

A SUPPLEMENT TO
GOD'S JUST JUDGMENT
OF A NATION

PREPARING OUR NATION TO RECEIVE
A BLESSED JUST JUDGMENT

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FILLING IN THE BASIC PICTURE WITH THIS SUPPLEMENT

This Supplement is designed for those who have read or are reading *God's Just Judgment of a Nation*, which is called "the book" in this Supplement. The book gives a basic picture of what God calls His people to do to save a nation and move it into the great future that He gives to any nation that joins itself to Christ Jesus as His disciple. The U.S. is normally used to illustrate the principles. The book covers the main points that are most likely to be needed now or in the near future, but omits or condenses many relevant points in order to provide a clearer and simpler basic picture. My goals for this Supplement are to fill in parts of the picture that I omitted, and to give a fuller Scriptural foundation for some parts of the basic picture. I intend to keep the entire Supplement as a free PDF file and Preview at www.lulu.com.

Most of the 12 appendices fill in or add to the basic picture. Each appendix can be vitally important to some readers but unimportant to others. Each appendix is written to cover its topic from the Bible with its own perspective, and the references to the book, another appendix, or chapter supplement are included to help readers integrate the idea into the whole picture. Therefore a reader should be able to follow the key ideas of an appendix without turning often to other sources (in a few appendices I suggest that the reader turn to a book in his Bible).

The chapter supplements further discuss some main points, such as the Joel 2 judgment, the timing for the outpouring of God's Spirit, and His giving the Elijah ministry to the Church in a land before its Day of the Lord. The supplements also fill in some points from Joel that we did not discuss much, such as how the nations separate according to their relationship to the Lord Jesus at the consummation of the age.

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This book supplements “the book”: *God’s Just Judgment of a Nation*. Although printed as a book, this Supplement contains only appendices and supplements to chapters and is called “this Supplement”. In this Supplement a reference to Chapter 7 means Chapter 7 in “the book”, and a page in the book is called “book p.” – for example, “book p. 8” or “book p. 34-36”. A simple “p. 8” means p. 8 in this Supplement.

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I call the New American Standard Bible the NAS or NASB. I add boldface to specific words and phrases in Scriptures to add my emphasis for discussion.

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Appendix 1

APPLYING AMOS TO NATIONS TODAY

In Chapters 3, 7, 14 we examined parts of Amos as they arose in Joel. We saw much evidence that ancient Israel in Amos served as a historical example of a nation that refuses to repent according to the principles of national judgment in Joel. We need an example, because the principles are easily missed. In this appendix we consider Amos systematically. This approach to Amos confirms how it illustrates the principles in Joel about God's work with nations in our day.

Because God uses Amos to illustrate Joel, He makes most of its major lessons for nations today easy to see by simply reading Amos. Therefore I shall state some of its major obvious applications without a further explanation, while most of our attention will be directed toward bringing out and explaining some major lessons that are less obvious. I recommend that you open your Bible to Amos.

Lessons for Nations Today from 7 National Judgments in Amos 1:3-2:5

Amos 1:3-2:5 God briefly declares specific sins and pronounces just judgments of seven ancient nations surrounding ancient Israel, the focus of the rest of Amos and the primary example that God gives to illustrate Joel's principles for nations that refuse to repent.

What can this Scripture show about the judgment of nations today? Amos 1:3-2:5 provides a part of the basis for the claim that God has or will ultimately judge every nation on earth – while it exists (Chapter 7). In this section we consider highlights of what Amos 1:3-2:5 can show about nations now. I recommend that you read Amos

1:1-2:6 in your Bible now, which tells about the seven ancient nations and introduces Amos' prophecy about ancient Israel's judgment (v. 6).

Each of the eight descriptions begins: *"For three transgressions of ... [nation] and for four I will not revoke its punishment."* In the first seven God specifies a sin or sins that provoked the judgment, declares that He will send fire that consumes specific strongholds (fortresses or citadels) of the nation, and usually adds a few details about the specific judgment. The devastating punishment is just (deserved): before God specifies only one or two sins, He says that a larger number of sins causes the punishing national judgment.

After the same beginning for ancient Israel, God uses the rest of Amos instead of a few verses to describe its sins and judgment. Ancient Israel is God's chosen example to illustrate clearly how Joel's general principles are worked out in nations that refuse to repent.

What in this Scripture suggests that every nation will be justly judged? Seven is often used in the Bible to indicate completeness or fullness. Consider this sequence in the Bible: God uses figurative language in Joel (like locusts) to give the general pattern and principles about judging nations before the great and awesome Day of the Lord. Immediately after Joel He briefly pronounces a just judgment of seven nations in Amos 1:1-2:5. Then in the next verse He begins His extended pronouncement of judgment of ancient Israel in the same way, but then He elaborates on Israel's judgment in the rest of Amos. Ancient Israel is the nation that God uses to illustrate what Joel shows for nations that refuse God's calls for repentance and turning to Him.

Amos 1:1-2:5 is the bridge in Scripture that connects His pattern and principles in Joel with His example for us in Amos 2:6-9:15. The "seven" in this bridge is a hint to me that every nation will be justly judged before Jesus returns at the global Day of the Lord in Joel 3.

This hint is confirmed in many ways. Consider how Joel's pattern harmonizes with Jesus' Great Commission for His personal disciples to disciple all the nations. As some people embrace Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior while others ignore or reject Him, nations also make that choice. Joel 2 describes both kinds of nations and the Lord's final call for a land to become His own and be saved. Both kinds of national choices in Joel 2 are consummated (brought together for a climax) in Joel 3, where all the unrepentant nations are gathered for their own judgment as they come against God's people and inheritance (v. 2) – the nation of Israel, all Gentile nations that have joined themselves to the Lord Jesus, and individual believers in Jesus from every nation.

A nation's just judgment must occur on earth while it exists. There are no uncommitted nations in Joel 3: each nation is either a part of His people and inheritance or against them. This whole pattern in Joel consists of every nation making its ultimate decision about relating to the Lord Jesus and gives a glimpse into the nature of each kind of just national judgment. In this way Joel offers special insights into fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission for nations.

Another confirmation is the way that all of Obadiah applies to the U.S. today and in the near future as well as near 600 BC (Apx. 2, or my book on Obadiah, *A Prophecy for the United States*). Ob. 15a says, "***For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations.***" The Day of the Lord on a nation is its just judgment – its time to be fully accountable to God. Obadiah also shows that this just national judgment can be devastating or a wonderful blessing (this blessing is discussed in the book, Apx. 2, and my book on Obadiah).

Micah 1:1-2 provides still another confirmation. As discussed in Chapter 14, this word about God's judgment of Samaria and Jerusalem is a witness against all the peoples and all the earth. How?

God will ultimately hold each people and each nation fully accountable for its sins, which justly devastates any person, people, or nation without Jesus' great sacrifice for the whole world.

This brings up still another confirmation that God will justly judge every nation while it exists on earth: Will God's justice allow Him to justly devastate some nations (such as ancient Israel, Judah, Judea, or Cambodia) and to not punish other nations that are as sinful? No, every destroyed nation has been judged, and every nation that still exists shall be judged. Every nation's sins cause its justly shattering punishment, which will ultimately be suffered by the Christ-rejecting nation or by our Lord Jesus in His great sacrifice for His people.

This brings up the key difference between the just national judgments in Amos 1:1-2:6 and nations now. In both the seven briefly described examples of national judgments and the much more thorough description against ancient Israel, God declared that He would not revoke its punishment. But as emphasized repeatedly, God gives nations in our day an opportunity to be spared in their just national judgments. For example, you may read about 1John 2:2 and Zech. 2:11 on book p. 13, which shows how Jesus' sacrifice for the whole world can give a wonderful just national judgment in our day. But only those nations and individuals that join themselves to Christ Jesus to become His people take advantage of His comprehensive sacrifice so as to be saved from ultimately being justly devastated.

A footnote * at the end of this Apx. 1 shows a good way that God may send "fire to consume strongholds" in nations today. Here we proceed with learning from God's example of ancient Israel.

Insights for Nations Now from the Sins of Ancient Israel

Every nation has its own combination of sins, so that some

specific sins in ancient Israel will not necessarily be key sins in every nation today. Nevertheless, God has chosen ancient Israel as the example for the nations today, and so it is good for readers to consider Israel's sins with a view toward their own nation's sins. The sins that caused ancient Israel's judgment could well be stumbling blocks for many modern nations.

Israel's sins can be put into three basic groups: abusing other people, especially the poor, helpless, needy, and righteous in Israel; the empty, phony religion that abused God's holiness; and Israel's arrogant refusal to repent from iniquity and to truly turn to God.

Amos is very clear about these sins, so that there is little need to go into detail about the first two groups here. But ancient Israel's refusal to repent of its sins is very instructive for any nation today. We shall find many insights in this appendix.

Amos' Clear Illustration of Joel about a Nation that Refuses to Repent

Remember (Chapter 3) how Amos 4:6-11 helps us to understand Joel 1: Amos 4 is one of the Scriptures corresponding to the season of Joel 1 of a land, and all of them helped us to consider the nature of this season of afflictions instead of focusing only on physical locusts.

Amos 4 especially helps us to see that the nation is stubbornly refusing to repent and turn to God in the Joel 1 season of afflictions. After indicating afflictions on the people of Israel, God concludes five times, "*Yet you have not returned to Me.*" This demonstrates how God repeatedly calls people to repent in this Joel 1 season, but in this case (our example Israel) they refuse to repent or even hear Him. Therefore God tells the people in Amos 4:12: "*Prepare to meet your God.*"

The description of the afflictions in Amos 4:6-11 is set up by a series of nine questions asked in Amos 3. For example, v. 6 asks: "*If a*

trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city, has not the Lord done it?" These questions help the people of Israel and believers now to realize that such afflictions did not happen by chance: life without God caused them, because the nation had stubbornly refused to repent and turn to Him. If people do not like their situation, then they should present their case to Him.

What?? People are often offended by this idea in Amos 3:6, but that prejudice can keep someone from understanding the shakings in Amos 4 and Joel 1. If they turn to Him, then He will show that they will get devastated if they insist on mere justice (as in Luke 13:1-5), but also that they can be saved by receiving the forgiveness in Jesus.

We saw (book p. 74 in Chapter 8) that Amos 5:15 provides a useful confirmation of another principle in Joel. The uncertainty in Joel 2:14, "**Who knows** whether He will not turn and relent?", is again expressed in ancient Israel's final call to repentance in Amos 5:15: "**Perhaps** the Lord God of hosts may be gracious to the remnant of Joseph." On the same page, we saw that Jonah 3:9 further confirms this conclusion for this same situation. The sure promise of 2Chron. 7:13-14 is no longer available to a land at its final call to national repentance in Joel 2: the season for the sure promise has passed.

Amos' Illustration of Joel's Day of the Lord on a Nation

We have also seen (Chapter 7) how the bear-and-snake analogy in Amos 5:19 helps us to understand the Joel 2 judgment of darkness. V. 19 enables us to see the two-fold nature of the curse more clearly than anything in Joel, and both have been primary features in the practical outworking of this judgment in the last 70 years. Although we have good reasons from Joel itself to not interpret Joel 2:2-11 as referring to the army of believers (Chapter 7 Supplement), many

believers do, and so Amos 5:19 helps us to avoid this error.

Amos 5:18 and 20 also reinforce the connection between Amos 5:19 and the Joel 2 judgment of darkness on the nation's Day of the Lord (Chapters 7, 14). Indeed, I used the way that Amos illustrated the principles in Joel to introduce the Scriptural meaning of "the Day of the Lord on an individual nation". After a brief review, let us see how Amos 5:17-20 leads into the rest of Amos: it shows what His people – His representatives – did to cause the Day of the Lord to be devastating, and shows how their lives on earth were justly devastated.

*¹⁷"And in all the vineyards there is **wailing**, because I shall **pass through the midst of you**," says the Lord. ¹⁸**Alas**, you who are **longing for the day of the Lord**, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be **darkness** and not light; ¹⁹**as** when a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him. ²⁰Will not the **day of the Lord** be **darkness** instead of light, even **gloom** with **no brightness** in it? (Amos 5:17-20)*

Notice that the Lord says, "*I shall pass through the midst of you*", and immediately describes the dark Day of the Lord coming on ancient Israel. This was not fulfilled on ancient Israel by His coming visibly or physically, but by His coming spiritually to hold Israel fully accountable for unresolved sins throughout its history when the nation rejected Him at this pivotal time. His coming spiritually established the awful national judgment of darkness that this Scripture calls "*the Day of the Lord*".

Indeed, this meaning of the Day of the Lord fits into the timing of God's promise to pour out His Spirit on all mankind after a nation's final call to repentance and before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes to the nation (Joel 2:28-31, as discussed in Chapter 10). If the people are prepared so that they recognize and receive Him at this pivotal point, the nation joins itself to Jesus and becomes a part of His people, and He pays the just penalty for the nation's sins. If the

nation rejects Him in His holy justice by ignoring Him or worse, then the nation also rejects His sacrifice and must pay its own just penalty, which devastates the nation even like ancient Israel.

This “Day of the Lord” on an individual land also fits into the description in Micah 1 (Chapter 14). In Micah 1 the Lord comes from His holy temple to judge two unrepentant nations for sinfulness and sins that had been getting ripe throughout their history.

