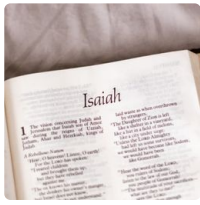


# OpenTheo

## Isaiah - Return from Exile



### Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah prophesied about the return of Israel from their exile and their re-establishment as God's chosen people. The message of the gospel, that there is a king named Jesus, is rooted in Isaiah's teachings. The covenant with Israel is not broken, but it has been superseded by the new covenant with Jesus. The dominant theme of Isaiah is the concept of fruit, as God desires for the nations and Gentiles to bear fruit and be married to Him.

## Transcript

Well, we were talking about some of the themes in Isaiah in our past few sessions, and in our last session we were looking at some of the themes that deal with the transition from bondage to nationhood. Now, nationhood, that might not sound like a very exciting, sexy thought, but actually it's a thrilling thing to get a vision for what God has in mind for the people of God as a holy nation. And we are the people of God, those of us who are in Christ, we are, as Peter tells us, a holy nation.

In 1 Peter 2, 9, he tells us that. But in the Old Testament, of course, Israel was the type and the shadow of what we are called to be. They usually did not actually live up to their calling very well, just like the institutional church has not proven to live up very well to the calling of the church.

But those who are true followers of Christ, because they are true followers of Christ, do comprise an alternative community in the world with an alternative king. And that's what the gospel is understood to say. When Paul came to Thessalonica, the people said, this man's preaching that there's another king named Jesus.

That's exactly what the message of the gospel is. There is, in fact, an alternative kingdom, another king. And those who follow that king are a holy nation.

Their numbers are not coextensive with the membership of the institutional church, of course. But those who are Christ's are his, through a spiritual rebirth, a spiritual union, a unity in the spirit that we all share. And therefore, it is a spiritual nation.

But in the Old Testament, as is so often the case, things that are in the New Testament, spiritual, are depicted in natural ways, in ritual ways, in physical ways, in types and in shadows. And in the Old Testament, the type of the church, the type of Christ. You see, the church isn't something different than Christ.

The church is his body. Christ and the church are typified in the Old Testament by Israel. And Israel, therefore, was called in its day to be a holy nation also.

But in order to become a holy nation, they had to be brought out of bondage. Of course, that's true of us as well. We were in bondage to sin prior to Christ saving us and calling us out and making us a holy nation.

So also, Israel's journey toward nationhood began with bondage. When God called Abraham, he was not in bondage. Nor were Isaac and Jacob in bondage.

But their descendants went into Egypt and became in bondage. And when they went into Egypt, they were not yet a nation. They were only a big clan, a big family.

The 70 heads of households who went into Egypt with Jacob were not anything like a nation. They were just a big bunch of related people, an extended family to whom God had made certain promises. But in Egypt, they were melted down into just a mass of slaves.

Millions of them. And then God called them out of bondage, brought them to Mount Sinai, and promised that they would be a holy nation if they would keep his covenant and obey his voice. And they would be his kingdom.

He would be their king. So this is how Israel became a holy nation. They were brought out of bondage and brought into a land that God had promised them where they were melded into an actual political unit.

Political slash religious. But then all nations then were political slash religious. All nations had their gods.

Israel had the true God. And so they became a holy nation unto Yahweh. That was the exodus.

Now, later on in their history, they were carried away into Babylon, and once again they became slaves in a foreign country. But God delivered them from that too. In the days of Cyrus, he delivered them and sent them back once again to the promised land where they again built Jerusalem and again built the temple and did all those things over again.

Sort of starting from square one. So twice, Israel was brought out of bondage into nationhood. And both times provide a type and a shadow of spiritual salvation from spiritual bondage into being a holy spiritual nation.

And this is what Isaiah talks about in many different ways. Of course, we've observed in more than one of our lectures so far the prominence of the exodus motif. How many times something about the exodus is brought up, whether it's walking through water, dry shod, through the sea, being preserved, having your enemies drowned in the depths of the sea, coming out of Egypt, walking through the desert, those kinds of things.

Those are images that call back to mind the exodus. And we saw that there's even a new exodus referred to and a new Passover. Of course, the original Passover was very much tied to the exodus.

It was because of the Passover that the exodus could occur. And there's a new Passover. And we saw in Isaiah, God says, don't remember the former things.

There's a new thing. And the new thing is he's going to make a new salvation that will eclipse the salvation of the exodus. And this is seen, of course, in Christ telling the disciples that from now on when you take Passover, don't remember what happened coming out of Egypt.

Remember what I have done for you. That is, there's a new salvation, a new exodus, and therefore a new memorial. You don't remember the old exodus.

You remember the new exodus. You do this in remembrance of me, Jesus said. And so we were talking about that last time.

Also, when we ended last time, we had been talking about the tabernacle. The first project God gave Israel once they got out of Egypt was to build a tabernacle, to be the place where God would dwell among men on earth. Of course, God dwells everywhere.

And even Solomon, who built the temple, acknowledged that as he prayed his prayer of dedication to the temple. He said, what house can I build to you, God? Heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain you. How can I build a house for you? But of course, the idea was that though God does, in fact, fill the heavens, he wants to dwell manifestly among human beings.

