

Contrasting Physical and Spiritual Israel

Rick Railston

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I'm sure many of those of you that have a computer have looked on ancestry.com and maybe looked into your genealogy to find out who you are, where you came from, where your ancestors came from, what nation you're from. You find information that you didn't know before, but perhaps no one takes their genealogy more seriously than a Jew because they believe that they are specially chosen by God. If you're not Jewish, it's hard to appreciate the importance that genealogy is to the average Jew. Now with that in mind, let's go to Exodus 19 and we'll begin in verse 4. I'm going to read it out of the New King James. God is speaking to Moses.

Exodus 19:4. *'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, [and how I bore you on eagles' wings and [And notice this.] brought you [referring to Israel] to Myself. 5) Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be [Notice this.] a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6) And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* ... (NKJV)

That happened approximately 3,400 years ago and the descendants of Israel have believed that ever since—that they were a special people above all people. Their ethnicity is very important to them.

Now let's take that up to the time of Christ. We know that, yes, Christ interacted with some non-Jews during His time on earth. The Samaritan woman comes to mind, but the vast majority of the people that He interacted with in His ministry were people of Jewish descent. Now let's come forward a little bit to Acts 2. You can be turning over there where we'll discover a little background to set the stage for Acts 2. You will remember that the northern ten tribes were taken into captivity and scattered, but Judah was allowed to return (to the Promised Land) 500 years prior to Acts 2. The fact is that the Jews of 31 AD had no reason to think that they still weren't the only people that God was working through. They still thought that they were God's special people at the time of Christ. With that in mind, let's begin in verse 1 of Acts 2. Again, I'll read it out of the New King James.

Acts 2:1. *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and [they] began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* (NKJV)

Focus on this.

5) *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.*

6) *And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together [all these Jews], and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.*

7) *Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"*

8) *And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? (NKJV)*

Verse 9 starts to tell us the different areas these Jews came from.

9) *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*

10) *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, [Now notice this.] both Jews and proselytes,*

11) *Cretans and Arabs — we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." (NKJV)*

So we see here that all of these were either Jews or proselytes. Now a proselyte is one who converts to Judaism and is circumcised. As a reference, look at Exodus 12:48, which tells us if a stranger wants to take Passover that all of the males must be circumcised.

Exodus 12:48. *And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. (NKJV)*

So all of the people from all of these nations were either ethnic Jews or they were proselytes. Continue on in verse 38 of Acts 2.

Acts 2:38. *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and [you] shall receive the gift of the Holy [spirit].*

39) *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, ... (KJV)*

He's talking to Jews. "The promise is to you and your children," but notice this:

30b) *... and [in addition to that] to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God [will] call. (KJV)*

Now Peter is speaking under inspiration and here is a hint of something more that was going to come, as we're going to see.

Now let's turn to chapter 10 of Acts and we're going to start in verse 1, again from the New King James. This is the account of Cornelius. And this verse and another verse answer the question of what Peter meant when he said, "And all who are afar off." I'm sure when Peter mentioned that, he didn't understand it. He was speaking under inspiration.

Acts 10:1. *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,
2) [Notice, he was] a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. (NKJV)*

It's obvious Cornelius was a Roman and it appears that he found out about God through the Jews. Maybe he was starting to keep the Sabbath and the holy days. He was obeying God as best as he could. And it was most likely he was not circumcised. Therefore, he was not a proselyte. We don't know 100 percent for sure but there are indications of that. Then in verses 3 through 8, Cornelius is told in a vision to go find this man named Peter. Next in verses 9 through 14, it tells us that Peter had a vision. That's where this great sheet came down from heaven that was full of all kinds of unclean animals and beasts. This voice said to Peter, "Kill and eat." This, of course, shocked Peter who said, "I can't do that. I've never eaten anything unclean in my life!" Then in verse 15:

*15) And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."
16) This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. (NKJV)*

At this point, I'm sure Peter was confused as to the meaning of the vision. He was totally uncertain; he was shocked. Then in verses 17 through 23, Peter travels to see Cornelius and we'll pick up the account in verse 24.