Alas for Many Christians on Their Nation's Day of the Lord

The only people “*who are longing for the day of the Lord*” are those who thought they were in good standing with Him. In Amos 5:18 God tells them, “*Alas*”. He goes on to show that this Day of the Lord on the unrepentant nation would be an awful darkness and gloom instead of brightness and light. This should shock us!

Christians cannot look to the Day of the Lord for a personal escape, or use their longing for Jesus' return to substitute for obeying His voice to serve Him and others. This service helps the land to repent and turn to Him. A grievous national judgment awaits every unrepentant nation before He returns, but Christians can save their land. The Day of the Lord on an individual nation is merely a just judgment when God makes the nation fully accountable.

Today there is much work to do in unrepentant nations that approach their Days of the Lord, even as there was in ancient Israel. Their outward religion without real repentance deceived only themselves. God was angry about the idolatry of His people in the land, and also angry at those of His people who casually accepted this idolatry, injustice, and unrighteousness (Amos 5:21-27). Therefore Amos 6:1a says, “**Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria.**”

Then God shows that His judgment on the Day of the Lord comes especially on those who ignored this problem while lavishing themselves with luxuries: Consider Amos 6:3-7:

*Do you put off the day of calamity, and would you bring near the seat of violence? Those who recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the stall, who improvise to the sound of the harp, and like David have composed **songs for themselves**, who drink wine from sacrificial bowls while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, yet they have **not grieved** over the **ruin of Joseph**. Therefore they will now go into exile at the **head of the exiles**, and the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away. (Amos 6:3-7)*

Christians who work to serve themselves luxuriously in the midst of the great idolatry and iniquity in their nation deceive themselves. They need to re-examine themselves and what God is saying to them. For one thing, God calls His people corporately to prepare the way for Him as the time approaches for His coming to the land in His holy justice – the nation's Day of the Lord – so that the nation corporately receives Him instead of ignoring or rejecting Him.

Most of the people in ancient Israel were not shocked by the “Alas” and did not seek the Lord nor grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore they went into exile at the head of the exiles. Likewise, the Day of the Lord on China, for example, was very tough on almost everyone in China, but especially on the Christians there.

Zeph. 1 agrees with this picture from Amos. Consider v. 14-15:

¹⁴Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. ¹⁵A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. (Zeph. 1:14-15)

The context of v. 14-15 emphasizes that this judgment specifically affects His stagnant and complacent people. Consider v. 12 and 4-7a:

*And it will come about in that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will **punish** the men who are **stagnant in spirit**, who **say in their hearts**, "The Lord will not do good or evil!" (v. 12)*

*"So I will stretch out My hand **against**...those who have **turned back** from **following the Lord**, and those who have **not sought the Lord or inquired of Him**." Be silent before the Lord God! For the **day of the Lord is near**. (v. 4, 6-7a)*

The Nation's Ultimate Rejection of God's Call to Repentance

Ancient Israel's authoritative rejection of its last call to repentance is shown in Amos 7 and describes a potential development in the U.S. and many other nations now. Amos' intercession had saved the nation from destructive just judgments, but the time came when God declared that He would judge all who were not upright in Israel (v. 1-9). Amaziah was the religious authority representing the Lord in Bethel, which was where the king lived and which means "house of God".

While the land was in great idolatry, influential Amaziah repudiated God's call to repentance through Amos. Amaziah was trying to provide a sanctuary for the king (Amos 7:13). A sanctuary from what? The context makes it clear that Amaziah wanted this to be a place of refuge from being challenged by the living word of God. Surely King Jeroboam did not resist his efforts, because he did evil in the sight of the Lord and practiced Israel's idolatry (2Kings 14:24). Amos 7:17 shows that Amaziah's success brought an awful judgment on himself and his family, but also ensured that Israel would receive its awful national judgment. Up to this point God's many pronouncements of judgment were really warnings that could have stimulated repentance (as we see from Jer. 18:7-8 in Chapter 8).

In nations today there are many respected religious leaders who call themselves Christians while they bless idolatry, deny the authority of the word of God, and fight against repentance and turning to the

God of the Bible. In this way they make idolatry respectable and confuse those who do not know what the God of the Bible is saying.

This example can show us that even though we do need unity in the Church in order to bring about national repentance – we need a good corporate response to God – we should also realize that there are some highly influential “tares” who call themselves Christians, but who fight vigorously and insidiously against the repentance that God wants now from the nation and its people (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). For example, leaders in many denominations falsely assure people that the U.S. does not have a vital need to align itself now with God’s word in the Bible, because the tares really do not believe the Bible.

I shall add my conclusion from 2Chron. 7:13-14 and elsewhere: although people who falsely profess to be Christians are a major problem in nations today, it will be overcome if only the true Christians in a land do what God says in the season of v. 13. As we saw on book p. 113-114, on the day that God is preparing (Mal. 4:1-3), God will give His believers works to do to distinguish them from those who falsely claim His name (like He gave Jesus revealing works to do – John 5:36 – and like the signs and wonders in Acts authenticated His apostles).

The Fulfillment of the National Judgment on Ancient Israel

Amos 8:1-9:10, 2Kings 15-17, and 2Chron. 30:1-12 are the primary Scriptures showing the fulfillment of this judgment of darkness on ancient Israel. We can see the nature of this “bear and snake” judgment in Chapter 7 and its Supplement (7), and so here I shall add only a few comments.

God makes an interesting comment at the end of Amos 9:3: ***“I will command the serpent and it will bite them.”*** This Hebrew word for serpent is the one translated as snake in Amos 5:19 and serpent in the

Garden of Eden, which Rev. 12:9 identifies to be the devil and Satan.

Amos 8:9 emphasizes the spiritual or figurative darkness in the national judgment by saying: *“And it will come about in that day,” declares the Lord God, ‘that I shall make the **sun go down at noon** and make the **earth dark in broad daylight**.’”*

For this time of national judgment, Amos 8:11-12 says:

*“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a **famine** on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather **for hearing the words of the Lord**. And people will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.”*

V. 11 has often been quoted for spiritually famished people in the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe; and it is entirely appropriate. The worst part of their tragedy has not been the oppression and economic deprivation – bad as they are – but the decades of imposed starvation for the word of God, which gives eternal life and hope. This Scripture clearly fits the nations that are already under this dark judgment – including the Islamic nations – and will surely develop in any other nation that continues to arrogantly reject God’s word.

Now a long time under the oppressive judgment of darkness and spiritual famine does not automatically lead to a national repentance and turning to God, but often instead to a spiritual hardness in which only some individuals get rescued. 2Chron. 30:1-12 records how decades of life under the bear and the snake affected ancient Israel. Very shortly before Assyria came and took the final remnant of ancient Israel into exile, King Hezekiah of Judah sent them an invitation to the Passover that he was celebrating. Look at this gracious invitation in v. 6-9 and the hardened response in v. 10-11:

“O sons of Israel, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped and are left

*from the hand of the kings of Assyria....⁹For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive, and will return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him.” ¹⁰So the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to **scorn**, and **mocked** them. Nevertheless **some men** of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. (2Chron. 30:6b-11)*

Notice that those who came had an excellent opportunity to stay in the place where they found spiritual life in the Lord. Humble people who were seeking the Lord and righteousness could find repentant Judah far more like home than their idolatrous homeland. They may have been spared the torturous final siege and annihilation of ancient Israel, which began within two years.

In contrast to ancient Israel, Judah provides a positive example of a national repentance after a national judgment. Ezra and Nehemiah show that the remnant returning from their exile in Babylon were much more sensitive to God's word and law than those before the exile, and Haggai 2 shows God's blessing of them early in their repentance.

A Conclusion to Apx. 1 about Amos and Nations Today

In this appendix the word in Amos has shaped our discussion on how it applies to nations today. This approach has added applications to modern nations as well as provided a meaningful context for the parts of Amos that we used to illustrate the principles of Joel. We can more fully appreciate how God uses the book of Amos to confirm and illustrate the principles in the book of Joel about nations today.

* (from p. 8): All seven brief pronouncements of judgment in Amos 1-2 say that God will send fire to consume citadels in the nation (other translations of “citadels” include fortresses, strongholds, and palaces). The primary meaning of “fire” in this context is a just national judgment

that consumes the judged nation and people – including their leaders' most secured forts. But there may be a healthy way that God sends "fire to consume fortresses" in nations today. Consider the fortresses or strongholds of evil thoughts and attitudes that the evil forces of darkness have established in individuals and groups of people, as Paul describes in 2Cor. 10:4-6:

*For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the **destruction of fortresses** [strongholds]. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience whenever your obedience is complete.*

I believe the fire that consumes specific fortresses in a nation can refer to the bringing down of established strongholds that work against God and His purposes for good in people. Relevant examples are Egypt's ten plagues at the time of Moses – each of which exposed the emptiness of a specific major idol of the Egyptian people – and the judgment of the church of Laodicea, which clearly had strongholds that kept the people from seeing the life in Jesus. Consider these excerpts from His prophecy to this lukewarm church in Rev. 3:14-21:

*...I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by **fire**... and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes....*

If this refining fire is allowed to work before the national judgment, then this fire could help produce the repentance and turning to God that provides a wonderful just national judgment for nations in Christ Jesus. Or if a devastating judgment comes, then its fire could help the survivors by bringing down the established strongholds in a land, which were able to withstand all of the weaker attacks against them.

Appendix 2

**OBADIAH: GOD'S SPECIAL INVITATION
TO "CHRISTIAN" NATIONS TODAY**

In Joel through Jonah God provides a remarkable package for believers about nations in our day. Joel gives the whole pattern and general principles for every nation, but this comes through some figurative language like locusts.

But God does not leave us to our own interpretations of what He means. He shows that every nation ultimately faces its just national judgment in Amos 1-2 (p. 5-8 in Apx. 1). In the rest of Amos He provides ancient Israel to illustrate how the principles of Joel are worked out for nations that refuse to repent before its devastating national judgment (Apx. 1). He also provides Nineveh in Jonah as an example to illustrate the principles of Joel for a nation that turned to God and avoided the devastating judgment (Chapter 8).

Sandwiched between the positive and negative historical examples of responses to the Joel 2 call to repentance is the little book of Obadiah. It is directed to those nations today that have received a partly Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage from past generations. Much of Obadiah uniquely fits the United States among nations today. This word to nations now is partly veiled, but with hindsight it is simple and fits precisely into the pattern of Joel.

In Apx. 2 we consider only highlights and major conclusions from Obadiah. Their basis, other applications, and more explanation are given in my book, *A Prophecy for the United States* (see p. 211).

Ancient Edom and "Modern Edoms"

Ob. 1 says that Obadiah is "*concerning Edom*". The man Obadiah spoke about ancient Edom, but what he said is evidence that God inspired Obadiah to express his words so that they also address certain nations today. Every verse in Obadiah fits the U.S. now or in a plausible "near future": v. 3b-9 are specific for the U.S., and the rest of Obadiah applies to all nations with a partly Judeo-Christian heritage and foundation from past generations, which I call "modern Edoms".

There is an extensive and meaningful analogy between ancient Edom and modern Edoms, which includes corresponding national foundations, heritages, characteristics, and development up to the time when the prophecy applies. This is shown in Chapter 2 of the Obadiah book (its Preview is free), but is too much to include here. Neither can we show the description of the ongoing, upcoming crisis involving Israel, their neighbors, and modern Edoms (3 chapters in that book).

Vital Warnings of Iniquity, Deceptions, and the U.S. National Judgment

As in Amos 1-6 and Jonah, God's warnings in Obadiah are given as pronouncements of judgment with no "if" in sight. Jer. 18:7-8 (Chapter 8) shows that the "if" is there: if a modern Edom repents, then God will relent of a judgment that even He had spoken.

In Ob. 3a the Lord says to Edom: "***The arrogance of your heart has deceived you.***" This reveals the underlying iniquity of each modern Edom: arrogance is a pride, presumption, and lack of fear of God, which cause a self-exaltation that defies Him. Arrogance causes a nation to despise God's word of truth and reject His ways of living, so that it is easy for the devil to deceive the land.

Obadiah reveals three key areas of deception. An unrepentant U.S. will be terribly deceived about an ambush, about Israel and its

God, and into becoming like a “stranger and foreigner” to the true God and His people of promise. The latter two warnings are in v. 11 (p. 23) and apply to all modern Edoms.

The rest of Ob. 3-4 reveals the origin and ultimate outcome of the national arrogance, which specifically fits the U.S. out of all modern Edoms. Ob. 5-6 shows the horror if the U.S. does not repent: the picture describes what happened in nations like Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Afghanistan. Ob. 7-9 specifies key features in the U.S. global foreign policy that began in the 1940s, and here we consider one of them: the ambush if the U.S. refuses to repent. V. 7 proclaims:

*...the men **at peace with you** will **deceive you and overpower you**. They who **eat your bread** will set an **ambush** for you. (There is no understanding in him.)*

Those at peace with us deceiving and overpowering us could refer to many possible sources, such as China, our arrogant news media establishment, and the mainstream of Hollywood. Here let us consider clues from the Bible that this may refer to a great surprise from Russia, because our study of the Minor Prophets equips us to appreciate this.

First, notice that the U.S. has been one of the most notable suppliers of grain for bread of all time. This includes to Europe after World War II, to China, to the USSR (Russia), and elsewhere.

Joel 2:20 calls the potential instrument of judgment, “*the northern army*” (Chapter 7). And in God’s main example for nations today, Amos 5:19 calls the national instrument of judgment on the unrepentant nation a “*bear*”. The bear is a national symbol of Russia.