And therefore, he ordained that a site be created, a structure in which man could meet with him, where God would visibly appear in a pillar of cloud or fire, what they came to call the Shekinah glory, a term not found in Scripture, but used among the rabbis, the manifest glory of God, the manifest presence of God. And therefore, that structure that was built, the tabernacle, was called the house of God. Later on, when the tabernacle was no more and Solomon built the temple instead, Solomon's temple was called the house of God.

When we come to the New Testament, we are called the house of God because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are the new tabernacle. And we saw that Isaiah has references to God's dwelling place, a new tabernacle.

There's a new Exodus. There's a new Passover. There's a new tabernacle.

All of these things, of course, hark back to the very book of Exodus and the events immediately surrounding the escape from Egypt and the journey to the promised land. Now, one thing that happened, and we move now to new material, one thing that happened in the Exodus, and especially at Mount Sinai, was that God entered into a covenant with the people of Israel. Now, a covenant is a contract.

And there were various kinds of covenants, but a great deal of business was transacted in biblical times through covenants. We would have written contracts today, but often the covenants, well, they could be written, but they could be spoken as well. The main thing is that two parties agreed to something and it was binding.

And God brought Israel to Mount Sinai and He made a covenant with them. They had to agree to it just like He did. He made the provisions.

He said, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, indeed you shall be, this is your privilege, you'll be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all the earth, above all the nations of the earth, for all the earth is mine, says the Lord, and you'll be a kingdom unto me of priests and a holy nation. So they had the privilege of being a distinctive nation with a distinctive ruler, God. That was their privilege.

The stipulations were, you do what I say. And then He gave them, of course, the Ten Commandments and a larger body of laws as well. The keeping of those laws and remaining faithful to God was the only condition they had to meet to be the most important nation on the planet.

Important for what? The Jews were sometimes called the chosen people. We call them that sometimes in the Bible. But what were they chosen for? It's not so much that they were chosen to go to heaven.

Whenever we come to the idea of being chosen by God, especially in the New Testament, we immediately probably, our minds go to the idea of being, oh, God chose some people to go to heaven and chose some people to go to hell. This idea comes, of course, out of Calvinism, which itself came out of Augustinianism. Augustine was the one who originated those ideas in the fourth century.

No Christians believed that before. No Christians before the year 400 ever taught. None of the church fathers that we know of ever taught that God chose some people to go to heaven and some to go to hell.

What they did teach, and what the Bible seems to teach, is that God has chosen those who are in Christ for a special vocation. And that vocation is to glorify him, to represent him, to make him known in the world, and themselves to be transformed into his likeness. This was also what Israel was called for.

Israel was chosen not for a heavenly destiny, but an earthly one. God had made promises to Abraham which were earthly. Through your seed, all the nations, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

In the New Testament, we're told that's fulfilled in Christ. Christ is Abraham's seed. And through Christ and the gospel, all the families of the earth, by hearing the gospel and responding and coming to Christ, come into that blessing.

And we usually interpret that blessing in terms of things in the afterlife. But that's not necessarily how Israel was encouraged to see it. Israel was never told anything about the afterlife.

Abraham was never told anything about an afterlife. The idea was that God was doing something in the earth. And Israel had a privilege of playing the key role in that project, and that was to bring the Messiah into the world.

Abraham was promised that. His son Isaac was promised that, where his other seven sons were excluded from that. Isaac had two sons, one of them, Jacob, was promised that.

Esau was excluded. And so, the 12 sons of Jacob become that family. And then at Sinai, they become that nation.

Of course, the nation at Mount Sinai was not exclusively made up of those descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because there was a mixed multitude that went out of Egypt with them. And therefore, the nation was not ethnically homogenous. It was definitely, predominantly, made up of Israelites.

But there were, no doubt, Egyptians. We find some among them in the stories of Numbers, as they wandered in the wilderness. There were Ethiopians among them.

Probably, the Egyptians had slaves from many countries. My guess is that when Israel was released, these other slaves jumped on the bandwagon and said, we'll get in the crowd and move out too. This is our opportunity.

Doors open. And so, there was a mixed ethnic group that left Egypt, and a mixed ethnic group with whom God entered into this covenant Sinai. He said, it's okay.

It doesn't matter if you're a born Israelite or not. He says, you just get circumcised. You keep the Passover.

You keep the Sabbath. You keep my covenant. You're my people.

So, the nation was defined by covenantal faithfulness, not by ethnicity, even in the Old Testament. How much more in the New? In the New Testament, there's not that many Jewish people in the movement. Predominantly, people from other nations are.

So, God has never been a racist. God has never actually chosen a nation based on the ethnic background of its citizens. But only this.

He had a group of people who were mostly ethnically homogenous, mixed with a few others, and he said, listen, you keep my covenant and you'll be a nation. Being Israel means covenant faithfulness to God. Now, the covenant that God made is analogous to a marriage covenant.

At least that's how God spoke of it in later years. In Jeremiah 31, when God says he's going to make a new covenant, he said, not like the old covenant I made with them when I brought them out of Egypt, which covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, he says, I was a faithful husband, they weren't a faithful wife. After Sinai, Israel was always regarded to be God's wife.

And God the husband. It was a marriage. So that we could say that the marriage covenant, or even the whole concept of a covenant, suggests the analogy of marriage.