*24) And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.
25) As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. (NKJV)*

Now, just as an aside, this doesn't have anything to do with the subject today; it's interesting that some people want to be worshipped. Even today in God's church, some people want to be worshipped. And Peter, an apostle would not allow that to happen. Verse 26:

26) But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; ... (NKJV)

"I am a man just like you. You don't worship me. You worship God."

27) And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. (NKJV)

Cornelius had invited a crowd.

28) Then he [Peter] said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation.... (NKJV)

But now notice what Peter says.

28b) ... But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. (NKJV)

By this time Peter has gotten the message of the vision. Then in verse 34:

34) Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

35) But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. (NKJV)

This is regardless of color, ethnicity; it doesn't make any difference. Verse 44:

44) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

45) And those of the circumcision ... (NKJV)

Remember Peter brought down with him Jews from Jerusalem.

45) And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. (NKJV)

Now the Greek word for "astonished" here literally means *to be beside oneself*. And this is the same word that was used to describe Mary when she walked up and found the tomb of Christ empty—just absolutely beside yourself, astonished, didn't know what to say, couldn't speak almost.

So the Jews who saw the holy spirit coming on the Gentiles had the same reaction. And I'm sure Peter did too.

46) For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God [those who just received the holy spirit]. Then Peter answered,

47) "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (NKJV)

So right here, God's entire plan takes a turn because up until that time, it was available to the Jews, but now it takes a turn, a very important turn, that salvation is not just open to physical Israel but now there is something, as we're going to see, called "spiritual Israel."

With that in mind, let's go to Galatians 6:15. We're going to see a new term is introduced. Now with this turn of events, we see that not only was there a physical Israel but there is now a spiritual Israel.

Galatians 6:15. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, ... (NKJV)*

It doesn't matter.

15b) ... but a new creation. (NKJV)

Meaning: God is concerned about a new creature; being filled with God's holy spirit, he or she becomes a new person, a different person.

16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, [And notice this.] and upon the Israel of God. (NKJV)

Here is a new term that's never been used before referring to spiritual Israel. And here we see the concept of spiritual Israel is introduced. The Israel of God is something that benefits all of us here in this room and all over the world. It benefits all of us because regardless of our ethnicity, the color of our skin, our background, we can be part of God's family. That's what happened here.

So, today in the sermon what we're going to do is contrast physical Israel with spiritual Israel. We're going to contrast what physical Israel went through during the Old Testament times with what spiritual Israel is going through now and we're going to see there is a perfect analogy, a perfect parallel between what physical Israel went through back then and what spiritual Israel is going through now. We're going to look at five ways, five parallels between physical and spiritual Israel. We're going to see that physical Israel was a type of spiritual Israel, and, then, we're going to see many lessons that we can learn to help us with our calling as firstfruits. So, the title of the sermon is:

Contrasting Physical and Spiritual Israel

1. The first contrast, the first parallel, is that both physical and spiritual Israel are "nothing" people. (I say "nothing" in quotes meaning *just nothing in the world's view.*)

Let's start with physical Israel because in the world's view (and we're going to see spiritual Israel) are insignificant people. Not even worthy of the world's consideration. Notice physical Israel. They were not numerous. They were not brave. And they had no inherent strength. They were literally a bunch of slaves that God had mercy on.

Let's go to Ezekiel 16 and we're going to start in verse 2 which I'll read out of the New King James. What we're going to see is how the world views physical Israel—how it viewed it back then and in most all cases views it today.

Ezekiel 16:2. *"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3) and say, 'Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan [a pagan nation]; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. 4) As for your nativity, on the day you were born [Notice this.] your navel cord was not [even] cut, ... (NKJV)*

Nobody was paying attention to you! Nobody was helping you.

4b) ... nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; ... (NKJV)

You were just left in your own blood, so to speak, or your mother's blood.

4 continued) ... you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. 5) No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. (NKJV)

That's how the world viewed physical Israel back then. It was a sad situation, but notice what happened.