Russia has served as a crushing instrument of national judgment on many nations in the last century, even as Assyria did at the time of Amos. Also, the U.S. could easily call Russia “the northern army”.

The situation in Jer. 37 captures the heart of what is happening

today involving the U.S. and its potential instrument of judgment. God was near the end of calling Jerusalem to repent. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (the Chaldeans) served as His instrument to judge many nations near 600 BC. Babylon was given great strength to be this instrument, but did not need its great strength to ransack a Jerusalem and Judah that refused to repent. In Jer. 37 Babylon lifted its siege of Jerusalem, and during this time the Lord told them:

Thus says the Lord, "Do not deceive yourselves, saying, 'The Chaldeans will surely go away from us,' for they will not go. For even if you had defeated the entire army of Chaldeans who were fighting against you, and there were only wounded men left among them, each man in his tent, they would rise up and burn this city with fire." (Jer. 37:9-10)

It is this way in the ambush by God's instruments of national judgment in our day. Russia does not need its great power to judge a U.S. that refuses to repent at God's final callings. In Ob. 4 the Lord declares that even if we set our nest among the stars (notice our pride in our mighty space achievements), from there He will bring us down. Russia could spring quite an ambush on the U.S. soon.

An effective ambush can include real progress. For example, Amos 8:11-12 describes the famine for the word of God in Russia, and He is now meeting the spiritual needs of many people – progress that will not be wiped out by a subsequent persecution. Some people in the U.S. can help people in Russia to make real progress: this is good, but is no substitute for repenting of our national arrogance.

A successful ambush will not be fully confirmed before it happens. And remember: Russia is only one "likely" source of the ambush, but a list of reasonable sources is too long for our purposes here. If we stay arrogant, then we shall be deceived about this ambush – no matter who does it. Truly receiving Jesus is our only national escape.

Warnings of Sins and Deceptions to all Modern Edoms

All of Obadiah after v. 9 applies to the U.S. and all other modern Edoms. V. 10-11 warn modern Edoms against being deceived by their arrogance (p. 20-21) in their crucial relationships with Israel and God:

¹⁰*Because of **violence to your brother Jacob**, you will be covered with shame, and you will be cut off forever.* ¹¹*On the day that **you stood aloof**, on the day that **strangers** carried off his wealth, and **foreigners** entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem – you too were **as one of them**.*

Every modern Edom commits other sins, but Ob. 10 shows that God establishes violence to our brother nation from Jacob as the basis for our permanent destruction. Indeed, violence to Israel by a modern Edom would be a result of its arrogant rejection of God and His word in the Bible. Oil in anti-Zionist nations can make Israel a valid test of any modern Edom's heart-attitude toward and working relationship with the Lord in our day, even before Israel comes to truly know Him through its Messiah, Jesus. This test comes especially in the three issues that Ob. 11 specifies: the possession of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the West Bank settlements (you could consider the meaning of “entering the gate” on p. 25-26), and how to divide up Jerusalem are issues in Ob. 11 that have been a focus of world attention for decades.

Once again, the emphasis here is to see what Obadiah can show us about modern Edoms. The basis for these conclusions about Israel is given further in Chapters 6-8 and Appendix 5 of *A Prophecy for the United States* (its PDF file is free at www.lulu.com under james tarter).

A tiny comment at the end of Ob. 11 is the third key area of deceiving modern Edoms: “**You too were as one of them.**” “You” is the modern Edom, and “them” are the “strangers and foreigners” who are carrying out the aggressions of v. 11 against the nation from Jacob. Notice that the primary aggressors against this nation in our

day are Islamic-Arabic nations, which have been strongly helped by atheistic-communistic nations, including especially the USSR.

Eph. 2:12 identifies key features of ancient Gentiles: “...***excluded from the commonwealth of Israel*** [foreigners], and ***strangers to the covenants of promise***, *having no hope and without God in the world.*” The aggressors today do not know the true God nor His covenants that are based on His promises to believers and to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – truly strangers. They are also foreigners, not directly related to God’s people of promise, and excluded from their inheritance unless they join themselves to Jesus. In fact, these strangers and foreigners have had their Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage systematically wiped out in their past. The Joel 2 judgment of darkness accurately describes their great loss.

In v. 11 the Edom is somehow as a stranger or foreigner while differing in their relationships with Israel. How are they alike? Notice what secular humanism, at its spiritual core, has sought to do in the U.S.: get God out of public life; establish practices alien to the God of the Bible (abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, pornography...) in the names of choice, rights, and free speech; erase the Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage from our nation; and make it very hard for people to come to know the living, true God. In short, secular humanism has sought and seeks to get the U.S. to become as a stranger and foreigner to God and to His people of promise. The U.S. is not a stranger or foreigner, but is tempted now to become like one.

This is the war raging in the U.S. and other modern Edoms now: each is being brought to the point where it must choose between Biblical Christianity and secular humanism. The choice for Biblical Christianity is not merely returning certain standards to the culture, but the nation joins itself to the Lord Jesus as His national disciple.

The choice to become as a stranger and foreigner is caused by deceiving arrogance and leads to the sins that Ob. 12-14 describes:

*Do not gloat over your brother's day, the day of his misfortune. And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction; yes, do not boast in the day of their distress. Do not enter the gate of **My people** in the day of their disaster. Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity in the day of their disaster. And do not loot their wealth in the day of their disaster. And do not stand at the fork of the road to cut down their fugitives; and do not imprison their survivors in the day of their distress. (Ob. 12-14)*

Here is the awful progression. In v. 11 the modern Edom is standing aloof from Jacob when strangers and foreigners attack it, but also has arrogantly become "as" one of them. V. 12 warns against developing attitudes against the sons of Judah. V. 13 warns the Edom against executing its own aggressions against the Lord's people with this negative attitude. Then v. 14 warns the Edom against slaughtering fugitives and imprisoning survivors of His people, who are desperately fleeing from malicious enemies.

Therefore Ob. 11 to 14 shows a progressive deterioration of the Edom, which also takes it further away from ever repenting in practice for its salvation. This is because Satan is strengthening his deceptions and footholds in the nation.

Nazi Germany is a recent example of v. 12-14. Arrogance helped Germans to form a bad attitude against the sons of Jacob. It got worse as the Nazi government persecuted them, and arrogance also moved the nation into further evil actions and eventually pitiless violence against the Lord's people – both Jews and committed Christians.

Ob. 13 is amazingly appropriate for the U.S. and other modern Edoms, because it reveals the foundation for future actions that Satan has been laying in these nations for decades. "***Do not enter the gate of My people***" becomes more alive by realizing that the gate was the

seat of government of an ancient sovereign people – the normal meeting place of leaders for government business. When foreigners “entered the gate” of a sovereign people like Jerusalem of Judah, the foreigners exercised authority over matters (the choice of king, tribute or taxes, etc.) which normally were within the sovereign jurisdiction of the violated government. Both 2Kings 23:31-35 and 24:10-17 show this takeover of authority as they record how first Egypt and then Babylon “entered the gate” of Judah near 600 BC.

When God warns Edom in Ob. 13, “*Do not enter the gate of My people*”, He warns modern Edoms to not join the foreigners as they gather against Israel in the aggressions of Ob. 11 (Jacob’s wealth and possessions, etc.). But the warning goes beyond that, because God’s people also include genuine Christians. Modern Edoms must not establish secular authority over matters that should lie within the sovereignty of church government. But many governments in the U.S. are increasingly trying to restrict evangelism for Jesus and restrict free speech from the Bible on hot topics like homosexuality.

Edoms such as the U.S. are warned against committing these aggressions against His people, but a more practical use of this warning now is to alert Christians about this scheme of Satan. Then we can recognize the real issue behind such attempts and can know to resist them with the wisdom and power that God supplies. For example, “we who are spiritual” are not to abandon the issues of government into the hands of the professional politicians, but are to contribute to our government as our Lord leads.

This warning can also help believers realize that God is not calling for us to create a state Church of our own if we do get the power to do it. Both history and human nature tell us that if a national government requires something as little as an oath for public office that “I believe in

God", then many unregenerate hearts would speak the right words in order to get tangible success. Can a government help a church? A Church working by the Spirit in faith does not need government help, but the freedom to do God's works without government interference is a blessing. A Church working without Him needs to repent and get His power instead of support from a government. Indeed, establishing a state Church in any nation has always led to a loss of true spirituality in both the favored group and the whole nation.

Now v. 13 warns Edom against two of the three aggressions in v. 11: against looting the wealth and entering the gate of the Lord's people, but not against casting lots for Jerusalem. Ob. 11 shows Edom now: standing aloof from brother Jacob and becoming as a stranger or foreigner, which aptly describe what all modern Edoms are doing now (but many have also already developed negative attitudes that v. 12 describes). In contrast, Ob. 13 shows that a modern Edom which refuses to repent will move from standing aloof into the two aggressions against both Israel and the Lord's people.

Notice the omitted aggression in v. 13. Every unrepentant modern Edom really does not desire Jerusalem for itself, and this is unlikely to change in such thoroughly secularized nations: they do not need a warning about this. This is a custom fit for all modern Edoms, showing one of the many ways God inspired Obadiah to say precisely what applies to modern Edoms. V. 11, 13, and all of Obadiah say exactly the things that the U.S. or other modern Edoms need to hear and also omit warnings that do not apply to modern Edoms.

Now the pitiless atrocities in v. 14 lead to a just devastation of unrepentant modern Edoms. V. 15 proclaims and v. 16-18 elaborate on God's just judgment of such Edoms:

¹⁵*"For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. **As you have done, it will be done to you.** Your dealings will return on your own head. ¹⁶Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow, and **become as if they had never existed.** ¹⁷But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions. ¹⁸Then the house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau will be as stubble. And they will set them on fire and consume them, so that there will be **no survivor of the house of Esau,**" for the Lord has spoken. (Ob. 15-18)*

The devastation of an unrepentant Edom in this Scripture is clear.

The Alternative: Life and the Blessing in Jesus for the U.S.

The good news in Obadiah is that Ob. 15-21 has a dual meaning: one of devastation for unrepentant Edoms, and one of blessing for repentant modern Edoms. Notice that the judgment in v. 15 is merely just: *"As you have done, it will be done to you."* It is the sinful deeds on the Edom's record that make this time of accountability to God so devastating. But Jesus paid the just price for the sins of the whole world (1John 2:2, book p. 13 in Chapter 2), which means that any nation as well as any individual that becomes a part of His people can have its sin debt wiped clean.

Ob. 16 goes further. How does a nation *"become as if it had never existed"* in a good way? It is very much like a person "dies" in a good way in baptism (Rom. 6:1-11, etc.). Consider a good way to fulfill v. 16.

As with a person joined to Jesus, His blood severs a repentant Edom from its sinful past that would otherwise shape its present and future: His blood pays the just price for past national sins and breaks their power to further corrupt the people. In our day each repentant nation will be severely tested. One test is its faithfulness to Israel when powerful international forces demand that every nation join them

against Israel. As a repentant Edom “walks by faith” in the newness of life in the Lord Jesus through such testing, God transforms the nation so completely that the nation of today will become as if it had never existed. The sins characteristic of the nation will become only history and a memory, because they would no longer be practiced or affecting people. This is “the blessing” of Joel 2 for a repentant modern Edom, a national disciple of Jesus (Chapters 8-9).

We can see God's justice and blessing in Ob. 15-16 more fully in Apx. 4 as we understand a nation's “generational iniquity” (p. 44-56).

Here let us see how Ob. 21 reveals the key to releasing this blessing to a modern Edom. V. 21 says: “*The **deliverers** will ascend **Mount Zion** to judge the **mountain of Esau**, and the kingdom will be the **Lord's**.*” The practical meaning of this conditional promise can be clear when we see how the terms in Ob. 21 fit modern Edoms.

The deliverers are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are the only people qualified to come into His holy throne room. Mt. Zion is the Mt. Zion of Heb. 12:22-24 and Micah 4:1-3a: the Lord's holy throne room in heaven. From there He sends forth His law and renders decisions for mighty nations. Judge means to govern: good examples for the meaning of the Hebrew word for judge are the Judges of ancient Israel, who were deliverers and government leaders instead of mere rulers in court cases. The mountain of Esau is the modern Edom's government, which arose out of its partly Judeo-Christian foundation and usually because of it. (The meanings of Mt. Zion and “mountain” of Esau are shown from Scriptures in Apx. 5, and their use in Obadiah is discussed on p. 92-98).

These meanings in Ob. 21 can show how a modern Edom is delivered from its underlying iniquity (arrogance), its fatal sin (betraying brother Jacob), and the consequent destructive judgment. Believers in

Jesus ascend into the Lord's holy throne room on Mt. Zion in heaven, which is before His face. There they "govern the government" of the modern Edom by intercession, so that it will become the Lord's with Jesus being its King in practice. This makes an Edom a kingdom, regardless of the form of its visible government.

This intercession before God on Mt. Zion is the "pray and seek My face" of 2Chron. 7:14. This requires holiness and is the key missing ingredient for Christians in prosperous modern Edoms: we have so many distractions from seeking His face. V. 14 and Ob. 21 together can show that if these actions are fulfilled in any Edom before its judgment, then the other ones in v. 14 will also be fulfilled, and then the Edom will be delivered and will become the Lord's possession.

In this section we have seen highlights of the ways that the last part of Obadiah can reveal great blessings for the U.S. or any modern Edom that repents and joins itself to Christ Jesus. We can also see that we used other Scriptures to provide insights that reveal these blessings in Obadiah, and they all fit neatly into the whole picture from the Minor Prophets and the Bible.