Paul said that when God made Adam and Eve and joined them together as one flesh, he said, that's a great mystery. He said, I speak of Christ in the church. God created the marriage covenant to be an earthly picture of such a relationship between God and his holy nation.

Now, we're very individualist as Americans. We always think of our individual privileges. We don't think corporately as people always did prior to probably the enlightenment or the founding of this nation.

But we think, well, I'm the bride of Christ. I'm the temple of the Holy Spirit. I am this, I am that.

Of course, in the Bible, it's more properly, we are. Christ doesn't have a million brides. He has one bride.

He doesn't have a million bodies. He's one body. We are all members of that body.

We, collectively, the nation of Israel was God's wife. Collectively, the church is Christ's bride. And this relationship is defined by covenant.

So, as there was a covenant that defined the relationship of Israel to God as his wife, his marriage, in the Old Testament, there is a covenant that defines our relationship to God. And Isaiah is not silent about that. And in Isaiah, of course, we have one of the major themes of Isaiah is that God's original wife was unfaithful.

Even in chapter 1, in verse 21, he says, How has the faithful city become a harlot? That means the faithful wife, in this case, has become an unfaithful wife, a harlot, like Hosea's wife did. Jeremiah brings that idea up also, and so does Ezekiel, in a very graphic way, in

Ezekiel 16 and Ezekiel 23. Many of these prophets bring this point up.

That Israel, in being unfaithful to God and worshiping other gods, has become a harlot, an unfaithful wife, a covenant-breaking wife, an adulteress. And so, many times what the prophets were saying is, Well, Israel has been an adulteress wife, and some of them went so far as to say God's going to give her a writing of divorcement. God's going to divorce her and take another wife.

He's going to make a new covenant with a new people. Now, the new people are made up of the faithful remnant of the old people, so there's continuity between the old nation and the new, but it's not identical, because the old nation was defined by an older covenant. Those who try to relate to God under the old covenant, which is, of course, what any Jewish person who does not believe in Christ, but is seeking to serve God, would have to be doing.

They're trying to follow the old covenant. They're following a marriage covenant that's now been ended. God's not married to anyone by that covenant anymore.

That marriage was ended. There's a new covenant, and that covenant involves faithfulness to Jesus Christ and the covenant He has made with us. So, Isaiah, as well as some other prophets, has one of his themes being that God is divorcing His unfaithful wife, Israel has broken the covenant, and God is going to enter into a relationship with someone else, a new covenant.

This also is, of course, connected to the whole theme of the Exodus, because it was as a result of the Exodus, and it is the thing that the Exodus itself precipitated that God entered into a covenant with Israel as a holy nation. Now, He has a new holy nation defined under new covenant stipulations. In Isaiah 24, which is, by the way, a chapter that most commentators, maybe all commentators I've ever encountered, believe is about the end of the world.

I do not agree, just because I'm ornery, but also because I have reasons. As for almost everything I believe, I hope actually for everything I believe, I have reasons. They may be valid, they may be compelling or not, but they are reasons compelling to me.

And I will not get into this in detail right now, but Isaiah 24 is a chapter of destruction and judgment. It is described as a judgment of cosmic proportions. It sounds, especially the way it's translated in our Bibles, where the word Eretz is typically in this chapter translated Earth, rather than land.

It sounds like the end of the world. However, if you take the word Earth in all its occurrences in this chapter and translate it land, which is 100% as well justified, then it's not the end of the world, it's the end of the land that is of Israel. It's the end of the old covenant people.

And I won't go into this chapter in detail now, as I will in a later lecture, but I want to point out this, what it says about those that are being judged in this chapter, verse 5, it says, the earth, I would read the land, is also defiled under its inhabitants because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant. Now those who see this chapter as the end of the world think of the everlasting covenant as the covenant that God made with Noah, because that's the only covenant God ever made with the whole world, essentially, after the flood. All other covenants were more narrowly made, and since people want to see this chapter as sort of the end of the cosmos, the end of the world, they say this covenant that the earth has broken must be the only covenant God ever made with the world, and that must be the Noahic covenant.

However, I believe that if we understand this to be a destruction of the land, the land of Israel, that is, and I take this to be relevant to the transition to the new order, as one could easily see as they read the next chapters. Chapters 24 through 27 are a block of chapters in Isaiah. 24 through 27.

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 are all about the new covenant. Therefore, I'm of the opinion that chapter 24 is about the fall of the old covenant, a transitional idea that comes up in a number of places in Isaiah. I think we could call it a central theme of Isaiah, is that God is going to end the old covenant relationship with Israel and establish a new covenant through the Messiah.

Chapters 25, 26, and 27 are fairly unmistakably about the Messiah's era, that is, our own, and chapter 24, with its images of destruction and judgment, I believe is about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish order. Unfortunately, all translators seem to translate the word *eretz* throughout this chapter, which occurs a great number of times throughout the chapter, as earth. So it sounds like it starts with the end of the world.

Verse 1 says, Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste, well, or the land of Israel. At the end of that verse says, He distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. Where do you scatter the inhabitants of the world to? The moon? I mean, if you're going to scatter the inhabitants of the world out of the world, what are you going to do? Put them in rocket ships? But you can scatter the inhabitants of the land and make the land empty by scattering them to other places.

