

This is Part Fourteen of the Serial Publication in PDF and Video,
including the second half of Chapter Nine.

The
PRODIGAL SON
PROPHECY

God's Amazing Plan for the Restoration of the Two
Hebrew Houses and the Salvation of the Gentiles

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THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL'S RETURN TO THE HOLY LAND...

IF NOT AFTER THE BABYLONIAN EXILE THEN WHEN?

First we will consider Isaiah's prophecy and commentary regarding the removal of the House of Israel from the Holy Land.

Isaiah Chapter 11 contains one of the most recognized and quoted descriptions of the coming Millennial Kingdom when Christ will rule the earth from Jerusalem as the King of Kings. That thousand-year reign will be the glorious crescendo of the creation story, the Sabbath "Day" when:

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (verses 6-10).

Yet, while that is the happy ending to the prophecy given to Isaiah, the beginning is a tale of rebellion against God by the entire House of Jacob, and bitter conflict between the Houses of Judah and Israel. And interspersed throughout are glimpses of the Messiah whose first and second coming will be intimately connected with the rivalry and reunion of the two houses.

The first four chapters of Isaiah are addressed alternately to Judah (1:1, 2:1, 3:1, 4:3) and to all of Jacob (2:5) in the form of chastisement, but in Chapter 5 the waywardness of the House of Israel and its imminent banishment from the presence of God (by the hand of the Assyrians) begins to be invoked as a special warning to the House of Judah:

*"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. I will lay it waste...**For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel**" (Isaiah 5:3-7).*

Then in Chapter 7 comes the prophecy of the Messiah in the midst of a literal war between Israel and Judah. It is delivered to Ahaz, King of Judah in the depths of his despair about the military alliance of Israel and Assyria which has attacked Jerusalem:

*"Now it came about in the days of Ahaz...king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and **Pekah...king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it**, but could not conquer it. When it was reported to the house of David, saying, 'The Arameans have camped in Ephraim,' his heart and the hearts of his people*

shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind. Then the LORD said to Isaiah, 'Go out now to meet Ahaz...and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted...[their plan against you] shall not stand nor shall it come to pass...within another 65 years Ephraim [the House of Israel] will be shattered, so that it is no longer a people...If you will not believe, you surely shall not last" (Isaiah 7:1-9).

All looks lost to Ahaz, but God wants to show him that this war and the lasting hostility that it will engender between the two houses is part of a much, much bigger plan for the salvation of the world. Note here the apparent double meaning of the last phrase, "*If you will not believe, you surely shall not last*": to Ahaz an exhortation not to shrink from a battle God intends him to win, but at the same time to the reader a proclamation of the key to salvation that is repeated continuously through the New Testament -- the concept of *abiding in Christ* (e.g., John 15:6). It is the phrase in the text that abruptly segues from history to prophecy, that pivots from the House of Israel in one of its darkest hours of sin, to the coming sunrise of the Messiah that will illuminate the path of Israel out of the wilderness and back to the Holy Land:

*"Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 'Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 'But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!' Then [Isaiah] said, 'Listen now, O house of David! [Judah], Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore **the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel**' "* (Isaiah 7:10-14) ...

*....."there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt [territory of the House and Kingdom of Israel], but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, **on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light...For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore"** (Isaiah 9:1-7).*

Both by key prophetic clues and by contextual arrangement Isaiah clearly associates the coming of the Messiah with the House of Israel.

How will this plan of salvation come about? The explanation begins with the very next verse:

"The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. The Lord sends a message against Jacob, And it falls on

Israel. And all the people know it, That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria...So the LORD cuts off head and tail from Israel” (Isaiah 9:7d-14).

It is accomplished through the divorce and subsequent allurements of the House of Israel.

ISRAEL’S FIRST AND SECOND RETURN TO THE LAND

1. The First Return

Thus far in this book we have made mention of just the second of two waves of returning Northern Kingdom Israelites to the Holy Land, because that is the most significant of the two in that it metaphorically encompasses the House of Israel as a whole. However, Isaiah testifies of the return of a small number of Israelites following the fall of Assyria but preceding the first coming of Christ.

*“Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them [Assyria], but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. **A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return**” (Isaiah 10:20-22).*

We have already seen these returnees mentioned in Isaiah 9:1-2: *“in...**the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali**...[known in the time of Jesus as] **Galilee of the Gentiles**. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.”*

This is why there were “lost sheep” of Israel in Galilee at the time of Christ, and why during the same general time period the Apostle Paul could testify truthfully to King Herod Agrippa in Acts 26:6-7 that *“I stand on trial because of my hope in the promise that God made to our fathers, **the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to realize as they earnestly serve God day and night**.”* There was a remnant of all the tribes in the land, some under the auspices of the House of Judah and its system of synagogue worship (including some members of the 10 northern tribes who had long before defected to Judea immediately after the formation of the Kingdom of Israel – 2 Chronicles 11:16), and others who were “lost” in paganism of various sorts. But it was only a remnant.

2. The Second Return

*“And 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**, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from*

the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” (Isaiah 11:11-13).

The story of the reunion and return of the two houses is told and retold in many of the Old Testament prophecies.