6) "And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' (NKJV)

That's what God said to this baby that was out on the ground with the umbilical cord still attached, bloody and dirty on the dirt. God had mercy on this outcast nation. So we see here this is how the world views Israel—as nothing. Now, let's go to 1 Samuel 13 verse 19 to see another example. We're breaking into the book of Samuel and here Saul is king. He is about to fight the Philistines, but the problem is he doesn't have any weapons—big problem! And this shows you the state of Israel. Now, the Philistines were dominating Israel at this time and notice what they did.

1 Samuel 13:19. *Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, ... (NKJV)*

Why?

19b) ... [because] the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears." (NKJV)

So the Philistines wouldn't allow the Hebrews to have a blacksmith.

20) But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare, his mattock, his ax, and his sickle;

21) and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads.

*22) So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan....
(NKJV)*

They had no power. They had no strength of their own. Apart from God, they were nothing.

Now for a third example, let's go to 2 Kings 18:13. This is the time of King Hezekiah and the King of Assyria has invaded the land and has laid siege to Jerusalem.

***2 Kings 18:13.** Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and [he] took them. (KJV)*

The Kingdom of Judah was in a bad situation. We'll jump to verse 23. The Assyrian army now surrounds Jerusalem and Rabshakeh, who is Sennacherib's general, is standing down below and the Israelites are timidly looking over the wall. Rabshakeh starts mocking the Jews.

23) Now therefore [Rabshakeh says], I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses — ... (NKJV)

Notice what he says.

23b) ... if you are able on your part to put riders on them! (NKJV)

And the fact is they could not. They didn't have the riders. They didn't have the skill to put 2,000 men on 2,000 horses to fight back. So we see here that physical Israel apart from God was absolutely nothing. They were not strong. They were not brave. They were not numerous.

With that in mind, let's talk now about spiritual Israel—a nothing people. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 1 verse 26. We know this. I'll read this out of the King James. It's a very familiar scripture, but you see there is a parallel between physical Israel and spiritual Israel.

***1 Corinthians 1:26.** For [you] see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men [according to] the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: (KJV)*

Now it's ironic because Paul, in terms of Judah, was mighty in the sense. He learned at the feet of Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, but, as we have just seen,

who is Judah compared to the Romans? Nothing. So, Paul is saying, “not many mighty ... are called.”

27) But God [has] chosen ... (KJV)

Notice what He has chosen.

27b) ... the foolish things of the world to [put to shame to] the wise; and God [has] chosen the weak things of the world to [put to shame those who] are mighty;

28) [He's also chosen the] base things of the world, and things which are despised, God [has] chosen, and [the] things which are not, to bring to [nothing the] things that are:

29) [And He did so that] no flesh should [glorify themselves] ... (KJV)

Now here we are in a very modest Masonic Hall—and you out there listening are in your own homes or gathered together—but we're in this very modest Masonic Hall in Moses Lake, Washington. Contrast that with Peter's Basilica, which is this gigantic cathedral with all the paintings and the gold, the marble, and the mosaics. Here we are in Moses Lake, Washington and there is smoke outside from wildfires and we have a very modest meeting place. It shows that spiritual Israel, we today, is viewed the same way as the physical Israelites were viewed back in their day.

With that in mind, let's go from chapter 1 to chapter 6, 1 Corinthians 6 where we'll start in verse 9. I'll read this out of the New King James. Paul was reminding the Corinthians; he says:

1 Corinthians 6:9. *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? [He says, "Don't] be deceived.... (NKJV)*

Notice what he lists here.

9b) ... Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

10) nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

11) And such were some of you.... (NKJV)

Back then and today also, God called the weak of the world. So we see here concluding point number one, that both physical Israel and spiritual Israel are a nothing people in and of themselves apart from God. But because of God, physical Israel was, and spiritual Israel is, the most treasured people on the earth. Look at the latter part of verse 11.

11b) ... But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (NKJV)

God has taken this nothing people, physically for Ancient Israel and spiritually for us today and has transformed them and us into the most treasured people on the face of the earth.

2. The second parallel or second type: Both physical Israel and spiritual Israel were betrothed and married—physical Israel was married to Jesus Christ and spiritual Israel will be married to Jesus Christ yet in the future.