And as you go through this chapter, I believe there's many references to a city that's under judgment. Verse 10 says, The city of confusion is broken down. There's a city here involved.

It's not the world we're talking about. It's the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, in my opinion. But the point is, it says of them in verse 5, These people have defiled the land.



By the way, that's a term that Moses used when he said that if Israel would leave murders unavenged, the land would be defiled under them by unrequited murder, by innocent blood that has not been atoned for by the blood of the murderer. That innocent blood defiles the land. As, of course, our own land certainly must be greatly defiled by the shedding of so much innocent blood of unborn children.

But the Israelites, the prophets often suggested that they had violated the covenant, defiled the land. And this is what verse 5 says, I believe the everlasting covenant was the covenant that would in fact have been everlasting had they not broken it. But anyway, I think this idea that Israel has broken the covenant is found in this passage.

As you look later on in the book, chapter 42, verses 1 through 6, we find that God is giving Jesus as a covenant. Now Jesus is not named, but the New Testament quotes this passage and applies it to Jesus. Isaiah 42, the first verses in it are quoted in Matthew 12.

And it says, Behold, my servant whom I uphold, my elect one in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

He will not cry out nor raise his voice nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break. A smoking flax he will not quench.

He will bring forth justice to truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged. That's one of my favorite lines in Isaiah.

He will not fail nor be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth. And the coastlands will await his rule, his law. Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk on it.

I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness and I will hold your hand. I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles. Now, who is being addressed here? The servant who is identified in Matthew 12 as Jesus.

And God says to Jesus, I will give you as a covenant to the people. A new covenant. It's interesting, in the old covenant, the covenant was a written document with a bunch of laws.

To be God's chosen nation, you had to keep faithful to those laws, to that covenant. In the New Testament, the new covenant is a person, Jesus. Faithfulness to the new covenant is faithfulness to Jesus.

Obedience to the new covenant is obedience to Jesus. Jesus is the covenant. We are in covenant with God when we are in Christ.

And so, we have this reference to God giving Christ as a covenant. Of course, Jeremiah

31, which is not Isaiah, but is of course on the same track as Isaiah in this. Jeremiah 31 has that most famous of all passages about the new covenant, which is the same subject that Isaiah is talking about.

Jeremiah 31 says, Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant. We've talked about a new exodus, a new Passover, a new tabernacle, now a new covenant. All those things associated with the exodus are now renewed as something new in Christ.

The antitype of the old. I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Of course, that included the remnant of Israel and Judah when Jesus made the new covenant with them in the upper room.

When Jesus sat with the disciples and said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. So, Jesus sat with the remnant of Israel, which is a very small group at that time. There had been 12, and even one of them had left the room by now.

And he entered into the new covenant with 11 men, the complete remnant of Israel at that time, apparently, or at least the representatives of it. He says, This covenant will be not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring 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. I will 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. That is, those who are in the new covenant will have personal knowledge of God, will not depend, as the Jews under the old covenant depended on some Levites to tell them what God is about. The Levites had the law.

No one else did. All the other tribes had to learn about God from the Levites. In the new covenant, everyone's going to have a direct connection with God.

Everyone in the new covenant knows the Lord. Doesn't have to be know him by hearsay. Doesn't have to know God through a secondary testimony of another person.

Everyone in this covenant knows the Lord. They're not dependent on being told who the Lord is. Of course, initially, when they're not in the covenant, they have to be evangelized.

But once you're evangelized, you know the Lord. Remember, John said in 1 John 2, I think it's verse 28, he said, You have no need that any man teach you. But the anointing which you've received teaches you all things.

That's the same thing here. They don't depend on men to teach you. Everyone's not going to have to say, know the Lord.

They'll all 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.

So those who come into the new covenant all know the Lord. They're all forgiven. He remembers their sins no more.

That's the new covenant. That's the new marriage. In Romans chapter 7, Paul, in this place probably more clearly than most places, clarifies what the exact relationship is to the old covenant for the Christian.

And this is something that I find from the people who call me and ask me questions, is a very common area of confusion for Christians. They say, well, what exactly is our relationship to the law? Are we supposed to keep the law, some of the law, none of the law? What's up with that? And Paul probably gives us the most clear analogy of marriage here that answers that question for us in Romans 7. He says, do you not know, brethren, for I speak to those who know the law, that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For, this is the analogy, the woman who has a husband, like we have the law, is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. Now, by the way, from the whole of Scripture, you would get some clarification about this.

This verse alone might give the impression that as long as a woman's ex-husband is alive, she's stuck with him. But actually, it would be clear from the way Paul's arguing, what he's saying is a woman is bound to her husband only as long as he lives, no longer. He's not suggesting that there are no, you know, unusual circumstances that can change her being bound to her husband because Jesus actually talks about things like that.

Paul talks about those things in 1 Corinthians 7. There are situations that can cause a brother or sister not to be in bondage in such cases, as Paul says. But here, the point he's making, and it expects people to understand because he's writing to those who know the law. By the way, those who know the law know that the law does not forbid a woman to remarry if she's validly divorced.

He presumes they know that. The point he's making is she's not bound to her husband at all after he's dead. That's a fact.