But is there further confirmation of this word in Obadiah to bless modern Edoms? Yes, the next Scripture in the Bible and a meaningful part of Obadiah's context is Jonah, where one of the most wicked nations repented according to the principles of Joel 2. The grave warning in Ob. 1-18 is built on the judgment in Amos, and the hope in Ob. 15-21 is confirmed by God's example in Jonah (p. 34 in Apx. 3).

Modern Edoms in the Parable of the Wedding Feast

"For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations" (Ob. 15a). This was an important characteristic of the time near 600 BC, and we have seen many indications about how important this is to the nations

of the world since about 1940. Every nation decides for or against discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ before He returns at the consummation of the Age in Joel 3. One choice is for life and the blessing under God in Joel 2, and the other causes the awful Joel 2 judgment of darkness under the devil. (This consummation is considered further in Apx. 10).

This choice of nations today for or against Jesus is shown in the parable of the Wedding Feast in Matt. 22:1-14. This is a well-known Scripture, and so instead of examining it here, I ask you to read it afresh, and I shall merely state my conclusions. Many people declined the king's invitation to the wedding feast for his son. At first all were unwilling to come, but with a later invitation many mistreated or killed the inviters while others continued to ignore it. The king slew the murderers and did not let the other rejecters in with the new guests.

This parable shows the privileged calling, natural attitudes (that is, attitudes not affected by faith in God), natural responses, and the consequent judgment of unrepentant modern Edoms among the nations in our day.

As Jesus' return draws near, God gives Gentile nations a special grace to join themselves to Him by faith. Like Judea at the time of Jesus, His word and ways have had many generations to take root in a modern Edom. Like Judea, God gives modern Edoms the first opportunity and responsibility among nations today to receive the "wedding feast" that God provides for His chosen nations. Like Judea, an unrepentant Edom would not be bothered or distracted from its way by His invitation – people in the U.S. now tend to stumble in this way. Some modern Edoms will even persecute and kill God's servants who bring His invitation to these Edoms – because it includes repentance – but this is primarily a future development described in Ob. 13.

Both this parable and Ob. 16 show that God will give other nations an opportunity to receive the blessing of national discipleship to the Lord Jesus, which unrepentant modern Edoms had arrogantly disdained and refused for their own destruction. Both Scriptures convince me that before Jesus returns, the U.S. and other modern Edoms will experience years of either an awful devastation or the blessings for repentant nations in Jesus.

A Conclusion to the Application of Obadiah to Nations Today

In this appendix we have seen highlights of the ways that Obadiah can apply to the U.S. and other nations today with a partly Judeo-Christian heritage and foundation from past generations. We can see how Obadiah's message fits neatly into the four-book sequence of Joel through Jonah in the Bible. This message provides a perspective of the real issues facing the U.S. and its believers in our day – especially repenting from our arrogance that leads to our choice to become like a stranger or foreigner to God and to His people of promise, which includes the nation of Israel. Obadiah also helps us to see once again that believers here need to bring our nation to join itself to our Lord Jesus Christ. Obadiah reveals many specific insights into preparing the people in our land to make this life-giving decision for our nation.

Moreover, while the focus of this appendix on Obadiah and of the book *God's Just Judgment of a Nation* has been especially on the U.S., we again see how this word in the Minor Prophets applies to many specific nations now. Indeed, Ob. 3a and 10-21 is a custom fit for all nations in our day with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation from past generations, which I have called "modern Edoms". Ob. 3b-9 is so specific to the U.S. since the 1940s that it is rare for a statement in v. 3b-9 to apply to another modern Edom.

Appendix 3

**GOD ARRANGED THE MINOR PROPHETS
AS A UNIT FOR NATIONS TODAY**

In Chapters 3, 6-10, and Apx. 1-2, we repeatedly saw how tightly Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah fit together to provide a coherent picture of nations in this time before the climactic return of the Lord Jesus. This picture is consistent with the whole Bible, and has been and is being worked out before our eyes for over 60 years.

These four books were arranged in ancient times, so that this is not human wisdom about our time, but is surely a perspective from God. (If anyone doubts His inspiration of the Bible, this prophetic unit for our day is one more piece of evidence that He inspired not only the contents of the books, but their arrangement in the Bible as well.)

God also made all twelve books of the Minor Prophets into a unit that gives a coherent message for nations and their Christians in our day. One brief summary of this unit is that it elaborates on Jesus' Great Commission. We can know how much God wants believers today to appreciate what the Minor Prophets show about the Great Commission, because He arranged this whole section of the Bible to provide this message that is being worked out now so specifically.

In this appendix we briefly review how the first 5 books fit together. Then we consider the basic nature of the contributions to this picture from the other 7 books.

The 12 Minor Prophets Forming a Coherent Unit About Nations Today

Locusts were devastating the land at the beginning of Joel.

HOSEA shows the real source of this devastating invasion of locusts: spiritual unfaithfulness by God's people and the resulting unrepented national sinfulness. JOEL gives the general principles and whole pattern of God's work with nations now as whole units from that point onward by using figurative language. Then AMOS gives an explicit example of how Joel is fulfilled for unrepentant nations, and JONAH gives it for repentant nations. OBADIAH is aptly located between Amos and Jonah and applies to modern nations with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage from past generations, which includes the U.S. The grave warning in the first part of Obadiah is built on the example in Amos, and the hope for repentance in the last part of Obadiah is confirmed by the example of Nineveh in Jonah.

Then MICAH proclaims the Lord's coming – both from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and from His holy temple to a nation for its just judgment (Micah 1:1-5, as we see in Chapter 14, book p. 119-121). Micah shows that the sin and rebellion of His people cause a devastating judgment on a land when He visits it in His holy justice. Without using the term "Day of the Lord", Micah 1:1-5 provides a good functional definition for the Day of the Lord on an individual land: the judgment produced by His coming in holy justice to make the land fully accountable to Him. He provides two examples in Micah 1 for nations today, and they both lacked the fruits of repentance and faith. This is a clear warning to nations today, and He tells them to listen and pay attention (v. 2).

Now Micah's location in the Minor Prophets separates the two prophecies about Nineveh, so that the sequence of Jonah, Micah, and NAHUM gives a message for modern nations. Nahum shows the destruction of Nineveh about one hundred fifty years after Jonah. This sequence provides modern nations a balance of two truths: (1) the restoration of a land by the repentance in Joel or Jonah is a major

reversal of the movement of the land to its devastation, and (2) this repentance must be more than temporary if the land is to stay saved after its salvation.

HABAKKUK shows a general principle in Scripture: God raises up a fierce, ruthless nation to be an instrument of judgment against a seemingly “less evil” nation that has refused to repent by the time of its ultimate call to repentance. Examples of this Scriptural principle in our day include Poland, Cambodia, etc. God’s justice in this principle surprises many people, even as Habakkuk was surprised, and so we consider the justice in this principle in Apx. 4. Habakkuk also shows another general principle: how individuals can live and spiritually prosper even when their nation comes under the Joel 2 judgment of darkness. The answer is faith, which includes faithfulness.

ZEPHANIAH gives another description of a nation’s Day of the Lord (Chapter 14, p. 13-14 in Apx. 1) on Judah that thoroughly agrees with the national judgments of Joel 2 and Amos 5:19. Zephaniah confirms a theme in Amos 4-7 that can make believers uncomfortable: this judgment comes especially on the unrepentant sinners of the Lord’s people. Zephaniah also reinforces Habakkuk’s second principle by showing that a nation or individuals who have sought the Lord in humble righteousness might be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger. Zephaniah ends with a description of nations at peace with one another and with the Lord, the King of Israel. As in Joel 3, this blessing comes after nations are gathered to receive the burning anger of the Lord. Therefore Zephaniah confirms and adds to the picture from Joel for Christians about modern nations.

The messages of Haggai and Zechariah give much further insight into God’s constructive work on earth today. HAGGAI represents this constructive work collectively as “rebuilding the Lord’s temple”.

This construction is to begin when many of the Lord's people are saying that the time has not yet come for this work (Haggai 1:2). For an application today, many Christians put Eph. 4:12-16 only after the Rapture: before then the Body of Christ – God's temple today – will not be matured or perfected like v. 12-16 show. This Scripture shows that the Body of Christ will grow and build itself up until it manifests all aspects of Christ Jesus, even while its parts are rejecting doctrines that would toss them here and there: mankind's sinful nature is still at work. Clearly this growth must occur before the Rapture, and our contributions to this constructive work before then are crucial.

Haggai also shows that this constructive work will take place in God's people when the world is being greatly shaken. This describes the situation on earth today as His people and many nations are often thwarted in their diligent efforts to serve themselves well, and as other nations are shaken in Joel 1 or fall under the Joel 2 national judgment.

Then ZECHARIAH says more about "building the Lord's temple" by using symbolism – especially including the role of Jesus as Priest and King in this construction. Zech. 2:11 and its context show that many nations will join themselves to the Lord in our day and will become His people: this discipleship of nations is a major constructive work to be done at this time. Zechariah also prophesies the judgment and the ultimate restoration of the nation of Israel, plus God's judgment of all the Gentile nations that gather against "Judah" and "Jerusalem" (see Apx. 12 about Zech. 12:1-10). The ultimate judgment of the Gentile nations will occur at the very consummation of the Age of the Gentiles, as Joel 3 and Zeph. 3 describe.

God's "priests" in a Gentile land are its genuine Christians (book p. 21-22 in Chapter 3). In MALACHI God concludes this unit for nations now in the Minor Prophets by giving a message to especially

His priests. He shows the priests many basic principles, including what His priests should be doing – which would prepare a land for His coming to it – and what His priests have actually been doing in an unprepared land with a long-established Church. The priests' failure to respect God in their lives caused people who did not know Him to ignore Him in practice, because they assumed that God would not hold them accountable. In turn, the ignoring of God by many people produced the sins of Mal. 2-3 (treacheries, arrogance, etc.) that are so common in "post-Christian lands".

All of this is discussed from Malachi in Chapters 11-12.

The end of Malachi proclaims and briefly describes the "Elijah ministry" that prepares the way of the Lord, which His corporate people in a land must fulfill before He comes to it in His holy justice. God comes first to His unfit and unprepared people, and will prepare them with refining for the special day that He is preparing. In turn, they will prepare the people in the land to receive the Lord Jesus when He visits it in His holy justice.

This "cure" through His people is discussed in Chapter 13.

The next thing in the Christian Bible is the coming of the Lord Jesus to the nation of Judea in Matthew, which specifically emphasizes His role as the King of the Jews – the nation of Judea.

Malachi also applies to His second coming to the whole earth, but the basic message of Malachi and this whole unit of the Minor Prophets is especially about the way that God comes to individual Gentile nations in His holy justice in these years leading up to His return to the whole earth. God will receive and fully restore the repentant land that has been prepared by the Holy Spirit through its priests. But He also warns that if the hearts of the fathers and children are not turned to each other, then He is apt to strike the land with a

curse, which is the Joel 2 judgment of darkness. The relationship of the fathers and their children is an especially vulnerable part of His pattern for the family at this time, and this is a major part of the Elijah ministry to prepare a land for God's coming to it in His holy justice.

Consider one more feature about the Minor Prophets as a unit, which can help believers recognize the nature of a prophet's message for us. The lack of dates for six Minor Prophets, a problem for learning by the historical method, occurs in two kinds of prophecies. Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum concern ancient Gentile nations and are not dated. Every other undated book – Joel, Habakkuk, and Malachi – provides general principles for the way that God works with nations and their Christians now, so that their dates are not needed to see essential meanings for nations now. In contrast, the six dated books contribute to these basic principles especially by showing His work in historical situations, so that their dates are very helpful for rightly applying those Scriptures today.

I conclude that God is very careful to inspire each prophet to date his book or not date it.

These glimpses into each book of the Minor Prophets in this appendix can help us see that God has carefully arranged and preserved His word to speak to Christians about nations today.

Appendix 4

JUSTICE TO ALL AND MERCY TO MANY IN GOD'S WAY TO JUDGE NATIONS

In this appendix we consider how God's way to judge nations is totally just. Remember that the "Day of the Lord" on a land is its time to be fully accountable to God for its sins that it had never resolved before Him: this is merely a just judgment! But the unresolved sins of many generations come on especially one generation. We hear God is just, but many people may deeply believe that His judgment of whole nations is unjust if we do not examine it further. Understanding how God can be just to everyone and merciful to many can remove some reasonable doubts people may have about His surprising approach to national judgment. Let us first see God's great care for each one of His people in His way to judge nations. Starting on p. 44 we see how God is merciful to judge a nation generations after many of its sins.

God's Great Care for Each Person in Sweeping National Judgments

There is enough cruelty and killing in national judgments to make everything seem to be out of control (consider Nazi Germany, Stalin's USSR, etc.). With so much unjustified trauma and murder, it is hard to believe and impossible to see that God is carefully just to everyone. But the unseen eternity is far more important than the visible events in one's personal life. God has eternity to make things just and right for each person, but a nation must be justly judged when it exists.

Unless we see things from God's complete, eternal perspective, a national judgment looks like an indiscriminate solution for a problem.

We need to embrace God's assurances that it is not – He is carefully providing for each person through physical death or through a longer life on earth. For example, consider the well known Corrie ten Boom family in Nazi Germany: at the right time Corrie was delivered to live longer on earth, and Betsy and other family members were delivered through death into the next phase of their eternal life.

