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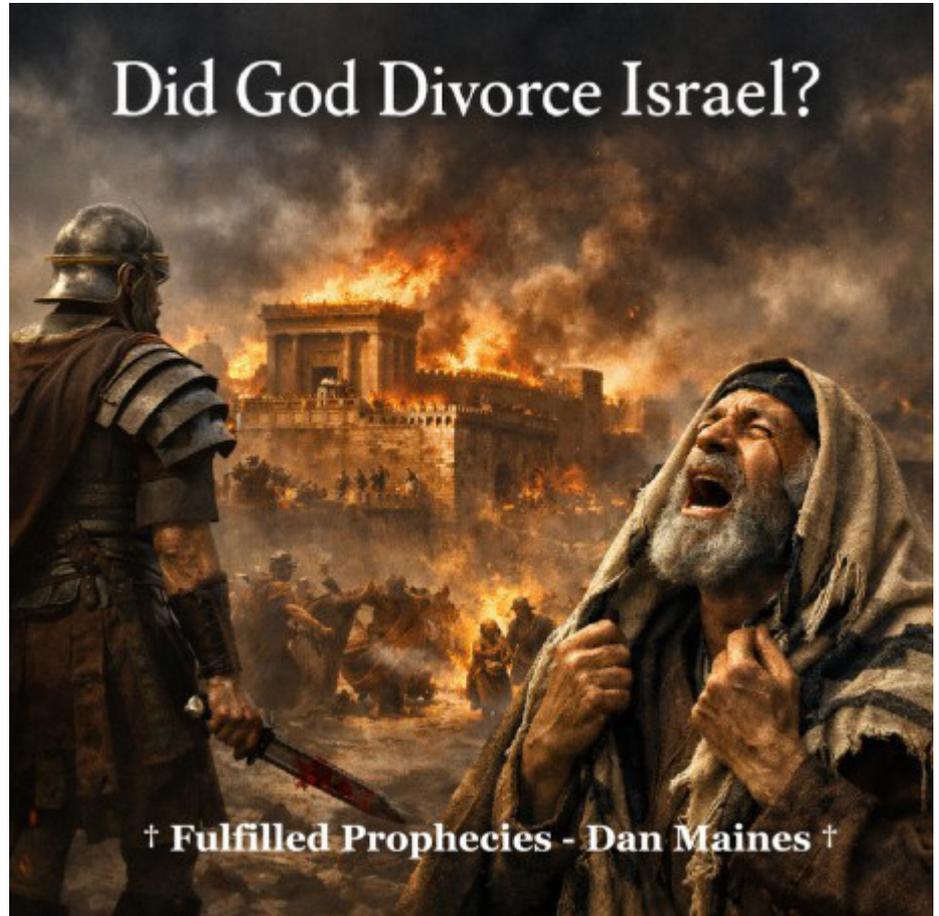
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Did God Divorce Israel?



By Dan Maines

Did God Divorce Israel?

Introduction

† Many people read the Bible and assume that God would never separate Himself from Israel under any circumstances. But the scriptures themselves tell a different story. The prophets warned repeatedly that covenant unfaithfulness would bring judgment, separation, and even divorce.

† The language of marriage between God and Israel appears throughout the Old Testament. Israel was called the bride of the LORD. But when she broke the covenant, worshiped idols, persecuted the righteous, and rejected the Messiah, God declared that the covenant relationship would come to an end.

† This was not an emotional reaction. It was covenant law. The Law of Moses already warned Israel what would happen if she broke the covenant. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was not a random tragedy. It was the final covenant judgment that ended the old covenant world.

Jeremiah 3:8

Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

† God Himself says He gave Israel a certificate of divorce. This language comes directly from covenant law and marriage law in Israel (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). It shows that the relationship between God and Israel was structured like a covenant marriage.

† Israel committed spiritual adultery by worshiping idols and rejecting God's commandments. The prophets repeatedly called this adultery and harlotry (Isaiah 1:21; Ezekiel 16:15; Hosea 9:1).

† Judah saw what happened to Israel in earlier judgments but continued the same rebellion. Instead of learning from Israel's fall, Judah followed the same path and would eventually face the same covenant consequences.

Isaiah 1:2

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me

† The phrase heavens and earth here is covenant language. God was calling the covenant world of Israel to witness the charges against His people. This same language appears in Deuteronomy when God called heaven and earth as witnesses against Israel's covenant violations (Deuteronomy 31:28).

† This wasn't talking about the physical universe being judged. It was the covenant world of Israel, the temple system, the priesthood, and the law order that defined their relationship with God.

† When Jesus later spoke about heaven and earth passing away, He was speaking about the end of that covenant world, not the destruction of the physical planet (Matthew 24:34-35).

Matthew 21:43

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.

† Jesus said this directly to the religious leaders of Israel. They were the caretakers of the covenant kingdom, but they rejected the Son of God.

† Because of that rejection, Jesus declared that the kingdom would be taken away from them. This meant the temple system, the priesthood authority, and the covenant privileges that Israel had enjoyed.

† The kingdom would instead be given to a new covenant people, those who believed in Christ. This new covenant community is the church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:19-

22).