Whether they're divorced or not. Even if they're faithfully married, when he dies, she's not bound to him anymore. She's free.

That's the point he wants to make as a way of analogy. She's bound by the law to her husband. One could, to pick up Paul's idea, add the word only as long as he lives.

But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then, if while her

husband lives, that is, while she's still married and he's living, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress, of course. She can't have two husbands at once.

But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. So that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. What's this got to do with anything? This, verse 4. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ that you may be married to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

Now, what's he talking about here? He says the law was a marriage. It was a covenant. It was like marriage.

Those who are under the law are bound to keep the law as long as the marriage stands. However, of course, death can end a marriage. And when a woman's husband is dead, she's under no obligation to do any of the things that he once required her to do.

He has no further authority. That covenant is ended. Death has brought a permanent end to that marriage.

Therefore, she can remarry. That is, enter into a new covenant with another man. You cannot enter into a new covenant while you're still in the old covenant.

God doesn't have two covenants with two different people at the same time. God doesn't have a covenant with Israel and another covenant with the church. You can't have two covenants going simultaneously.

In this case, he's not speaking about from God's side of having two wives, but from our side. We can't be involved in two covenants at the same time. We can't be relating to God under the old covenant and also be saved in the new covenant.

Only because of the death of Jesus and our death in Him, we died in Him, can it be said this marriage we had to the law has been ended by death. Now we're alive from the dead and free to be married to another, to Jesus. So the idea here is the covenant with the law, the covenant of Sinai, is defunct.

And we are set free entirely from any of its obligations because we died with Christ. But we are free to be married to Christ, which we are, because there's a new covenant. We're in a covenant relationship, marriage with Christ.

What are the ramifications of that with reference to the law? Well, what it means, of course, is that if we were under the law, we'd have to do everything the law said. Just like the wife who's married to her first husband is under his headship. She's got to fit in with his plans.

But if he dies, she doesn't have to anymore. But if she marries again, she has to fit into

her new husband's plans. And that's how it is.

We don't have to obey any of the laws of the old covenant. But we have to obey everything Jesus said. On the seventh day, Adventist says to me, why do you keep nine of the Ten Commandments, but you don't keep the fourth commandment? Why do you make a distinction and not keep that one commandment when you keep the other nine? My answer is, I don't keep any of the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments were given as part of an old covenant. That's dead. There is no Ten Commandments.

Now, what there is, is Jesus. I am under obligation to obey Jesus. Now, he won't let me murder.

He's forbidden that. He won't let me commit adultery or steal or bear false witness or even covet. In other words, he won't even let me be disrespectful to my parents because Jesus spoke about all those things.

One thing he never did speak about was Sabbath. Jesus never imposed the Sabbath on his disciples. Therefore, when you see a Christian living faithfully to Christ, it looks like he's keeping nine of the Ten Commandments, even though he's not keeping any of the Ten Commandments.

He's keeping the commandments of Christ. Jesus said, go and make disciples, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. To be a disciple of Jesus, he said, if you continue in my words, you are my disciples indeed.

It's obedience to Christ that defines new covenant obligation. It's just like if a woman had married a man originally in her youth, and he said, I want to have breakfast every morning at six. And when children are given to us, I want you to stay home and raise the children.

And I want you to have dinner for me when I get home at six in the evening. And so she does those things as a dutiful wife, but then he goes out and he gets killed in an accident. And she goes down to the singles group at the church, meets a nice guy, goes online, meets the guy, and gets married again.

Her new husband says, I want breakfast served every day at seven. I want you to stay home and raise the kids. I'd like to have dinner at six.

Well, she's doing some of the same things her first husband told her to do. If her neighbor says, why do you keep doing what your husband said to do when he's dead? Well, she would say, I'm not doing anything that my first husband told me to do. I'm doing what my present husband wants me to do.

It's just that he has some of the same interests that my first husband had. Jesus certainly had some of the same interests as the law had. The same moral standards, for example, maybe even a little tighter.

But the point is, nothing that the law says defines the obligations of people who are under a new covenant. It's a new marriage, Paul said. The woman is dead to her old marriage when her husband dies.

She's free to marry another. And so we are dead to the law by the body of Christ so that we're free to marry another, even him who is raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God. An important point in Isaiah, by the way, which we'll get to later on.

God's concern for fruit. So we've got this new covenant idea. In Isaiah 49, verses 8 and 9, he says, Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time I have heard you.

In the day of salvation I have helped you. You might remember that this is a verse quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6. And he says, I will preserve you and give you as a covenant to the people. Jesus is being given as a covenant to the people.

Although one could say, well, this sounds like he's addressing his people themselves, the church. Well, if he is, it's not a different concept. The church is the body of Christ.

Christ is the head. We are not a different organism than Christ. The head and the body share the same life and identity.

That's why we can act in his name. We are him. We are his flesh and his bones, Paul said.

Christ exists on the earth incarnate in a body. Only the head has gone on ahead to heaven. The rest still walks the earth.

And so to say God gives Christ as a covenant to the people is not a different thing than saying God gives the church. Christ's body. Christ's embodiment is given to the world as a covenant.