Indeed, our just God will be totally just to every person and nation, but each one earns a just devastation. Jesus' great sacrifice frees God to justly add mercy to judgments: He Himself paid the full penalty for the sins of His people, so that they can be rescued justly.

God's Scriptures about national judgment consistently contain concise or veiled comments that show His great care and provision for each one of His people while He makes a just decision on the nation as a whole unit. We saw (Chapter 10) that His promise to deliver anyone who calls on Him (Joel 2:32) lies in the context of the Joel 2 national judgment. In another example, God promises that when He shakes the house of Jacob among the nations in judgment, *"not a kernel will fall to the ground"* (Amos 9:9).

Zech. 12:1-10 shows much about the judgment of nations in our day and is examined in Apx. 12. In a subtle way, v. 1 reveals God's priority to take care of each one of His people: *"...Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the **spirit** of man within **him**."*

In the context of national judgments, God proclaims three of His great works in one sentence. He stretches out the heavens, which can remind us that His works are immeasurably greater than the whole earth. He lays the foundation of the earth, which shows His special interest in the earth as a part of His creation as well as reminds us of His foundation for sovereignly judging whole nations. He also forms

the spirit of man within him – not them. This shows the astonishing value that He places on His vital eternal work in each individual of His people, because He mentions this work along beside His work with all the earth and stretching out the whole spiritual and material universe.

By showing the extraordinary value God places on His work in an individual, Zech. 12:1 can assure us that He truly provides each person in the “Israel of God” – whose spirit is made alive in Jesus – with whatever is just and good along with and through His global corporate decisions about whole nations. In deciding what is truly good for someone, God looks foremost to eternal work, which will be around long after the pains of national judgment cease.

In prophecies about the deliverance or else devastation of whole nations, He consistently brings up His saving work with each of His people. Only God can make fully just decisions on both levels at the same time, as Peter illustrates with his examples of Noah and Lot in 2Peter 2:5-9. V.9 says: *“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation and to keep the unrighteous under punishment...”*

God’s Stunning Instrument of Judgment on Unrepentant Nations

Habakkuk shows that God would raise up idolatrous Babylon to judge a seemingly more righteous Judah that had refused its full opportunity to repent. As shown on p. 38, Habakkuk’s lack of a date suggests that this is a general principle in Scripture about God’s judgment of many unrepentant nations. In Habakkuk God confirms and explains His use of a “bear nation” (Amos 5:19, Chapter 7) to judge a nation that is fleeing from Him. This helps us to recognize the role of Assyria against ancient Israel, Rome against Judea near 70 A.D., and the government of the USSR against many nations in our day. Here let us consider the justice in God’s solution.

Hab. 1:1-4 shows that Judah had a serious sin problem. When hearing this solution for it, Habakkuk questioned why God would judge sinful Judah by a much more sinful nation. Why doesn't He favor the less sinful nation? God does not answer this, but shows that sinners are ruining their future by their sins and will be judged justly.

God's way to judge a nation is built on unmentioned truths that are often overlooked when we see awful sinfulness. God fully calls some nations to turn to Him before He fully calls others, so that each nation must repent by the time He appoints for the land – when it has had its full opportunity to repent. The judged land may reject its opportunity to repent by God's grace – the most devastating sin – while the ruthless national instrument of judgment has not yet had its full opportunity to repent. In this way the ruthless nation is not as guilty.

Notice that God exercises justice on individuals in this way. Each person must repent by a time that God sets for him only, lest he die without Jesus while many “more wicked” people continue to live. Afterward, some respond to their opportunities to repent, so that they receive Jesus and are saved. The key is not the overt actions, but what a person does with God's grace to repent and turn to Him.

Likewise, Judah needed to respond to God before Babylon exhausted its opportunity to repent, and Israel before Assyria, and Judea before Rome, and Hungary before the USSR in the 1950s, and the U.S. before Russia or China.... The crucial point for any nation is to receive God's call for its own repentance – instead of placing its confidence in “not being as bad as its enemy”.

God can do a constructive work in a devastating national judgment beyond redeeming individuals: this judgment can set up His work to build His corporate people, the Church. The bear and snake try to systematically wipe out all Judeo-Christian foundation from the land,

but this was fatally flawed and did not improve as needed during the less hostile conditions before the judgment. As God warns the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3), He spits out the unrepentant corrupted church and saves only individuals in it. Out of this remnant can come a glorious church, which will grow up in all aspects into the fullness of Christ Jesus before He returns (Eph. 4:11-16, Chapter 4).

How to Live Through a National Judgment by the Bear

“...*the righteous* [*“the just”* in the King James Version] *will live by his faith*” (Hab. 2:4). Real “faith” includes faithfulness or dependability, the primary thrust of this Hebrew word. This principle in Habakkuk is so general that it applies any time (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11), but it has even more meaning during the great chaos produced when the Joel 2 judgment comes on a land. Efforts to save one’s life will lose it, but losing it for Christ can preserve it. In contrast to this life, the rest of Hab. 2 shows the devastation of “*the proud one*”, who is not humble.

Zephaniah’s counsel for before the Day of the Lord came to Judah fits into this general principle in Habbakuk for believers:

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger. (Zeph. 2:3)

Seeking God and righteousness with humble faith and faithfulness before judgment comes might hide the land from His anger – avert the just national devastation. But even if a nation gets justly devastated, this is God’s way for anyone to live in Him through that chaos.

For example, there were some in ancient Israel and Judah who took the Lord God seriously when their nation was rejecting Him, even as many believers do now. As shown in 2Chron. 30:1-12 (p. 16-17 in Apx. 1), God provided Hezekiah’s Passover for this remnant in ancient Israel shortly before Assyria came to carry the remainder of Israel into

exiled slavery. Humble people in ancient Israel who were deeply seeking the Lord and righteousness could find repentant Judah far more like home than their homeland: many would stay in Judah and miss Assyria's siege that would come within a few years and horribly finish off ancient Israel as a nation.

Just Mercy in Personal or National Sins Judged Generations Later

A generational iniquity is one kind of curse. In Hebrew, a curse is a reversal or absence of a rightful or blessed state. An iniquity is a twist or a bent in a person's or a nation's nature that makes it easier or more natural to sin, which can produce a just curse. First let us see God's just mercy in working with generational iniquity of individuals. Then we can appreciate His just mercy in His work with nations.

God's nature is to be totally just within each person's eternity: He is so just that He suffered great pain to be fully just to all when He generously adds love in Christ. Rom. 2:4-6 shows that God will justly judge everyone within his/her eternity for his/her deeds:

*Or do you think lightly of the riches of **His** kindness and tolerance and **patience**, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and **unrepentant heart** you are **storing up wrath** for yourself **in the day** of wrath and revelation of **the righteous judgment of God**, who **will render to each person according to his deeds**. (Rom. 2:4-6)*

*The Lord is **not slow** about His promise, as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to **repentance**. (2Peter 3:9)*

Notice that God judges sins – not iniquity, which merely helps to cause sins. He will fully judge everyone, but His full judgment is often long after the sin in order to allow repentance and life. In fact, this “slow” judgment is the way any person gets an opportunity for eternal life: all children of Adam and Eve were born after their sin and before

they died from their sin. And if God held some of my other ancestors fully accountable for deadly sins soon after they were committed, then surely their early deaths would likewise have prevented my birth and opportunity for life in Christ.

Sins have consequences or curses that must be resolved justly. What surprises many is that guilt from sins and blessings can continue for generations without the full just judgment of a deadly sin, so that many live instead of never being born. One generation after another might reject their opportunities for the life that Christ won for us, but then someone fully resolves it for oneself and his/her descendants. How? 1John 2:2 shows that Jesus paid the just penalty for the sins of the whole world, so that anyone in Him can fully resolve them:

*¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ** the righteous; ²and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the **whole world**.*

God will make a fully just judgment of everyone within eternity. In doing this, He knows every person perfectly, including his/her unique starting and end points, capacities, opportunities, advantages, and responses to His grace in Jesus. Blessings and unresolved sins do pass through generations, giving people in them an opportunity to live and repent before God makes His full just judgment if a sin does stay unresolved. Ex. 34:6-7 and Heb. 7:9-10 clearly show a descendant's coupling with and participation in a deed of an ancestor:

*Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷who keeps **lovingkindness for thousands**, who **forgives iniquity, transgression and sin**; yet He will **by no means leave the guilty unpunished**, visiting the **iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations**." (Ex. 34:6-7)*

*And, so to speak, through Abraham even **Levi**, who received tithes, **paid tithes**, for **he was still in the loins of his father** [Abraham, three generations earlier] *when Melchizedek met him.* (Heb. 7:9-10)*

Notice that Ex. 34:6-7 and Heb. 7 show generational blessing as much as generational iniquity. Often a blessing is hidden or corrupted by the curses until they are removed. A less Biblical term for this easily observed generational influence is a “legacy”: a dictionary definition of “legacy” is something that comes from an ancestor or predecessor.

The progression of an iniquity from David to his son Solomon is an example of unresolved iniquity getting passed from one generation to the next. King David was a man after God’s heart and also with a sin and a weakness or iniquity: he took many wives for himself despite God’s explicit law telling kings to not do that (Deut. 17:17). Then David saw Bathsheba and sinned with her. As you know, he repented later.

King Solomon began his reign with a heart for God and God’s people, and God gave him great wisdom and knowledge (1Kings 3:3-14). But later he moved into a sin that turned him away from God and His ways with no repentance. Solomon disobeyed God by marrying idolatrous women, let them entice his heart away from God, supported their idolatry, and steadfastly refused His correction (1Kings 11:1-12). Solomon also lost his heart for God’s people (1Kings 12:4, 10-11). This sin developed despite Solomon’s wisdom and previous heart for God and His people.

We see that David’s iniquity was not Solomon’s awful sin, but was a moral weakness that grew into Solomon’s sin, because Solomon had refused to resolve his iniquity before it manifested as his own sin. He had inherited blessings and also this iniquity that he needed to resolve.

Matt 23:29-36 shows how an unresolved generational iniquity can grow into producing deadly sins without our realizing it:

²⁹Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,
³⁰and say, **"If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets."** ³¹So **you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.** ³²Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. ³³You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the **sentence of hell?** ³⁴Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them **you will kill and crucify**, and some of them **you will scourge** in your synagogues, and **persecute** from city to city, ³⁵**so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.** ³⁶Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. (Matt 23:29-36)

In John 8:37-44 Jesus shows that we become sons of the one we truly follow (in John 8, it was the devil). We inherit blessings and iniquities from those we truly follow in addition to physical parents. "This generation" in Matt. 23:29-36 did not personally murder Abel or Zechariah, but had joined the murderers of the righteous in their heart-attitude and thereby had their iniquity while also denying the truth that they had it: therefore they could not resolve it. In fact, Cain personally murdered Abel, a sin set up by Cain's refusal to handle his iniquity:

⁶Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you **angry?** And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷**"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."** ⁸Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and **killed him**. (Gen 4:6-8)

What a description (v. 7) of Cain's iniquity that led to his sin! V. 7 also vividly describes the iniquity of "this generation" (Matt. 23:36) that led to their sin like Cain's. By denying and refusing to resolve their own iniquity, it eventually manifested in them and caused their punishment for their own sins.

Just Mercy in the Iniquity of a Nation Spanning Generations: Judea

God's time to judge a nation might challenge our natural sense of justice more than anything else, because national judgments come generations after many of the sins are committed, and severely afflict people who personally did not do them. But God justly judges each person regardless of whether his nation is blessed or cursed. With either national judgment, God will surely be just to each person and nation of every generation – but this includes unseen eternal futures for people and may take many centuries to complete for a nation.

The scribes' and Pharisees' iniquity in Matt. 23:29-36 (p. 47) grew into Judea's national sin. In our discussion here consider v. 29-36 and the rest of the previous section's discussion about personal iniquity.

The guilt of past generations of a nation is stored up without a full judgment until the sins are either resolved in Jesus, or else one generation of the unrepentant nation pays the full penalty for the unresolved sins. Normally a nation's sinful past is a strong influence in shaping the health of the nation's current culture, but this deadly tendency gets broken if the nation truly turns to Jesus.

Jesus' sacrifice frees God to add mercy to justice, which is what God does when He judges nations for sins spanning generations. The Lord Jesus paid the full price for the sins of the whole world (1John 2:2 on p. 45). Therefore God can justly clean the sin-record for any nation or person that joins to Him: He is free to be both just and generous to the undeserving. God can justly withhold judging a nation for its sins for generations, giving it an opportunity to repent and justly resolve the sins by Jesus' sacrifice, but also allowing the iniquity to ripen if the people do not repent. He can justly delay executing the penalty to a sinful nation until it has its full opportunity to repent and turn to Him. If a nation turns, then it can live because Jesus paid its shattering

penalty. If the nation does not turn to Him, then it pays the shattering penalty when the time for the full national judgment comes.

God generously gives opportunities for undeserving people and nations to receive mercy, but God allows individuals and nations to reject His grace for life, go their own way, not get their sins resolved, and so pay the penalty themselves. We shall see many reasons from the Bible to expect that people in the generation facing the ultimate consequences for its nation's sins may also be given the greatest opportunity to repent and be saved. That generation might not be more wicked in its deeds than previous generations; but the previous ones could not reject God's grace like the people in the accountable generation, because God's Spirit is poured out on all of the people in the land shortly before the Day of the Lord comes to it (Joel 2:28-31, Chapter 10).