Let's look at physical Israel by going to Ezekiel 16 and read verse 8, again out of the New King James. This is how God viewed physical Israel.

***Ezekiel 16:8.** "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; ... (NKJV)*

God is saying this to physical Israel.

8b) ... so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord God. (NKJV)

This nothing people became God's possession.

Now, let's go back a book to Jeremiah 31 and we're going to start in verse 31—again out of the New King James. We're going to see that not only was physical Israel betrothed but married to Christ.

***Jeremiah 31:31.** "Behold, the days are coming [speaking about a future time], says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — (NKJV)*

It hasn't happened yet.

32) not according to the covenant that 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 [But notice this.], though I was a husband to them, says the [Eternal].

God says, "I was a husband to physical Israel." Now let's look at the same parallel with spiritual Israel. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 11 and look at verse 2. We see here that physical Israel was a type of spiritual Israel. There is a parallel between the two. Paul is talking to the Corinthian church:

***2 Corinthians 11:2.** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband [referring to Jesus Christ], that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (NKJV)*

Paul is saying, "I am preparing you to be the very bride of Jesus Christ. And he says, "I'm jealous about you because I want you to succeed.

Now, let's jump to Ephesians 5. We normally go to Ephesians 5 to talk about marriage and relations between husbands and wives. Ephesians 5, we'll start in verse 25 where the context is marriage.

Ephesians 5:25. *Husbands, love your wives, [Paul says, "I want you to love your wives"] just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, (NKJV)*

Paul refers to the church in a feminine sense.

26) that He might sanctify [the church] and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27) that He might present her [the church] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (NKJV)

"Without blemish"—the church without blemish, being presented to Christ as His bride. Verse 32, the context is still husbands and wives.

32) This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (NKJV)

And we know that marriage will occur; that joyous event will occur at the Marriage Supper in Revelation 19:7. Let's see and read about that wonderful, that joyous event. I'll read it out of the New King James. We are very familiar with this scripture, but let's view it from the standpoint of both physical and spiritual Israel being betrothed and married to Christ and understand that parallel.

Revelation 19:7. *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

8) And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the [righteousness] of the saints. (NKJV)

This is what Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians.

9) Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (NKJV)

So, summarizing point number two as we conclude that, both physical and spiritual Israel were betrothed to Christ and in the case of spiritual Israel, will be married to Christ; physical Israel was married to Christ,

3. Now the third parallel, the third type: This physical life (the physical lives of all involved) was a time of purification for both physical Israel and spiritual Israel.

Let's look at physical Israel. They wandered forty years in the desert but that was not their destination. They wandered forty years not arriving at their destination. That forty years was a process of purification before their goal of entering into the Promised Land was given to them. Let's go to Numbers 14 and we'll begin in verse 26, again out of the New King James. God is speaking to Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 14:26. *And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,
27) "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me?
... (NKJV)*

They were thirsty; they were hungry. They wanted to go back to Egypt. God brought them out in the wilderness to kill them.

*27b) ... I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.
28) Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord [the Eternal], 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you:
29) The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. (NKJV)*

They're going to die. They will never see the Promised Land. As a result of the complainers' deaths, Israel was purified—Israel was purified from those people who griped and whined and complained against God. Yes, they yelled at Moses, but they were really yelling at God. Wandering was essentially a time of physical purification for physical Israel and, once all the unfaithful died, then Joshua led them into the Promised Land.

Now let's contrast that with spiritual Israel. This physical life, our physical lives here today, cannot be our priority. Ancient Israel was looking to the Promised Land. This physical life can't be our goal. We look to our Promised Land—a spiritual Promised Land. And now we are in a time of purification before we enter eternal life. Our focus cannot be on this physical life. It can't be on pleasure. It can't be on the self. It can't be on gratifying the self. That's what physical Israel wanted. And look what happened to those twenty years and older. They died without ever achieving seeing the Promised Land. Our focus should be on overcoming and purification in this life.

Now, let's look at the time we live in. 2 Timothy 3, we've read this many times, but let's focus on these verses as the time we live in that we have to come out of; we have to become pure and not polluted from the time we live in. 2 Timothy 3:1.