But he says, I give you as a covenant to the people to restore the earth or land. To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages that you may say to the prisoners, go forth. To those who are in darkness, show yourselves.

So the idea of, again, coming out of bondage into a covenant. God has given Christ as a covenant to the people. To call people out of bondage.

Prisoners, come on out. Jesus said, of course, that God had anointed him to proclaim liberty to the captives. In that case, he was quoting Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of Nazareth.

But these references to Christ as the new covenant are, of course, in the context of a new exodus, a new people of God, a new tabernacle, a new Passover, a new covenant. All the things of the exodus, new. This covenant is often called an everlasting covenant in Isaiah and elsewhere in the scriptures.

Isaiah 55.3, for example, says, Incline your ear and come to me here and your soul shall live and I will make an everlasting covenant with you. Make sure mercies of David. Make sure mercies of David is a Hebraism that means the merciful things that God surely promised to David.

The new Davidic order. This verse is quoted by Paul in Acts 13.34 as applicable to Christ. In Chapter 59 of Isaiah.

Verses 20 and 21. We've actually read and dealt with these verses in another connection. Isaiah 59.20 says the redeemer will come to Zion and those who turn from transgression and Jacob, says the Lord.

As for me, says the Lord, this is my covenant with them. Remember, Paul quoted verse 20 as applicable to the present age in over in Romans 11.26. He quoted that verse and he says, as for me, this is the says the Lord. This is my covenant with them.

My spirit, who is upon you and my words, which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from your mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants, says the Lord, from this time and forevermore. This covenant is permanent. It's not like the old covenant, which actually passed or transmogrified or morphed into a new covenant.

This one is going to stay. This is not one that needs to be replaced. It's Christ.

You can't improve on perfection. The old covenant was not perfect. The writer of Hebrews says it was imperfect.

If it had been perfect, there wouldn't have been speaking of a new covenant. The writer of Hebrews says. But this one is perfect.

By the way, I've had new age. People say, well, you believe that the new covenant replaced the old covenant. Can't you believe that God would have yet another phase? The Mormons, but more or less think of that, too.

I mean, some of some of the cults believe that their movement is the next phase. Jesus was the next phase after the old covenant. Now God's doing a new phase.

Now the one we've got is the permanent one. It's forever. And so it is often said to be in chapter 61 in verse 8. Hebrews 13.20 tells us that Christ's blood is the blood of the everlasting covenant.

The term the everlasting covenant from Isaiah and other passages in the Old Testament. It's picked up and identified with the present covenant that Christ has made with us. Hebrews 13:20.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead. That great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you complete in every good work to do his will.

Working in you what is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ. To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

So this is the everlasting covenant. It's also called a covenant of peace. In Isaiah 54.

Now by the way you have to remember when you come to chapters like 54 and 55. You have to remember their proximity to chapter 53. Everybody who is a Christian knows what Isaiah 53 is about.

But chapters 54 and 55 actually are continuations of that chapter. Talking about the results of the sacrifice made by the Messiah. And of course talking about the present age that we live in.

And in chapter 54. Verses 1 and 2. It says sing O barren. You who have not born.

Break forth into singing and cry aloud you who have not travailed with child. For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman says the Lord. Enlarge the place of your tent and let them stretch out the curtains and habitations.

Do not spare. Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. The reason I refer to this as a covenant of peace in this verse.

Is because these verses. Lead to verses 9 and 10. Which says for this is the waters.

It's like the waters of Noah to me. That is a one time deal. For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth.

So have I sworn that I would not be angry with you or rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed. But my kindness shall not depart from you.

Nor shall my covenant of peace be removed. Says the Lord who has mercy on you. Now I could have just read those verses about the covenant of peace.

But the reason I read the first two verses so you'll know the context. What are the first two verses context. Paul quotes them in Galatians 4. And says that this.

Verse these verses at the beginning of Isaiah 54. Are talking about the Gentiles coming into the church. Talking about the church.



You see when it says sing O barren. You who have not born. This is a reference to the Gentile nations.

They are barren. They've never produced fruit for God. In the context of Israel being God's wife.

He intended for her to produce fruit. We're going to have another lecture where we examine the whole concept of fruit. In Isaiah a very dominant theme.

God's looking for fruit. This fruitfulness sometimes is likened to a vineyard or a field. A fruitful field.

But sometimes to a woman's producing children. In the Bible children are called the fruit of the womb. They're a product.

I hate to use the term it almost seems to objectify too much. But that God is looking for as a man looks when he marries. He looks for fruit.

He wants his wife not to be barren. Just like a farmer wants his fields not to be barren. A child born to a woman is regarded to be fruit.

And so God married Israel hoping to get fruit. But the nations who are Gentiles were never married to God. He never bore.

They never bore any fruit to him. They never had a chance. They were barren.

They were fruitless nations. Not in relationship with God. But he says you who are barren who have never borne break forth into singing.

Cry aloud you who have not travailed with child. For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman. Who's the married woman? Israel.

Who's the desolate? The Gentile nations. They've never produced any fruit for God. But God's going to get himself more fruit from the Gentile nations than from Israel.

Paul quotes this, as I said, in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 27 and applies it to the church. It's talking about how God married Israel to get fruit. Got no fruit.

Not much. Then he went to the Gentiles who had never had a chance to bear fruit. They were barren.