God's way to judge nations, which puts a special responsibility on the generation of His visitation to repent or else face far greater consequences, is merciful even to the accountable generation. Rom. 2:4-6 and 2Peter 3:9 (p. 44) show that God may extend His mercy far longer than is sensible to us in order that people may receive their full opportunity to repent and be saved. If God were to justly judge a nation before that time, then many or most people in the accountable generation would have never lived at all, having been destroyed through the premature death of their ancestors. Such mercy is easily seen in the example of Judea (p. 47): many there did receive life.

The Generational Iniquity in Practice in Ancient Israel and Judah

Now one might reasonably think that this word to the generation of Judea is not for others: it rejected Jesus in His flesh, which no other nation has done or could do. Also, the Greek word for generation may mean "kind" and not refer to the lifetimes of people. These possibilities

are made unlikely by the fact that God often judged one generation of a Biblical nation generations after its continued, unresolved sins.

The Bible best describes the national judgments of ancient Israel and Judah, and so they best show the build-up of sins for generations until one generation of each nation was devastated for these sins. In both ancient Israel and Judah, the curses of disobedience in Deut. 28-30 were worked out over many generations instead of a few years. This is the generational iniquity (= sinful legacy, p. 46) in practice.

2Kings 17:1-23 clearly summarizes ancient Israel's generational iniquity or sinful legacy. Beginning with the judgment that destroyed the nation, v. 1-23 trace ancient Israel's unrepented sins from its first king, Jeroboam, throughout its history up to the resulting judgment of exiled slavery and national annihilation. Notice especially v. 7 and 21-23 (v. 21b-23 are discussed further on p. 60):

¹In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned nine years. ²He did evil in the sight of the Lord, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him. ³Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. ⁴But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. ⁵Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

*⁷Now **this came about because** the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods ⁸and **walked** in the customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. ⁹The sons of Israel did things **secretly** which were not right against the*

Lord their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the Lord had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the Lord. ¹²They served idols, concerning which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." ¹³Yet the **Lord warned Israel** and Judah through **all His prophets** and **every seer**, saying, "**Turn from your evil ways** and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." ¹⁴However, they did **not listen**, but **stiffened their neck like their fathers**, who did **not believe** in the Lord their God. ¹⁵They **rejected** His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they **followed vanity** and **became vain**, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the Lord had commanded them not to do like them. ¹⁶They **forsook** all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and **sold themselves to do evil** in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him.

¹⁸**So** the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. ¹⁹Also **Judah** did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but **walked in the customs which Israel had introduced**. ²⁰The Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.

²¹**When** He had torn Israel from the house of David, **they made Jeroboam** the son of Nebat king. Then **Jeroboam drove Israel away** from following the Lord and made them commit a great sin.

²²The sons of Israel **walked in all the sins of Jeroboam** which he did; they **did not depart** from them until the Lord removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets.

²³**So** Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.

Notice that the sins that caused ancient Israel's total destruction began hundreds of years earlier and were never forsaken, but instead

ripened. This is an unresolved national iniquity at work.

2Kings 23:25-27 shows that Judah's devastation was irreversibly provoked by the sins of Judah under Manasseh over 40 years earlier:

*²⁵And before him [Josiah] there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him. ²⁶However, the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which **Manasseh** had provoked Him. ²⁷And the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"*

The people of Judah never really repented with good King Josiah: they quickly returned to unfaithfulness and idolatry after he died (Jer. 34 and 42-44 are examples of the sinfulness of the judged generation). The iniquity sown under Manasseh was not resolved, but was getting ripe in hearts even while good King Josiah limited its expression.

The pattern Jesus shows in Matt. 23:29-36 was followed precisely in each nation. National annihilation was withheld from ancient Israel and Judah until a generation received the full penalty. This generation continued in the sinfulness of the previous generations at the crucial time when the Lord visited each nation in His holy justice for the Day of the Lord of that nation: its time to be fully accountable to God.

The Generational Iniquity at Work in Many Other Ancient Nations

Gen. 15:13-16 shows that God was going to allow the iniquity of Egypt and the Canaanite nations to develop and ripen for 400 years. Then He would judge a generation of all those nations:

*And God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed **four hundred years**. But I will also **judge the nation** whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out*

*with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for **the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.***"

The Canaanite nations' unresolved iniquity became a sinful legacy. Every Canaanite nation was judged for it.

Jer. 25:15-38 and Ob. 15 (Apx. 2) show that all nations near 500-600 BC had a Day of the Lord, when the penalty for each nation's sins was executed against a specific generation. Amos 1-2 mentions national sins and sinfulness that provoked fiery national judgments on seven nations surrounding ancient Israel, and then goes into much more detail about Israel in the rest of Amos (Apx. 1). Over 100 years after Amos, Jer. 46-49 expounds on the judgment of five of these nations and adds a few more nations. Nineveh (Assyria) is another notable example in Jonah, Nahum, and Isaiah.

The recorded national judgment of Babylon confirms key features of the sinful legacy. Babylon greatly prospered until it was suddenly destroyed about 50-70 years after Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Judah. God pronounces Babylon's judgment and its cause in Jer. 51: v. 34-35 cite Nebuchadnezzar's devouring and shedding the blood of Jerusalem. V. 24 and 49a confirm this cause:

*"But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done **in Zion** before your eyes," declares the Lord. (v. 24)*

*Indeed, Babylon is to **fall** for the **slain of Israel.** (v. 49a)*

Dan. 5:18-30 and Jer. 50-51 show how Babylon continued to mock and persecute Jews and profane their God and ignore His manifestations. Then a new generation of this idolatrous nation was destroyed for all of Babylon's sins.

The Dark Day of the Lord on Nations Now

In Chapter 1 we saw many examples of nations in the 1900s that have had a Joel 2 or Amos 5:19 judgment of darkness under atheistic communism, when other nations were coming under the darkness of Islam. In Chapter 7 I also stated that every nation today has its own Day of the Lord (this conclusion is justified best in Apx. 1, p. 6-8).

God's Blessed Day of the Lord Judgment on Nations Now

I have repeatedly emphasized that this Day of the Lord is only a just judgment, and God gives nations a blessed alternative to being devastated on its Day of the Lord. In this section we consider Ob. 15-16: it shows how God totally removes a nation's generational iniquity or sinful legacy in the blessed alternative that He gives nations today.

To appreciate how Ob. 15-16 applies to nations now, realize these conclusions from my book on Obadiah (highlights are in Apx. 2, p. 19-32): (1) all of Obadiah fits the U.S. in remarkably specific ways within the last few decades and/or in a reasonably projected near future; and (2) Ob. 10-21 fits all nations now with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation from past generations. Now consider Ob. 15-16:

¹⁵For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. ¹⁶Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow, and become as if they had never existed.

The first part of v. 15 is one of the many reasons convincing me that every nation in our day will have its Day of the Lord. The other part shows clearly that this is merely a just judgment. A nation today that refuses its full opportunity to become a national disciple of the Lord Jesus will receive the devastating Day of the Lord in Joel 2. A nation that joins itself to Him and becomes His people (Zech. 2:11a) will be

justly cleansed of all its sins by His sacrifice.

Indeed, in this context of the Day of the Lord drawing near on all the nations, Ob. 16 says that all the nations will “*become as if they had never existed*”. Of course, this can be fulfilled by the total destruction of an unrepentant nation (as with ancient Edom). But God’s blessed alternative is a completely different way for a repentant nation today to become as if it had never existed: the nation removes its sinful legacy by truly repenting and joining itself to Jesus, who thoroughly transforms the nation as it faithfully walks with Him in obedience.

Consider how a sinful legacy produces death while Jesus gives life. A nation’s generational iniquity or sinful legacy normally shapes a nation’s future. Abuse, divorce, and other sins from selfishness and iniquity in parents tend to cause increased sin problems in the children. Even if given a clean record from past sins, the current generation naturally creates its own sins and iniquity and sinful legacy.

When Jesus removes a nation’s sinful legacy, He Himself takes the devastating just judgments due to national sins in past generations, and through His people He helps the current generation to get to know Him and changes their hearts. With this foundation, a disciplined nation obeys Jesus in the tough situations ahead, which transforms the nation so thoroughly that the sinful traits characterizing it either recently or throughout its history will be wiped out. The sinful nation will no longer be producing its evil fruit and corrupting people like it did in its past, so that the sinful nation will become as if it had never existed.

Therefore God has a good way for a nation in Jesus to perish, just as baptism is a good way for believers in Jesus to die (Rom. 6:2-3). In fact, a Scripture that reveals so much about personal baptism teaches us by comparing it to a national baptism. 1Cor. 10:1-2 shows how the nation of Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Indeed, 1Cor. 10:1-2 clearly illustrates the contents on p.55. When Israel went through the Red Sea, Israel was cut off from Egypt, a type of “the world system”. In the sea God destroyed Egypt’s army when it came to recapture His people. He also destroys Satan’s spiritual army when it comes to recapture a nation that joins itself to the Lord Jesus: His blood shed for His people cuts them off from their past sins. This shows His breaking of the powerful bondage of the nation’s sinful legacy (generational iniquity) on the current generation: He frees the nation to walk with our holy God. The sea also blocks it from returning to its former slavery to sin, even as the sea blocked Israel’s return to Egypt.

After being baptized in the sea, Israel was led through the wilderness by the cloud, which represents the Holy Spirit. In this walk of testing and trials, God transformed Israel into a nation that was able to possess its promised land, which provided a testimony of the Lord to all of the unrepentant heathen nations of Canaan (Josh. 2:9-11).

Likewise, a baptized nation today walks by faith in the newness of life in Christ Jesus, even as baptized believers are to do (Col. 2:11-12). As Ob. 16 shows, this walk by faith through the trials in our day will transform the nation of today so thoroughly that it will no longer exist. Even if a disciplined nation sins, its heart for our just God causes it to repent and seek justice, not to re-establish its sinful legacy. And as with individuals, this provides a witness and testimony to the world.

Before the Day of the Lord comes on any nation today, God graciously gives it its full opportunity to come to Jesus as a nation, so that it can be cut off from its iniquity (sinful legacy) and become a part of His people and possessions. Jesus paid the just penalty for the nation’s sins, so that it does not need to pay again for them, and its people can be freed to live and grow in Him.

The U.S. Iniquity or Sinful Legacy As a Practical Example Today

The effect of a sinful legacy or iniquity, its removal, and a nation's thorough transformation will be less abstract if we consider how all this works in a nation today. Here are a few sins by the U.S. so that we see how a sinful legacy works: abusing innocent people in a national practice of slavery, abusing Indians and nations like Mexico, condoning abortion as a nation, and operating with a spirit of rebellion or independence. For balance, much more can be said about whether these are true national sins of the U.S., which also has many other sins and good features, as do all other nations. I use the U.S. and these sins as examples of unresolved past sins, because they are a variety of national sins and do not require much knowledge of U.S. history to see how they work in reality.

Guilt from such national sins has been stored up for generations without the U.S. receiving appropriate just judgments, which would devastate the nation and its people. Obadiah, other Minor Prophets, and many specific developments in the U.S. show that the U.S. is near to its Day of the Lord. Before then, God is giving the U.S. a generous opportunity to completely wipe out its sinful legacy by Jesus' sacrifice. If the U.S. repents, joins itself to Him, and becomes a part of His people as a nation (Zech 2:11), then His great blood sacrifice for His people pays the full penalty for our nation's sins, and the U.S. and its people will never need to pay that horrible just penalty. The nation will be freed from its sinful legacy in every way and be transformed so much that it will not re-establish such practices.

But if the U.S. rejects or ignores Jesus at this critical time when He is calling it to be His national disciple, then: (1) our own generation would throw away our only hope for national salvation; (2) the U.S. would keep its sinful legacy; (3) this generation would greatly add to

the national sinfulness as the U.S. becomes like Sodom and Nazi Germany (Ob. 11-14 shows this future for the U.S. if it fails to repent); and (4) this generation would receive the due penalty for our many unresolved sins in God's just judgment (Ob. 5-6, 14-18 shows this to be devastating). We can see this future on p. 25-28 in Apx. 2 and in my book on Obadiah. The point here is that if the U.S. keeps its sinful legacy (iniquity), then national sins like slavery stay unresolved, and their just penalty will be executed on this generation that refused God's payment of the penalty for all of the nation's sins.

Let us see some continuing effects of two sins in the U.S. sinful legacy. They clearly show that the sinful legacy is not yet broken. They also bring out features of a truly resolved national sin, which can help us recognize when any national sin has truly been resolved.

Black fathers were often kept from carrying out their rightful role in their families during the practice of slavery, so that their families were often disrupted. We know that this problem is not yet fully resolved, because black families in the U.S. are still wounded and producing further injury. Fatherless families – a problem anywhere but especially common in black communities in the U.S. – have produced increased poverty, aimlessness, hopelessness, anger, and crime that afflict the entire nation.

Mal. 4:5-6 (Chapter 13) shows that a failure to turn the hearts of the fathers and their children to each other before the Day of the Lord comes to the land puts it in a great danger of being struck with the curse: the awful bear and snake judgment of darkness in Joel 2 and Amos 5:18-20. God's order will be re-established in all kinds of families in a transformed U.S., but specifically in black families.

The other example of a sin is chosen to represent a subtle past national sin that is still operating with major effects. In this illustration I

shall make assertions that could be both justified and challenged much further, but this sin is not the point here. The point is that national sins like this do exist and do affect the people of a land. Such sins must be rooted out in the national discipleship to the Lord Jesus.