2 Timothy 3:1. *This know also, that in the last days [referring to our time; they didn't know it then, but it certainly refers to our time] *perilous times shall come:**

2) *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... (KJV)*

Just like those twenty years old and above in physical Israel. They wanted to satisfy the flesh and they wanted to satisfy their taste buds. They wanted what they wanted to satisfy their own selves.

2) *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3) *Without natural affection, ... (KJV)*

We know what that means.

3b) *... trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, ... (KJV)*

That means *with no self-control*.

3 continued) *... fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
4) *Traitors, heady, high-minded, [But this last one:] lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (KJV)*

If that doesn't describe the Laodicean era, I don't know what does—interested in the self, lovers of the self. Proud and haughty, "I have need of nothing." This is the world we live in and not only is the church in the Laodicean era, but the world is! This describes the world.

But we have help that physical Israel never had. Spiritual Israel has help that physical Israel never had. John 16:33. We have help that was not available to them. Christ is telling the disciples this shortly before He was taken. He didn't have many hours left on this earth. Christ says:

John 16:33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me [you] might have peace [in this horrible world we live in]. In the world [you're going to] have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (KJV)*

The Greek word for "world" is "kosmos" and it means *the existing order or the existing arrangement*. In other words, it's what's going on at the time. And Christ is saying, "I overcame the world. I overcame Satan. I overcame the Jews. I overcame the world I lived in. I overcame the Roman Empire." Then in Revelation 2 and Revelation 3, the word "He who overcomes" occurs seven times.

So this third point, this third parallel for both physical and spiritual Israel, this physical life is one of purification, preparation. We are called to overcome and to become pure—unspotted from the world, as we find in James 1:27. God is giving us time to prove to Him that we will be unspotted from this world that we just read about in 2 Timothy 3.

4. Now to the fourth parallel, the fourth type of physical versus spiritual Israel: Both physical and spiritual Israel were offered a Promised Land.

This is an exact parallel. Let's go to Genesis 12 and look at verse 1. We'll read it out of the King James. God is talking to Abram and giving him some instruction.

Genesis 12:1. *Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get [you] out of [your] country, and [away] from [your] kindred, and [away] from [your] father's house, unto a land that I will show [you]: (KJV)*

Genesis 12:2, here is a promise. "And, if you do this:"

2) ... I will make of [you] a great nation, and I will bless [you], and make [your] name great; and [you shall] be a blessing:

3) And I will bless [those] that bless [you], [but I'm going to] curse him that [curses you]: and in [you] shall all families of the earth be blessed. (KJV)

That hasn't happened yet, but it will.

Notice Joshua chapter 1. Now we come to the fact that Israel went to Egypt. They became slaves and captives. God brought them out of Egypt through Moses. They have come right up to the Jordan on the east side. They're ready to go into the Promised Land and Moses dies. Joshua 1, verse 1 out of the King James.

Joshua 1:1. *Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, 2) Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, [you], and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, ... (KJV)*

It was a gift.

2b) ... even to the children of Israel.

3) Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. (KJV)

So we see here that God through Joshua is giving the Promised Land to Israel, a physical land that is theirs. Now, let's draw a parallel to spiritual Israel and let's go to Hebrews 4 where we'll begin in verse 8, out of the New King James. Hebrews 4:8 references Joshua, which we just read about.

Hebrews 4:8. *For if Joshua ... (NKJV)*

The New King James says "Joshua." The King James erroneously translates this as "Jesus," but it's really Joshua.

Hebrews 4:8. *For if Joshua had given them [referring to physical Israel] rest, then He [referring to God] would not afterward have spoken of another day. (NKJV)*

Not the day they went into the Promised Land but another day.

9) *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. (NKJV)*

This is because the land of Canaan to physical Israel was not a real rest—not the kind of rest that we have available to us.

10) *For he who has entered [into] His rest [meaning God's rest] has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. (NKJV)*

The analogy, obviously, is the Sabbath.