And lo and behold, he gets himself more fruit, more children from the Gentile nations than he ever got from Israel. That's what that is saying. But he says then of them in verse 9 that it's a permanent salvation, a permanent kindness.

It's a covenant of peace that he's making that is peace between him and us. Suggesting that prior to this covenant being made, there was not peace. There was antagonism.

There was hostility. Paul said in Romans 5, 1 that therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. It's a covenant of reconciliation with God, of peace.

In Ezekiel 34, the same term is used speaking about the new covenant. We're going to study Ezekiel separately, of course, but just to show how the prophets shared the same concerns. Ezekiel chapter 34 and verse 25.

This is a messianic age passage, this whole chapter. It's about Jesus. And it says in verse 25, I will make a covenant of peace with them and cause the wild beasts to cease from the land.

He means the Gentile predators who attacked the sheep of God, which were Israel. And they will dwell safely in the wilderness, as Israel will, and sleep in the woods. That is, God's people will be secure, and God will end the Gentile dominance over his people, like predatory animals over his sheep.

The same idea is found in chapter 37. You saw the covenant of peace there, also in chapter 37, 26. Chapter 37 of Ezekiel is also on the same subject as chapter 34 in general.

So in verse 26, he says, Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. So here we have it referenced to both. And he says, And I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary, that is, tabernacle, in the midst of them forevermore.

My tabernacle also should be with them. Indeed, I will be their God. Now, see, this is images of the Exodus.

God made a covenant at Mount Sinai and instructed in the building of the tabernacle. But as we pointed out, there's a new Exodus, a new tabernacle, a new covenant. It's a covenant of peace, and it's an everlasting covenant.

Ephesians, of course, talks about this. It doesn't use the word covenant, but it talks about how Christ has become our peace. In this case, talking about reconciliation, not our reconciliation with God, but our reconciliation with formerly hostile people who are now in Christ with us.

Particularly, he talks about the Jews and the Gentiles, formerly hostile powers against each other. But now Ephesians 2, 11 says, Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcised by what is called the circumcision, as the Jews call you uncircumcised by way of derision, says that at that time, you were without Christ. This is what you were.

By the way, you were once Gentiles. We're now Israel. You were once Gentiles in the flesh.

You were without Christ. You were aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel. Not now.

You're not anymore aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel. You're in it. You're Israel.

And strangers you were from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ, you who were once far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made both the Jew and the Gentile one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity that used to be between the Jew and the Gentile, but who now, in Christ, have given up those attitudes of enmity.

That is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself of the two, meaning the Jew and the Gentile, one new man. That is the body of Christ, thus making peace, that he might reconcile them both to God. Now we're reconciled to each other and also to God together in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

So it's a covenant of peace. There was enmity between us and God. There was enmity between us and other people.

But in this covenant, God has brought an end to the enmity between different races and people who were once hostile. In Christ, we become brothers. We become one body, and that in one body, we're all reconciled to God.

So it's peace all around. It's peace every direction. It's a covenant having as one of its primary features peace and reconciliation.

Okay, now, what do I want to do here? Let me—we started a little late. I'm going to run a little late, if you don't mind. Not too much late, because I, of course, do have other commitments.

But in addition to this Exodus motif, as we pointed out, there's this other similar motif of the Jews returning from Babylon, and this too. This too is a reference to God establishing the new nation, the church, using imagery of the old nation being established out of the Babylonian exile. In Isaiah 10, a very important passage on this subject, Isaiah 10, verses 21 and 22, it says, Now, this language of the returning remnant to the Jewish mind speaks of God bringing the Jews back geographically from the place of bondage back to the land of Israel.

That's at least the imagery. 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. Now, the average Jew would read this and say, okay, we were very numerous when we went into Babylon, like the

sand of the sea, but only a small number of us are going to come back. And if that's how they understood it, of course, that would be, in a sense, correct.

That is what happened. The whole nation went into captivity. A small remnant, only about 50,000, came back with Zerubbabel.

And so only a remnant returned to Israel. However, Paul quotes these words as being not about the return of exiles, but of salvation. In fact, he rewords it, very possibly following the Septuagint, I'm not sure.

But in verse 21, when Paul quotes it, it's Romans 9, 27, where he quotes it, he says, Though the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them shall be saved. And Paul's using this to talk about Jews who are saved now in Jesus. Jews who have come to Christ and are saved.

He points out that really only a remnant are predicted to be saved of Israel, not all of them. But he takes this passage to mean salvation in Christ. Now that also could have been deduced by a perceptive Jew just reading the passage in Isaiah.

Paul wasn't doing something innovative and controversial when he applied this to salvation in Christ. Because look at verse 21. The remnant will return to whom? To what? To the mighty God.

Now the term the mighty God is found in one other place. And that's in the previous chapter. Isaiah 9, 6. Or actually, yeah, 9, 6. Unto us a child is born.

Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God.

The same expression here. This is Jesus, this is the mighty God in Isaiah 9, 6. No doubt that's who he is in chapter 10, verse 21 too. The only two places you really find the expression.

And in chapter 10, no doubt, he's deliberately echoing the term that he used in the previous chapter. Which was Jesus, the Messiah. So this is not talking about the remnant coming back from Babylon.

