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What Was For Old Covenant Israel And What Is For Us



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† A lot of confusion in the church comes from not knowing what belonged to Old Covenant Israel and what belongs to us in the fulfilled kingdom today. (Hebrews 8:13)

† If we don't divide covenantal context correctly, we'll misapply judgment texts, time statements, and promises that were never written to us. (Matthew 24:34; Matthew 23:36)

† The sheep and the goats judgment is one of the clearest

examples of something that was for first century Old Covenant Israel. (Matthew 25:31-46)

† When we let Jesus define His own time frame, everything lines up without forcing future speculation. (Luke 21:32)

Matthew 25:31-34, 41

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Then He will also say to those on His left, Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

† This passage is part of the Olivet Discourse, and Jesus already said all these things would happen in that generation, not thousands of years later. (Matthew 24:34)

† The throne judgment language is covenantal, not a modern courtroom scene at the end of human history. (Matthew 23:36-38)

† The word nations here is ethnos, meaning tribes or covenant groups, and in context it's dealing with how people treated Christ's brethren during the tribulation leading up to AD 70. (Matthew 10:40-42)

† Jesus' earthly mission focus was Old Covenant Israel first, not modern nation-states. (Matthew 10:5-6; Matthew 15:24)

† The judgment fell when Jerusalem fell, because that was the climax of the age Jesus was ending. (Luke 21:20-22)

† The coming tribulation was geographically limited to Judea, not the globe. (Matthew 24:16)

† Eternal fire language reflects covenant judgment imagery

used by the prophets. (Isaiah 66:24; Daniel 12:2)

Matthew 24:34

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus didn't say some of these things. He didn't say most of these things. He said all these things. (Matthew 16:27-28, Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32)

† The sheep and goats judgment was part of all these things. (Matthew 25:31-46)

† If that generation passed, and it did, then the judgment occurred within their lifetime. (Matthew 23:36)

Matthew 23:36-38

Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

† Jesus tied covenant judgment directly to that generation. (Matthew 24:34)

† He wasn't talking about a future race thousands of years removed from His audience. (Luke 17:25)

† The house left desolate was the Temple, and that happened in AD 70. (Luke 21:20)

† The sheep and goats separation is covenant separation between faithful and apostate Israel. (Romans 9:6)

† That desolation fulfilled the covenant warnings spoken long before. (Daniel 9:26-27)

Romans 9:6

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

† Even in the first century, there was a division within Israel.
(Romans 2:28-29)

† True Israel consisted of believing Jews and Gentiles united in Christ. (Galatians 3:28-29)

† The goats were apostate covenant breakers. (Acts 2:36-40)

† The sheep were those who received Christ and endured through the tribulation. (Matthew 24:13)

† The remnant principle was already active in that generation.
(Romans 11:5)

What Was For Old Covenant Israel

† The destruction of the Temple. (Matthew 24:1-2)

† The end of the Old Covenant age. (Hebrews 8:13)

† The tribulation tied to Judea and Jerusalem. (Matthew 24:16)

† The judgment upon that generation. (Matthew 23:36)

† The passing away of heaven and earth, meaning the covenant world of Israel. (Hebrews 12:26-28)

† The shaking removed what belonged to that covenant order so that what cannot be shaken would remain. (Hebrews 12:27-28)

† Those events were never about modern geopolitics. (John 18:36)

† They were about God closing one covenant and establishing another. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

† The Law of commandments contained in ordinances was abolished in His flesh. (Ephesians 2:15)

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

† The Old Covenant was ready to disappear in the first century.
(Hebrews 9:9-10)

† It did disappear in AD 70. (Hebrews 12:27)

- † That transition was for them. (Matthew 23:36)
- † We're not waiting for that to happen. (Hebrews 12:28)

What Is For Us

- † We live in the fulfilled kingdom. (Colossians 1:13)
- † We're not awaiting national judgment. (Romans 8:1)
- † We're not bracing for covenant wrath. (1 Thessalonians 5:9)
- † We're living in reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
- † We have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken. (Hebrews 12:28)