A spirit of independence or rebellion (they differ, but rebellion is often justified by calling it independence) has operated in the land of the U.S. for ages. Before the Europeans came, the inhabitants mostly lived as independent tribes (unlike Europe and some other places). Even when losing their land, they rarely united against the European settlers. This spirit also impacted the settlers: a drive to live more independently contributed to their special push to keep expanding.

This special drive for independence was also mightily at work in crucial situations where it was decisively overcome. We can sense this conflict in a famous quote at the foundation of our nation: “United we stand, divided we fall.” The Civil War was in part a battle for some states to become independent again – but for rebellious goals.

Our foundational heart-attitude is revealed by the name “United States”: a “state” was a people in a land with a government that was not subject to external control. The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution established a national government only for carrying out the six functions specified in the Preamble (this includes “secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity”). The Bill of Rights was created to ensure that the national government would not crush the independence of the people or the individual states.

With many more examples we can see that people in the land of the U.S. have had an especially great drive to be “independent”, and not all of this great drive has been evil. For example, I see many reasons that the national rebellion and independence from England were justified and ordained by God, just as it was for ancient Israel

from Judah (in the next paragraph). But an evil spirit of rebellion stealthily slipped in the people and government and continues to work throughout the land. This spirit creates many effects, including an unusually large amount of crime (lawlessness), an exaggerated “right to choose”, an excessive pride in oneself, an exalted image of a “self-made man” who becomes great without any outside help, a great hostility toward group responsibility, and other effects like these.

How did this evil spirit slip in to establish its hold on the U.S.? Amazingly, look at ancient Israel: the same spiritual stronghold slipped in through its first king, Jeroboam. God clearly established his reign over ancient Israel when it rebelled against King Rehoboam (1Kings 11:31-39), but Jeroboam did not trust God's promise to him: he “*said in his heart*” that the people would kill him and return to Judah's king if they went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the Lord's house (1Kings 12:26-33). Therefore he gave the people two golden calves: “*It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; **behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt***” (v. 28b, 2Kings 17:16).

What a substitute that the people casually accepted! Jeroboam did not need it to protect his kingdom, but this established an idolatry that the land never forsook until the nation was destroyed:

*Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the Lord and made them commit a great sin. The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they **did not depart from them until the Lord removed Israel from His sight**, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day. (2Kings 17:21b-23)*

Likewise, an evil spirit of rebellion was not needed to establish the U.S. independence from England, but people here have let this spirit attach itself to us and create its sinister perversions of truth and righteousness throughout our history. This evil spirit of rebellion does

not blindly drive us: it works to get the U.S. to accept pagan practices of other nations and to join them in ungodly ways, because that gives Satan a greater hold on the U.S. This spirit also works to cause evil outbreaks of rebellion while offering “solutions” that can eventually give Satan greater power and control over the people.

God wants the U.S. to be independent in healthy ways: He wants the U.S. to use its independence to join itself to Him despite pressures from the world, and to help other nations to be free to make the same healthy choice. God does not want the U.S. to join many ungodly nations against His people Israel (Joel 3), to become like an ungodly nation, or to establish a world order apart from Him (Psalm 2).

Again, I am discussing features in the U.S. generational iniquity or sinful legacy in order to illustrate how such deep rooted sins from the past are festering and causing many complex effects today, and to show glimpses of how this nation will be very different when it truly resolves such features of its sinful legacy. The sins and spiritual bondage characterizing the old U.S. for so long will be broken, so that they will no longer mar our society and afflict people: the sinful features will not be practiced and their effects will be removed. The U.S. of today, with our epidemic crime and other national characteristics, will become as if it had never existed – only history and a memory.

That is what the Lord finds when He visits a repentant U.S. in His holy justice (Chapters 10, 13-14): the past sinful nature and practices have been utterly cleansed and removed from our nation by Jesus’ sacrifice and God’s Spirit. Where there was abuse, there is restoration wherever possible. Our nation’s sinful past has largely shaped the U.S. culture at all times before being joined to the Lord Jesus, but a disciplined U.S. will have its sinful legacy (generational iniquity) wiped out in full reality.

How a Nation Can Receive This Marvelous Deliverance

A nation today can have its sinful legacy removed and also be transformed because of God's abundant grace toward the nation and by His forgiveness and power. The spiritual power of the sinful legacy is broken by receiving Jesus' sacrifice for His people, and He will guide His willing people to restore what they should for the damage caused by their sins (in practice God limits this correction of injustices, but He may require it, especially if it helps the repentance to be real for people). All of this transformation is worked out in God's people of a nation and in the nation as a whole through the obedience of faith as they do what God calls them to do. The need is not for government programs, but for changed hearts that change deeds.

Here are examples of what God calls the U.S. or its Church to do in the crucial generation: to redeem and restore black families in the Elijah ministry that God has given to the Church now (Chapter 13); to fulfill the four actions of 2Chron. 7:14 (Chapter 5), which prepares the U.S. for the Lord's coming to it in His holy justice (Chapters 10-14); and to be faithful to Israel during strong temptations and pressures (Apx. 2, 9, and the book on Obadiah).

God's grace for this transformation is released in specific ways and situations for the nation by intercessors in the Lord's holy throne room (Ob. 21 in Apx. 2, 5, and Zech. 12:10 in Apx. 12). There they intercede for individuals and govern their government (Apx. 2). This includes applying Jesus' blood for their nation's sins, interceding for God's Spirit to transform people and their nation, and asking God to bring their nation to become a part of His people and His possessions.

God's Special Grace to the Accountable Generation

I know that this concept of a nation's sinful legacy or generational

iniquity will be hard for people to accept, because it often involves guilt from sins we did not personally commit. Like it or not, if my nation is approaching its Day of the Lord, then I am in the generation that must resolve my nation's sins and iniquities throughout its history. We can truly join ourselves to Jesus as a nation, let Him pay our full national penalty, and be utterly transformed as we obey Him. Or we can go our own way and thereby need to pay the just penalty for unresolved sins in our history and for our rejection of God's enormous grace to our nation. This will justly wipe out our nation in a brutal enslavement.

Yes, sins and iniquity have been ripening and are now blossoming in our nation, but Paul revealed a principle when he discussed the increased transgression from being given the Law: *"But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"* (Rom. 5:20b). In Matt. 11:20-24 Jesus showed how the sins and just judgment of the cities that saw most of His miracles compared with Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom. Jesus showed that a greater grace to repent was given along with a greater responsibility to repent and a worse judgment for not repenting. Consistent with this truth, in the final calls to national repentance in both Joel 2 and Amos 5, the Bible reminds us that God is gracious.

Therefore God gives those who have a greater responsibility to repent a greater grace to repent. As a part of this grace, God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind in our land before the Day of the Lord comes to our land (or any land approaching its day). Therefore the obedience of faith from now on can produce results that cannot be predicted from past experience (Chapter 10). We must not prematurely give up on the repentance of our own sinful nation or any nation (Jer. 18:7-12, Chapter 8). Many Scriptures (some are in Chapter 8) show that God does not want any person or nation to be justly devastated: He does give a greater grace to this special generation to receive Him

at the crucial time.

Of course, we must respond to Him. Many people and nations do not receive Him and do get devastated. Most historical reports do not notice revivals, but over the last 40 years I have found reports of revivals in a few nations before their Days of the Lord. I see this as a confirmation that God does give a nation a final opportunity to escape the awful devastation that He wants the nation to avoid. But it and His people there must respond to His grace, and apparently the response by such nations was not adequate for the opportunity God gave them.

Remember that God will be completely just to every individual with or without the judgment of his/her nation, and through Jesus' sacrifice He will add mercy to those who let Him, who open themselves up to receive Him. We in the accountable generation do not have a choice about being responsible for our nation's sinful legacy, but we do have other choices. By chosen actions or inaction, believers corporately cause their nation to decisively choose Jesus or else miss its opportunity for life; and each believer in Him has a surprisingly large influence on what his nation ultimately chooses. And every believer in Jesus can be blessed for eternity, regardless of his nation's choice.

Appendix 5

GOVERNING THE EARTH NOW FROM MT. ZION

Some of the Lord's teachings are explicit, so that all who hear will understand unless their hearts distort what He says. Examples are His commandments and His desire for us to be loving, merciful, just, and righteous. Other teachings are simple enough for anyone with an open heart to understand, but they are given only to people who truly want to hear what God is saying. People who read the Bible with only their intellect can easily miss these teachings, and God does not force them on anyone. They are consistent with what He plainly says elsewhere in the Bible, but also go beyond that to provide valuable new insights and perspectives to those who hear what God is saying.

Jesus' parables are like this. God also uses terms figuratively at times. Examples include "sleep" for physical death, "die" for denying one's preferences in order to do God's will, and the "locusts" of Joel 1 (Chapter 3).

Realizing all of this, I believe that in some Scriptures God uses mountain figuratively to refer to government. God's government is a kingdom and Jesus is the King. We can find much evidence for this meaning, which enables many Scriptures about Mt. Zion and the Lord's holy mountain to provide useful insights to those who hear. But God does not force these pearls on anyone. In Apx. 5 we consider key Scriptures that open up important insights for those who deeply want God's government to come much more to the earth in our time. I shall make the basis for my conclusions clear, so that you can examine it.

Mt. Zion May Refer to the Lord's Holy Government of the Earth Now

The meanings of “spiritual Mt. Zion” and “heavenly Jerusalem” of Heb. 12:22-24 are so helpful for appreciating how the Minor Prophets apply to nations today that I discussed these terms in the book's appendix. I have used them as they appeared in key Scriptures for us, and have referred to this Apx. 5 for a more systematic treatment of this whole picture. Therefore here I include the key Scriptures and ideas about Mt. Zion and the Lord's holy throne room in the book's appendix, and I add many other related Scriptures to provide a fuller foundation.

Notice the key terms and the timing in Heb. 12:22-24, which was written to First Century believers:

*But **you have come to Mt. Zion** and to the **city of the living God**, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the **Judge of all**, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

This Scripture describes a spiritual place by using a series of terms, each one full of meaning. The terms “*general assembly*” and the “*church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven*” show this as the place for believers in Jesus to assemble before God now: people do not go there only after dying or in the millennium. In Heb. 12 this place is collectively called Mt. Zion as a contrast with the Mt. Sinai of the Old Testament, which is described in v. 18-21. This mountain does not refer to physical Mt. Zion or Jerusalem, but to a spiritual place where believers in Jesus since New Testament times have gone while living on earth.

Jesus confirms that this Jerusalem exists now: “...*Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King*” (Matt. 5:35); and “...*the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God...*”

(Rev. 3:12). Jesus spoke v. 12 1900+ years ago to a church that is no longer on earth: this was true then, and so Jerusalem does not begin to come to earth only after the rapture of the Church. This Mt. Zion, this heavenly Jerusalem, is a place that believers in Jesus could go during the last 2000 years, and at the same time is coming to earth. In this appendix we shall see that it will come much more in our day.

God is the heart of where we go. When Heb. 12:23 describes God in this Mt. Zion, only one of His many features is brought out: He is the Judge of all. This is a word for the leader of a government. This single appositive in Heb. 12:23 suggests that God's government is a key function done in this Mt. Zion. Yes, this *"is the city of the great **King**"*.

The use of mountain to represent government causes many Scriptures to burst forth with fresh insights for us. Joel 3:17a says: *"Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, **dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.**"* Joel 3:21 emphasizes a key point in Joel 3:17 by declaring that *"the **Lord dwells in Zion**"*. Many other Scriptures state that the Lord dwells in Zion: Ps. 9:11, 76:2, 132:13-14, and Isa. 8:18. All of these verses show that God declares "Zion" to mean "His holy mountain where He dwells".

Furthermore, Ps. 2:6 says, *"But as for Me, I have installed **My King upon Zion, My holy mountain**"*. In Biblical times a "king" was the head ruler of the government of a nation or nations, and all other government obtained its authority from him. The government under him included princes, administrators, and other government officials. They are raised up above the other people because they are related to the king or because he gives them some authority that raises them.

The context of Ps. 2:6 shows that it applies in a time of rebellion against the Lord, and not merely during the millennium. As in Joel 3, in Psalm 2 the nations and peoples are in an uproar and are taking a

stand together against the Lord, His Anointed, and His anointed people on earth. Jesus is reigning as King upon Mt. Zion now!

Many believers are very familiar with portions of Psalm 110, because they are often quoted from certain perspectives in the New Testament (especially showing Jesus' High Priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, and showing the Son of David's lordship over even father David). Here we see Psalm 110 from another perspective: His reign over the earth from Zion before many submit to Him – like we saw in Psalm 2. Ps. 110:1-3 speaks about Jesus:

*The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand **until** I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The LORD will stretch forth Your strong **scepter from Zion**, saying, "**Rule** in the midst of Your enemies." ³**Your people will volunteer freely** in the day of Your power; in **holy array**, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.*

A scepter is a rod carried by a king as a symbol of his authority. This Scripture shows King Jesus' ruling and reigning from Zion before His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. And Ps. 110:5-7 shows that He will shatter His enemies. Indeed, Psalm 110 is a warning and promise of wrath to rebellious nations and people similar to Psalm 2.

This theme of the reign of King Jesus from Zion in Ps. 110:1-2 flows into the voluntary service of the Lord's people in holiness in v. 3. This is a hint that we voluntarily participate in our Lord Jesus' reign from holy Mt. Zion during this time of transition toward making His enemies a footstool for His feet.