It's talking about the remnant coming to Jesus, to the Messiah. So Paul is very much within his rights in quoting this verse as being pertinent to the Jews who have come to Christ. He simply says the remnant shall be saved, not the remnant shall return.

But the idea of returning is used and applied, of course, to the idea here of salvation in the new covenant. In Isaiah 53, in verse 6, it says, 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. When Peter quotes this, or alludes to

it, Peter alludes to it in 1 Peter 2, 25. He says, for you were as sheep going astray.

But he says, but have now returned. You've now, a remnant shall return. You've returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls, to Christ.

So like Israel was sheep going astray, Peter says to his readers, you were sheep going astray, but you've returned now. By becoming a Christian, you have participated in that return to God that is predicted. Which was foreshadowed by a geographical return to the promised land from bondage.

We have returned to God out of bondage to sin. These concepts are all mixed together in the minds of the New Testament writers, obviously. And apparently the prophets' mind too.

In Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 11, it says, he will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom and gently lead those who are with young. In all likelihood, in the context of Isaiah 40, the Jews would have thought this was referring to him gathering them from their captivity.

And bringing them safely, shepherding them back to the land of Israel. Of course, Jesus said, I'm the good shepherd in John 10, 16. And no doubt would have seen this as a reference to himself gathering his lambs to himself.

In Isaiah 11, 12 and several other places, it talks about these people being gathered from all over the world. Gathered into the church. In Isaiah 11, a chapter we've seen many times previously, a messianic chapter.

It says in verse 12, Isaiah 11, 12, he will set up a banner for the nations and will assemble the outcasts of Israel. And gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Now the dispersed of Judah would to the Jews mean the exiled, the Jewish exiles.

But in this passage, it's actually talking about gathering the spiritual Judah, the church. We see it because it mentions, well look at verse 10. Isaiah 11, 10.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, that's Christ, who shall stand as a banner. There's that banner that was in verse 12. To the people, for the Gentiles shall seek him and his resting place shall be glorious.

The banner attracts the Gentiles. This is the gathering in of the true Judah, the true Jews. To God, to the Messiah.

By the way, Paul quotes this verse also. Isaiah 11, 10, he quotes in Romans and he applies that in Romans 15. He applies it to his mission among the Gentiles, gathering the Gentiles.

And how the prophets had said that God would raise up a banner to the Gentiles and gather them in. It is, I was looking for the reference, I guess it's probably in the cross reference here. It's Romans 15, 10.

Romans 15, 10, Paul quotes that. So it's about the church. I don't want to take all the scriptures I have in my notes here.

But there are some really, there's a few really important passages I don't want to leave out. Isaiah 43, perhaps this will be the last one we'll have time to look at in this lecture. But Isaiah 43, verses 5 and 6. It says, Fear not, for I am with you.

I will bring your descendants from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, give them up. And to the south, do not keep them back.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Now, again, this gathering from all lands of his sons and daughters would have been understood in the Jewish mind of God gathering the Jewish people back to the land after the exile. That was the context of the general section of Isaiah.

Talks a lot about Cyrus and God rescuing the Jews from Babylon and so forth. He says, I'm going to bring them back from all the lands. However, there's some hints here that he might not be talking about simply that.

Because he doesn't just bring them back from the east or the north, as one might say, but from the west. Well, what's west of Israel? The ocean, the Mediterranean Sea. The Jews weren't scattered to the west in the Babylonian exile, nor necessarily to the south.

These are the four compass points. And Jesus, if you'll look at Luke chapter 13. Luke chapter 13, Jesus predicts the Gentiles coming to him in large numbers.

And Luke 13, 29. He says they will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and they'll sit down in the kingdom of God. And he's talking.

I could read earlier that he says in verse 27, he will say, I tell you, I do not know you. Verse 28, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see, the Jews see, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. But they who come to the kingdom will come from the east, the west, the north, and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.

This gathering from the four corners of the world is applied to Gentiles here coming into the church. And the language is reminiscent of Isaiah 43. One other passage, and then we're going to be done in John chapter 11.

Caiaphas made a prophecy without knowing that's what he was doing. And he said in verse 50, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the

people, meaning they wanted to kill Jesus to spare the nation from Roman reprisals, and not that the whole nation should perish. Now John says this about Caiaphas' words, verse 51.

Now this he did not say on his own authority, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, of course Israel, but verse 52, but not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Now the gathering of the children of God, my sons and my daughters from the east, the west, north, and south, the scattered children, is a term that the Jews even to this day refer to as the end of the diaspora, the time when God will end the exile and bring the Jews back to the land. But John's not talking about that.

John, when he says the children of God scattered abroad will be gathered together, he's talking about gathered to Christ. The idea of gathering the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem is only barely in view in these passages. It is the gathering of the nations into Christ that is the ultimate fulfillment of this, so that God creating a new nation through a new exodus, a new covenant, a new gathering of the exiles to himself.

These images, which were very meaningful historically to the Jews of Isaiah's day, are meaningful to us in an entirely different way, because they speak of a spiritual gathering, a spiritual liberation, and the forming of a spiritual nation with a new covenant. Anyway, that's all we will have time to do with that today, and we will move a different direction in our next lecture.