11) *Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest [God's rest for spiritual Israel], lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience [referring to physical Israel]. (NKJV)*

We don't want to do what physical Israel did. We don't want to go back into sin. We don't want to look back to Egypt or to intermingle with the gods of the Canaanites, etc.

Let's go to chapter 11 of Hebrews now and look at verse 39. We'll read this out of the King James. This refers to the fact that spiritual Israel is offered a Promised Land just like physical Israel but a far different one. We know this is the faith chapter so we won't go through all of the names here, but it says:

Hebrews 11:39. *And these all [referring to those who died in faith], ... obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise [this Promised Land]:*
40) *God having provided some better thing for us [spiritual Israel], that they without us should not be made perfect.*

So the fourth point is that God promised to both physical Israel and to spiritual Israel a Promised Land. He gave the land of Canaan to physical Israel, which was a type of the spiritual Promised Land God promises to us as spiritual Israel. Understand that both had a reward, physical Israel and we of spiritual Israel; both of us had a reward for forsaking the nations around us, for not becoming spotted with the world. Both had a reward for coming out of the world that they live in. The one for physical Israel, their reward was physical. The one for spiritual Israel, our reward is spiritual.

5. Now the fifth and the last parallel: For both physical and spiritual Israel, the Promised Land was a gift that could not be earned.

It was a gift to those who would show themselves fully appreciative of God's gift, God's mercy in giving them the gift. For both physical and spiritual Israel, they had to be

appreciative. Now let's look at physical Israel by going to Exodus 6 and we'll start in verse 2. Again, we'll read this out of the New King James. God is speaking to Moses; notice what He says. It's a gift; the Promised Land would be a gift.

Exodus 6:2. *And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the Lord.
3) I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord [or Eternal] I was not known to them.
4) I have also established My covenant with them, [But notice!] to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.
5) And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.
6) Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; ... (NKJV)*

Now notice what God is going to do.

*6b) ... I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.
7) I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the [Eternal] your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
8) And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the [Eternal]."*

Look at all what God promised to do to them, what God promised for them, and He did it all! It was a 100 percent gift! Yes, they had to be obedient, but they didn't have to do a thing. God would fight all their battles for them. Their Promised Land was a gift from God.

Now let's look at the parallel to spiritual Israel. Let's go to Luke 2, where we'll start in verse 29. We'll read this out of the King James. Christ is telling the disciples and the people around:

Luke 12:29. *And seek not [you] what [you] shall eat, or what [you're going to] drink, neither be of doubtful mind.
30) For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: ... (KJV)*

They're all worried about these things.

*30b) ... and your Father [knows] that [you] have need of these things.
31) But rather seek [you] the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.
32) Fear not, little flock; [Notice this.] for it is your Father's good pleasure ... (KJV)*

To do what?

32b) ... to give you the kingdom. (KJV)

You don't earn it; you're given it.

Then, finally this is the last scripture under this fifth point, a very familiar scripture, Ephesians 2:8. It talks about our salvation. It talks about God's grace. Again, out of the New King James. We know it by heart.

Ephesians 2:8. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that [faith, that grace, neither one is] of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9) not of works, [because nobody can] boast. (NKJV)*

If you work your way into it. And Christ is saying through Paul here, "I'm giving you this gift of salvation. You don't deserve it. You can't earn it." And that is this fifth point. Physical Israel and spiritual Israel, their Promised Lands are a gift that can never be earned; it cannot be earned.

In summary now, we've seen five examples, five parallels of how Old Testament physical Israel was a type of the New Testament spiritual Israel. The Israel of God, as Paul calls it, this term that began back with Cornelius where ethnicity no longer mattered to God.

Now what we want to do in the rest of the time is conclude with a gigantic lesson. Hopefully, this won't apply to any of us. Physical Israel ultimately slid back into sin despite everything that God did for them, they wound up rejecting God, rejecting the Promised Land, rejecting what God offered them. Let's go to Jeremiah 3 and begin in verse 6 where we'll see this. God called Israel "a backsliding nation." Instead of going forward, they went back to where they came from—the pagan nation of Egypt. Then they went backwards with the nations around them wanting to get close to the nations around them and their pagan gods. Jeremiah 3:6 from the New King James.