Matthew 23:37-38

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

† This statement is one of the clearest moments where Jesus announces the coming covenant judgment on Jerusalem. The city that once represented the dwelling place of God had become the place that murdered the prophets and rejected the Messiah.

† When Jesus says your house is being left to you desolate, He is referring to the temple and the covenant system centered in Jerusalem. The temple was called the house of God, but because of Israel's rejection of Him, Jesus declared that it would be abandoned and destroyed (Matthew 24:1-2).

† This is the moment where the divorce language of the prophets reaches its climax. God had already declared in Jeremiah 3:8 that Israel would receive a certificate of divorce. Now Jesus declares that the house of Israel is abandoned and about to be judged.

† Within one generation this prophecy was fulfilled when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, ending the old covenant order exactly as Jesus predicted (Luke 21:20-22).

Luke 21:20-22

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.

Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

† Jesus directly predicted the military destruction of Jerusalem. This was not symbolic language. It was a literal siege that would happen to that generation (Luke 21:32).

† The phrase days of vengeance is covenant judgment language that comes directly from the Law of Moses where God warned Israel that rebellion would bring national destruction (Deuteronomy 28:49-52).

† Jesus said these events would fulfill all things which are written. That includes the warnings of Moses, the prophets, and Daniel's prophecy about the shattering of the power of the holy people (Daniel 12:7).

† The Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem in AD 66-70 were the historical fulfillment of this prophecy, exactly as Jesus said it would happen.

Hebrews 8:13

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

† The writer of Hebrews clearly explains that the old covenant was already obsolete in the first century. It was aging and ready to disappear.

† The temple was still standing when Hebrews was written, but its days were numbered. Within a few years Jerusalem and the

temple would be destroyed in AD 70.

† This disappearance was the visible end of the covenant system that had governed Israel for centuries.

Hebrews 9:26-28

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been revealed to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

† The writer says Christ appeared once at the consummation of the ages. This refers to the end of the old covenant age, the age governed by the Law of Moses.

† The word once comes from the Greek word hapax, which means once for all time. Christ's sacrifice was a single, final act that would never need to be repeated (1 Peter 3:18; Jude 3).

† The second appearing mentioned here was connected with salvation for those waiting for Him. Jesus had already promised that this would happen within that generation (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34).

† That appearing in judgment during the destruction of Jerusalem completed the transition from the old covenant system into the fully revealed new covenant kingdom.

Daniel 12:7

I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

† Daniel was told that the fulfillment would come when the power of the holy people was shattered. The power of Israel was never military strength or political influence.

† Their true power was their covenant relationship with God through the Law of Moses and the temple system.

† When the temple was destroyed in AD 70, that covenant system ended permanently. The power of the old covenant people was shattered exactly as Daniel was told.

Revelation 21:1-3

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them

† The new heaven and new earth represents the new covenant order that replaced the old covenant world. The first heaven and earth passed away when the temple system and covenant order of Israel ended.

† The New Jerusalem is clearly identified as a bride prepared for her husband. This shows that the city is symbolic of the covenant people of God, the church (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews

12:22-23).

† God's dwelling place is now with His people directly. No temple building is required because Christ Himself brings God's presence to His people.

Revelation 21:22

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

† This confirms that the new covenant order does not operate through a physical temple system.

† Under the old covenant, God's presence was tied to the temple in Jerusalem. Under the new covenant, God's presence is found in Christ and His people.

† When the old temple was destroyed in AD 70, it confirmed that the new covenant system had fully replaced the old covenant temple order.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded that Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed in AD 70, fulfilling the warnings spoken by Jesus about that generation.

† Eusebius recorded that Christians fled Jerusalem before the destruction, recognizing that Jesus' prophecy was being fulfilled.

† Tertullian wrote that the old Jewish order had passed away and the new covenant kingdom of Christ had taken its place.

How It Applies To Us Today

† The end of the old covenant reminds us that God keeps His promises and His warnings. When God says something will happen, it will happen exactly as He said.

† Salvation is not found in buildings, rituals, or religious systems. It is found only in Christ.

† We also learn something important about judgment. Many people look down on others who have experienced divorce, yet scripture itself shows that God divorced Israel because of covenant unfaithfulness.

† That should remind us not to judge others harshly. Every situation has a story, and God Himself demonstrated that divorce can occur when covenant faithfulness is broken.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did God actually divorce Israel?

A: Yes. Jeremiah 3:8 states that God gave Israel a certificate of divorce because of covenant unfaithfulness.

Q: When did the final covenant judgment happen?

A: The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 fulfilled the covenant warnings and ended the old covenant system (Matthew 24:34; Daniel 12:7).

Q: Who is the bride of Christ now?

A: The New Jerusalem, which represents the church, the people of God under the new covenant (Revelation 21:2; Ephesians 5:25-27).

Q: Does the church replace the temple?

A: Yes. The presence of God now dwells with His people through Christ, not in a physical temple (Revelation 21:22; Ephesians 2:19-22).

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

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Source Index

† Jeremiah 3:8; Isaiah 1:2; Matthew 21:43; Matthew 23:37-38; Luke 21:20-22; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:26-28; Daniel 12:7; Revelation 21:1-3; Revelation 21:22

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5; Tertullian, Against the Jews

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