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

- † Our commission isn't to warn about an impending AD 70 judgment. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- † That judgment is past. (Matthew 24:34)
- † Our mission is reconciliation, not speculation. (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- † The kingdom has been inherited, not postponed. (Hebrews 12:28)
- † There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

Historical References

- † Eusebius recorded that the Christians fled Jerusalem before its destruction, recognizing Jesus' warnings. (Ecclesiastical History 3.5)
- † Josephus documented the catastrophic fall of Jerusalem

exactly within that generation. (Wars of the Jews, Book 6)

† Irenaeus testified that the Temple was destroyed in fulfillment of prophecy. (Against Heresies 5.25)

† Early Christians understood those warnings as first century realities, not distant future events. (Matthew 24:34)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't live under impending covenant wrath. (Romans 8:1)

† We don't reinterpret Jesus' time statements to protect a future system. (Matthew 24:34)

† We live in the finished kingdom. (Hebrews 12:28)

† We proclaim reconciliation, not fear. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

† We don't wait for sheep and goats separation, it already happened in the covenantal transition. (Matthew 25:31-46)

† Our identity isn't tied to Israel's Old Covenant structure. (Galatians 4:21-31)

† It's rooted in Christ's fulfilled work. (Ephesians 1:10)

Q & A Appendix

Q If the sheep and goats judgment already happened, why do people still die?

A Because that judgment was covenantal, not biological. It was about the end of the Old Covenant age, not the end of physical death. (Matthew 24:34)

Q Wasn't that a final judgment of all humanity?

A No. Jesus limited the timing to that generation and tied it to Jerusalem's desolation. (Matthew 23:36-38)

Q Are there any future covenant judgments coming?

A No. Hebrews 8:13 shows the Old Covenant was ready to disappear in their time, and it did. We now live in the established New Covenant age. (Hebrews 12:28)

Q If the sheep and goats was only for Old Covenant Israel, does that mean God no longer judges anyone?

A No. It means that specific covenant judgment tied to that generation has already occurred. Personal accountability before God remains, but the Old Covenant age judgment of Matthew 25 was fulfilled in their lifetime. (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 9:27)

Q What about Matthew 24:35 where Jesus says heaven and earth will pass away?

A That refers to the covenant world of Israel, not the destruction of the physical universe. Hebrews 12:26-28 explains that what was shaken was removed so that what cannot be shaken would remain.

Q If the tribulation was limited to Judea, why does it sound so global?

A Prophetic language often uses cosmic imagery to describe covenant collapse. The actual instructions were local and geographic. Those in Judea were told to flee. (Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:20-22)

Q Does this mean there is no future second coming?

A It means the coming in judgment Jesus described in the Olivet Discourse happened in that generation. He came in covenant authority against Jerusalem just as He said He would. (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34)

Q Why does Revelation speak in such dramatic imagery if it was fulfilled in the first century?

A Because it is prophetic apocalyptic language, the same kind used in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel when speaking about covenant judgment. It describes the fall of a covenant world, not the end of planet earth. (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Daniel 7:13)

Q If the Law was abolished, what guides believers today?

A We are under the law of Christ, not the Law of Moses. The

commandments contained in ordinances were abolished, but we now walk by the Spirit in the established New Covenant. (Ephesians 2:15; Galatians 6:2; Romans 8:4)

Q Are we living in the kingdom now or waiting for it?

A We have been transferred into His kingdom already. It is not future, it is present and unshakable. (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 25:31-34, 41; Matthew 24:34; Matthew 23:36-38; Romans 9:6; Hebrews 8:13; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Hebrews 12:26-28; Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 2:14-16; Matthew 24:16; Matthew 10:5-6; Matthew 15:24; Isaiah 66:24; Daniel 12:2; Romans 11:5; Hebrews 10:9; Romans 8:1

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5; Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.25

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