Jeremiah 3:6. *The Lord said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. (NKJV)*

What a sad situation.

7) *And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me'.... (NKJV)*

God pleaded with Israel through the prophets, "Return to Me."

7b) *... But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.*
8) *Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her [Notice this.] a certificate of divorce;*

yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear [didn't learn], but went and played the harlot also. (NKJV)

And God gave Judah a certificate of divorce. Despite all that He had done—taking a group of slaves out of Egypt, they didn't have to do anything but just walk and be grateful for what God was doing to them, be grateful and thankful for what He was offering them, making them His own people, giving them everything—they rejected all of that. They slid back and became harlots. And despite everything God did for them, they wanted to be part of the society around them. They wanted to be part of the society around them more than they wanted to have God as their God. And, as a result, God divorced them, gave them a certificate of divorce.

So the question for spiritual Israel is: Will spiritual Israel follow in the same path as physical Israel? Will spiritual Israel backslide to where they came from? Will spiritual Israel reject the most incredible gift that could be offered to any human being? Will they reject that?

What I'd like to say is “No, they won't reject it,” and we could end the sermon right here. But the real answer is that it appears some will follow in the footsteps of physical Israel and reject the offer of the Promised Land that God will give to them.

Let's look at the state of spiritual Israel, of New Testament Israel, leading up to the return of Christ. We know this by heart. So, I'm just going to summarize for you. We don't need to turn to Revelation 3 and read the message to the church in Laodicea, but it isn't a good one. It describes a group of lukewarm Christians and we see that today.

People, if they feel like it, they go to services. If they don't feel like it, they'll stay home—lukewarm. If they feel like tithing, well maybe they'll tithe. Otherwise, “I think I'll spend the money on something else. If I feel like doing things the world does, no problem.” This describes a group of lukewarm Christians who think they're on fire. They do; Laodicea thinks they're on fire and, not only that, they're arrogant about it. “You can't teach me anything. I've got everything I need. I don't need to listen to you. I don't need to listen to anybody. I know it all.” That is Laodicea. That is the state of the church at the end time.

What about Matthew 24? The disciples came to Christ—we won't turn there—the disciples came to Christ privately asking “What's the sign of your return?” Christ answered first with several things that are not the sign. He talked about such things as wars and rumors of wars; things like that that were not the sign. But do you know what the first thing He said was the sign of His return. It's in verse 12 of Matthew 24 if you want to check it out.

Matthew 24:12b. ... *the love of many [will] wax cold. (KJV)*

“The love of many will wax cold.” That is the first sign Christ said of His imminent return. And “love”, as we know, is the Greek word “agape.” It wasn't “eros” which is the

love between a man and a woman. It wasn't "philia," brotherly love between human beings. Rather, it was the love of God.

Now Zodhates says this regarding agape in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament. He says: "With reference to God's love.... It involves God doing what He knows is best for man and not necessarily what man desires." Doing what is best for man.

Agape love then applied to us in the church is doing what is best for the other person, whether it's the mate, the children, the grandparents, brothers, and sisters in the church. Agape love is doing what is best for them.

I've heard people say, "There's a DVD at church. So I'm not going to show up today." I've heard that or "I can play it on the player down the road." Yet, they never stop to think that's just a fraction of what services are all about. We come to services to give, to fellowship, to serve other people, to be inspired ourselves. Giving to other people—that's what agape love is all about. And agape love can only come through the spirit of God. Yet, what Christ said, the first thing He said was the sign of the end is that the love of God in some is going to wax cold and we see that right in front of our eyes—absolutely in front of our lives.

So to answer the questions, "Is spiritual Israel going to backslide like physical Israel did? Will some of spiritual Israel be given a certificate of divorce?," it certainly appears so. That's what scripture says.

Now with that in mind, let's go back to Ephesians 4 and as you're turning back there ... normally this scripture we're going to go to is used by many to contrast behavior before we're called versus our behavior after we're called, but what we're going to see is there is far more to this scripture than just that.