Hosea 1:10-11: *“Yet the time will come when Israel’s people will be like the sands of the seashore—too many to count! Then, at the place where they were told, ‘You are not my people,’ it will be said, ‘You are children of the living God.’ Then the people of Judah and Israel will unite together. They will choose one leader for themselves, and they will return from exile together”*

Jeremiah 3:18: *“In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.”*

Jeremiah 31:7: *“For thus says the LORD, ‘Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chiefs of the nations; Proclaim, give praise and say, ‘O LORD, save Your people, The remnant of Israel.’ ‘Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; A great company, they will return here. With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.’”*

THREE PARABLES ABOUT THE RETURN

The most detailed and direct telling of the story of the reunion and return of the Two Houses is found in Ezekiel Chapter 37. Like the parables of The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Prodigal Son told by Jesus in Luke 15, three aspects of a larger integrated message are presented in parable form. These are The Dry Bones, The Two Sticks, The Davidic Kingdom. Importantly, these convey virtually the same message as the parable of the prodigal son, but include more end-time symbolism.

THE PARABLE OF THE DRY BONES -- EZEKIEL 37:1-14

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry... He said to me, ‘Prophesy over these

bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD....' Thus says the Lord GOD, **"Come from the four winds, [Matt 24, Isaiah 11:13] O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'** So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, **an exceedingly great army.**" [Host of Heaven Revelation 19:11-21].

"Then He said to me, 'Son of man, **these bones are the whole house of Israel**; behold, they say, "Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off." Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD, '**Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,**" declares the LORD.'"

There are multiple layers of meaning in this parable related to our study. First we must recognize that this is NOT a parable about the Jews returning to the Holy Land in the 20th century as is so often preached by people who don't know the Two House teaching. The scripture expressly identifies the dry bones as the House of Israel, not the House of Judah -- and to eliminate all doubt about it, the two houses are unmistakably distinguished from each other just a few verses later in the next parable, as we will soon address.

This parable is about the House of Israel, the prodigal son, being brought back to life after being "dead" to the Father due to the "divorce" and banishment. "This son of mine was dead and has come to life again" (Luke 15:24).

It is also a teaching on the association of the House of Israel with Christianity. The promise that: "My people. **I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life**" is the very essence of the Gospel message of the New Testament. "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, Because of His great love for us, **God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ. It is by grace you have been saved!**" (Ephesians 2:5) and "Now it is God who establishes both us and you in Christ. **He anointed us, placed His seal on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of what is to come**" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

Furthermore, it is a teaching distinguishing the first and second coming of Christ, and foreshadowing the resurrection and rapture at the second coming. In the first part of the parable, the dry bones are lying on the surface of the ground -- the abandoned dead in the land of desolation. Upon the first coming of Christ, those who receive Him are only figuratively/spiritually dead and

simply come to life and figuratively/spiritually stand on their feet.

But notice that in the second iteration of the same resurrection theme in the same parable, the people are *actually* dead, and raised up from graves. This is what occurs at the second coming: “*The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*” (1 Corinthians 15:52). In that process they are assembled from the four winds (Matthew 24:31), and will soon thereafter accompany the glorious return of the King of Kings as part of an exceedingly great army (Revelation 19:14).

So there are two returns to the land in the parable of the Dry Bones: a physical return to the land by the Christians of the House of Israel in the days leading to the second coming of Christ, and a second return in the glorified bodies we receive at the resurrection and rapture.

The second parable of Ezekiel 37 addresses that first return.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO STICKS -- EZEKIEL 37:15-23

*“The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ‘And you, son of man, **take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. When the sons of your people speak to you saying, ‘Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?’ say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.”**’ The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘**Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I 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 will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.**”*”

Two things are clear from the context: 1) that “Sons of Israel” in this passage means any descendants of Jacob/Israel from any tribe, but 2) the House of Judah and House of Israel are distinct from each other as separate bases for Hebrew identity.

So the designation of the First Stick: “*Judah and... the sons of Israel, his companions*” indicates that

the “companions” of Judah includes members of the twelve tribes who are not technically Judeans nor Israelites of the House of Israel. They are the Hebrews from any tribe who adhere to Judaism.

However, the designation of the Second Stick “For...*Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions*” is inclusive of only the members of the House of Israel. This would seem to confirm that membership of the House of Israel is defined by and synonymous with membership in the Body of Christ. They are people from every tribe, tongue and nation, made “children of Abraham” by faith in Christ (Galatians 3:27-29).

All the “Sons of Israel” (of both houses) will eventually, in the unfolding of end-time events, have one king, Yeshua Hamashiach (Jesus Christ).

THE PARABLE OF THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM -- EZEKIEL 37:24-28

“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

This is the picture of the Millennial Kingdom, when Christ will rule from Jerusalem on the Throne of David, over the unified House of All Israel. The Millennial Kingdom is the thousand-year “Sabbath Day” of the Creation story and the model for the eternal spiritual Heaven that will begin after the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-22:21).

Jews and Christians will live side-by-side in the Holy Land, when “*Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim*” (Isaiah 11:13).

Removal of hostility between Judah and Israel will mean that Christians will be welcomed to live in modern Israel in the last days. That is not yet true today, as Israeli citizenship for immigrants is limited to Jews, but as the enmity of the world grows against both Christians and Jews, there will be a reconciliation born of natural alliance. It would also seem to be a natural outcome of the growing awareness of the Two House teaching among both Jews and Christians that friendship between members of the two houses would grow apace.