Now again, as far as background in Acts 18, Paul is mentioned as visiting Ephesus and it appears that he founded the church in Ephesus. We have high confidence that year was 52 AD because of another event that occurred in Acts 18 that seems to cement the date. We're very certain the Ephesian church was founded in 52 AD. We have also high confidence that the epistle to the Ephesians was written by Paul from Rome somewhere around 63-64 AD. In other words, the epistle of Ephesians was written eleven to twelve years after the church was founded. Therefore, by the time the book of Ephesians was written, the congregation had ten, eleven or twelve years to mature as Christians. This is not a young church. This church is a decade and a half old almost.

So with that in mind, let's go to verse 17 of Ephesians 4 from the New King James. This applies to spiritual Israel today.

Ephesians 4:17. *This I say, therefore, and testify in the [Eternal], that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, (NKJV)*

So, it's obvious here that some Ephesians were behaving as though they were unconverted, were behaving as though they were Gentiles. Because Paul is saying, "I don't want you to walk as the Gentiles walk." That's present tense; that's then. That's ten, eleven, twelve years after the church was founded.

Verse 18, Paul describes what their conduct is.

18) having their understanding darkened, ... (NKJV)

And we've seen people in God's church having their understanding clouded over and they walk away.

18b) ... being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; (NKJV)

Maybe that was a heart that was once opened and enlightened but is now blind again.

19) who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (NKJV)

Notice verse 20.

20) But you have not so learned [in] Christ, (NKJV)

You haven't learned that way from Christ's teachings. Verse 21, here Paul is casting some doubt.

21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, ... (NKJV)

What Paul is saying is "I doubt some of you are listening to Christ. I doubt some of you have ever been taught of Christ."

21b) ... as the truth is in Jesus:

22) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, (NKJV)

It doesn't say "has grown" but it says "grows," present tense, right now—"growing corrupt according to deceitful lusts."

23) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (NKJV)

Paul's not talking about conversion from pre-conversion days to post-conversion days. He's saying you need to be renewed in your mind right now—ten, eleven years after the church was founded.

24) and that you put on the new man [right now] which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (NKJV)

Now sure, their original repentance was genuine. They were baptized; they received God's holy spirit, but the problem is twelve years later they're still struggling with putting off their pre-conversion behavior. They still have their pre-conversion behavior as part of their nature ten, eleven, twelve years after the church was founded. And it is a problem.

So, the point being and the lesson for us is just because we've been in the church twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years doesn't mean we can coast. It doesn't mean we have it made.

Now between what God prophesied in Revelation about Laodicea and what He prophesied in Matthew about the lack of love of those living during the end days, combined with what we just read here in Ephesians, where even after a decade of conversion members were still struggling to come out of the world, what is that lesson, what does it say to us? We have to have a sense of spiritual urgency to purify ourselves to overcome so that "the betrothal we had" (I'm saying that in quotes.), "the betrothal we had" when we were baptized, now we want to make sure that betrothal ends in marriage—not in a certificate of divorce.

Now the one parallel between physical Israel and spiritual Israel we don't want is the fact that physical Israel came out of the society around them for a period of time but ultimately went right back into the society they came out of. And we've come out of the world around us some forty, fifty, sixty years. And we, unlike them, have the gift of the holy spirit and we can rely on it and we can exercise it and we can cause it to grow. If we exercise the holy spirit, we will not slide back to where we came from—if we exercise the holy spirit! If we make use of the holy spirit, we will not slide back. But conversely, unlike physical Israel who had not God's holy spirit, if we don't exercise God's spirit, if we don't pray to God and communicate with God and study and use God's holy spirit on a daily basis, we are guaranteed to follow the example of physical Israel to slide back into the world and at some point be given a certificate of divorce. We do not want that to happen.

So, let's use the example of physical Israel to inspire us to apply those examples in our lives and continue to grow closer to God, grow closer to Jesus Christ and to more than ever exercise the holy spirit so we can draw closer to the Father and the Son and we can be there at the marriage supper of Jesus Christ. So let's learn the lessons of physical Israel.