God's Throne Room Is Spiritual Mt. Zion, the Holy of Holies in Heaven

Psalm 99 shows us more about the Lord's reign over the earth from Mt. Zion now. Ps. 99:1-4a says:

¹*The **Lord reigns**, let the peoples tremble; He is **enthroned** above the **cherubim**, let the earth shake!* ²*The **Lord** is great **in Zion**, and*

*He is exalted above all the peoples. ³Let them praise Your great and awesome name; **holy** is He. ⁴The strength of the **King** loves justice.*

Notice that the Lord's reign over the earth is now, and v. 2 relates this with Zion. V. 1 adds a further insight: the Lord is enthroned above the cherubim, who are in the Holy of Holies. Therefore this shows that He is reigning from the Holy of Holies – the real one in heaven. This is the Lord's holy throne room, which is both the Holy of Holies in heaven and spiritual Mt. Zion. And v. 4 again brings out His kingship there.

The book of Hebrews shows us that the Holy of Holies in heaven (Heb. 10) and spiritual Mt. Zion (Heb. 12) are the same spiritual place. Let us see this by briefly surveying Hebrews (only 1.5 pages).

Heb. 13:22 says, *“But I urge you, brethren, bear with this **word of exhortation**, for I have written to you **briefly**.”* The whole book of Hebrews, with all of its rich insights and topics, is really a brief word of exhortation. What is the exhortation that ties everything together? It is for the Hebrew believers to enter by faith through the veil into the Holy of Holies by the perfect provision in our Lord and High Priest, Jesus.

In Heb. 1-4 the author first lays a foundation of who Jesus is, His becoming like us in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest, and our need to respond to God by faith and by resting from our own works. Then in Heb. 4 the author exhorts believers to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace through our great High Priest Jesus. This throne of grace in Heb. 4 is within the Holy of Holies in heaven.

Realizing that the Hebrews were really not prepared to respond to this exhortation (Heb. 5:11-14), the author then explains about Jesus being a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and explains that the whole Tabernacle of Moses – with its Holy of Holies, priests, and sacrifices – was merely a shadow and copy of the substance in heaven that is fulfilled in Jesus. This sets up the climactic exhortation

to draw near to God in the Holy of Holies in heaven (Heb. 10:19-25).

After giving a warning appropriate for entering the Holy of Holies, the author notes that the Hebrew believers were still not fully prepared to act on his exhortation: they were “***in need of endurance***” (Heb. 10:36). Therefore he strongly encourages them by expressing confidence in them, by reminding them of God's faithfulness to reward those who remain faithful by faith, and by giving many inspirational examples of those who preceded them and kept their faith in God through tough trials (Heb. 11). Then the author adds exhortations for them to endure: to consider Jesus the Author and Perfecter of faith, to endure God's Fatherly discipline for them, and to strengthen others among them who are weak, feeble, or otherwise coming up short.

With these encouragements and exhortations for endurance completed, the author returns immediately (Heb. 12:22-24, p. 66) to describe what is within the veil to the Holy of Holies in heaven. But this time he calls this place “*Mt. Zion*” to contrast it with the Mt. Sinai of the Law (v. 18-21). He describes what is within the veil to the Holy of Holies by merely giving a series of terms – Mt. Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, etc. – each one full of relevant meanings for the Hebrew believers. The author was truly making his description brief.

Hebrews ends with a brief description of the lifestyle fitting for those who draw near to God in the Holy of Holies or Mt. Zion, plus a benediction and a few personal remarks.

What is the conclusion from this survey of Hebrews? The spiritual Mt. Zion of Heb. 12:22-24 is the same place as the Holy of Holies in heaven of Heb. 10:19-22. They are separated only by a most fitting encouragement and exhortation for the Hebrew believers to endure to the end for their reward.

This identification opens up many Scriptures that can provide us

very useful insights. Let us begin by returning to Psalm 99, which helps us to see that Zion and the Holy of Holies are also the Lord's holy throne room in heaven.

Appropriate for discussing Zion and the Lord's reign of the earth from above the cherubim in the true Holy of Holies, the Lord repeatedly tells us that He is holy (Ps. 99:3, 5, 9). Moreover, v. 8 shows that this is the wrong place for a priest to take his unresolved sins: the Lord was a forgiving God to people like Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and yet He was an avenger of their evil deeds. We shall soon see some further practical effects of God's holiness on Mt. Zion and the Holy of Holies as we examine Psalms 24 and 15 and more (on p. 78-87).

The conclusion to Psalm 99 is v. 9: *"Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His **holy hill**; for **holy** is the Lord our God."* The Hebrew word for "hill" (*har*) in this verse is the same word that is translated "mountain" in the other verses where the Lord identifies "Mt. Zion" as "My holy mountain". The apparent difference in English translations of this word for "hill" or "mountain" does not exist in Hebrew in this verse and everywhere that we discuss "hill" in this appendix (especially *har* in Psalms 15 and 24). Therefore Ps. 99:9 says the Lord's holy mountain, and the context of Psalm 99 identifies this as Mt. Zion, His holy throne room.

God's Chief Government of the Earth Now from Mt. Zion and Jerusalem

God gives a mighty prophecy, Micah 4:1-3a, but to get its meaning we need to appreciate the meaning of the term "the last days". In Acts 2:16-17 Peter applied Joel's prophecy to Pentecost about 2000 years ago: *"But this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be **in the last days**,' God says, 'that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind....'"* Therefore God provides a Scripture to show that

“the last days” had begun 2000 years ago, and we should check if a key prophecy for “the last days” does or does not apply in our day.

Micah 4:1-3a and Isa. 2:2-4a are extremely similar prophecies for “the last days”: they differ mostly by switching “nations” and “peoples”. Most of this prophecy is very helpful for understanding what is happening now and what can happen now on Mt. Zion, the Lord’s holy throne room. This prophecy for now does not include the last part of Micah 4:3 or Isa. 2:4, because they state:

Then they will hammer their **swords into plowshares** and their **spears into pruning hooks**; nation will **not** lift up sword against nation, and **never again** will they **train for** [or, **learn**] **war**.

This part of the verse is exactly opposite to Joel 3:10, which tells the nations against Him and His people to “**beat your *plowshares into swords* and your *pruning hooks into spears*...**” This applies in our day of wars and Micah 4:3b must come after it: after v. 3b they never again train for war. V. 3b is after the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles and Jesus’ return. Other Scriptures (Luke 21:9-10, Matt. 24:6-7, and Joel 3:1-2) that are explicitly for this time leading up to the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles confirm that Micah 4:3b does not apply today. (Apx. 10 shows how the unique development of nations now identifies our day as leading up to this consummation).

In contrast to Micah 4:3b, Micah 4:1-3a harmonizes with Heb. 1:2, Heb. 12:22-24, Psalms 2 and 110, Joel 2-3, Luke 21, Zech. 2:11, Matt. 28:18-20, and many other Scriptures for this time leading up to Jesus’ return. Micah 4:1-3a is a key to discipling whole nations to the Lord Jesus, which will take place in our day. (This split in prophetic timing is similar to the split within Isa. 61:2 for Jesus’ first and second coming: you may compare Isa. 61:2 with Luke 4:18-19). Here is Micah 4:1-3a:

*¹And it will come about in the last days that the **mountain of the***

house of the Lord will be established as the **chief of the mountains**. It will be raised above the hills [not har, but a different Hebrew word], and the peoples will stream to it. ²And **many nations** will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the **mountain of the Lord** and to the **house of the God** of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For **from Zion will go forth the law**, even the **word of the Lord from Jerusalem**. ³And **He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations**. (Micah 4:1-3a)

V. 1-3a show clearly the Lord's reign over the peoples and nations of the earth from Mt. Zion. His law, word, judgments (including mercy), and decisions will be going forth from Zion and Jerusalem to whole nations in addition to individuals. His judging between many peoples (v. 3a) is very much needed now because of greedy aggressors and rebellious rulers (Psalm 2).

This picture fits into Isa. 60:1-3 (Apx. 7), which shows nations and kings coming to the light of the Lord on His people when darkness is covering the earth and deep darkness the peoples. Both Scriptures fit into fulfilling the Great Commission with the discipling of nations to the Lord Jesus (in Matt. 28:18-20 and Zech. 2:11). Moreover, all of this is fulfilling Joel 2, which is occurring nation-by-nation in our day (and also before our day), but will not after Jesus returns to the earth.

How do we fit into God's government? Are we mere spectators?

Our Participation in God's Chief Government of the Earth Now

"But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (Heb. 3:6). "Mountain" as "government" in Micah 4:1 shows that the government of the Lord's house – His faithful people, us – will be established as the chief of the earth's governments. Many nations and peoples will come to this government of His people (v. 2, Isa. 60:3). If the chief government of the earth is

the government of “the house of the Lord”, then we believers on Mt. Zion must have a key role in His government. Let us see how the connotations of Zion and Jerusalem in v. 2 confirm our participation.

Insights from Connotations of Jerusalem and Zion

Mt. Zion is the mountain on which the city of Jerusalem is built: they are the same location. Anyone away from physical “Zion” could use either term to refer to that location. Now consider Heb. 12:22: *“But you have come to Mt. Zion and to the **city** of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...”* Both are the same place, but Jerusalem adds a meaning of a “city”: a city has people dwelling there. In contrast, Zion adds a meaning of the Lord’s holy throne room and dwelling place.

Micah 4:2 shows that the law will go forth from Zion – the Lord’s holy throne room and dwelling place – directly to people in their consciences. The word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem, which is the city of the living God – His people who are abiding in Christ and who have come to His holy throne room. His law and word are the basis for judgments between peoples and decisions for nations (Micah 4:3). This is one way that we actively participate in this government.

Let us verify these connotations of Jerusalem and Zion. As physical Jerusalem is built on physical Mt. Zion, so is the heavenly Jerusalem built on spiritual Mt. Zion. Physical Mt. Zion is the rock of foundation on which the people of physical Jerusalem build their homes. Likewise, spiritual Mt. Zion provides the foundation on which the people of heavenly Jerusalem construct their ways to live on earth.

As indicated, anyone not located in “Jerusalem” could use either term to refer to that physical site – or to that spiritual site. Spiritually, both are the dwelling place of both the Lord and His abiding people, but each term provides its emphasis. Specifically, the Lord dwells both

in Mt. Zion and within His people in our dwelling place, Jerusalem. And His people can also dwell in the Lord and on His holy mountain, Mt. Zion (Psalm 15, p. 81). This relationship is like that of Jesus and His believers: we are to abide in Christ and let Christ abide in us (John 14:10-11, 20-23, and 15:4-7, 1John 3:24 and 4:13-16).

Nevertheless, this shift in emphasis often gives us extra insights, as illustrated in the following example. Joel 3:16 says that *“the Lord roars from Zion and utters [lit., “gives”] His voice from Jerusalem...”*. Amos 1:2 says the same thing for a similar but different situation.

In both cases the situations involve unrepentant people who are approaching the Day of the Lord judgment, and God’s Spirit is poured out on all mankind at that time (Joel 2:28-31, Chapter 10 and its Supplement). God speaks repentance and the law (the law of the Spirit and righteousness that Romans explains) to consciences directly from Zion; but people tend to hear Him as the roar of a lion instead of as their Father – with that quiet voice that believers easily miss if we do not try to listen to Him. Rebellious hearts do not welcome Him or His word and do not receive Him as their Father. The panic reaction to the dreaded roar of the Lord caused by their rebellion prevents them from comprehending practically all He is saying to them, and Satan is doing all that he can to add to their intimidation and confusion.

Therefore God also communicates to the peoples and nations – and specifically to the individuals therein – by giving His words more clearly and softly from Jerusalem. In this way God speaks to a land through His people who abide in the holiness of Christ, so that people in the land get an opportunity to hear, see, and understand His words to them without the confusion, denial, defense mechanisms, and utter panic of their reaction to Almighty God’s rightly convicting words.

God corrects His people first, and so we have an opportunity to

construct our lifestyles according to His word in the living conditions of the land before we try to teach others how to live. This can give us empathy for others and also help us learn His real solutions. Through His people God will show and tell the other people how to live in our land, and what to correct in order to “*walk in His paths*” (Micah 4:2).

In this way, Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2 show the teamwork of God's direct conviction by the Holy Spirit and the word of testimony from the Lord's people. Both work to help sinful nations repent as individual nations approach their judgments (Joel 1-2, Amos 1, Chapters 5-8), or at the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles (Joel 3, Apx. 10). As indicated in Chapter 10, both of these situations are before the great and awesome day of the Lord, when God pours out His Spirit on all mankind in a specific land or in all the earth (Joel 2:28-31).

A practical consequence of this insight is that we can pray with faith for God to do His part while we do our part in witnessing to a person. We can expect Him to convict people when we pray for them and give them His word. Realizing that God is roaring directly, we can focus on giving a clear expression of what God is truly saying instead of trying to speak an especially fiery word for soulish conversion. This helps us to appreciate our teamwork, and our dynamic interaction with our Father increases our joy and love for Him (John 15:7-11, 16:24).

There is an insight about “the heavenly Jerusalem” which was discussed near the beginning (p. 66-67). Now we can elaborate on it. In Rev. 3:12 the Lord Jesus calls the city of His God “*the **new Jerusalem**, which **comes down out of heaven** from My God*”. As previously indicated, this was in the present tense 1900+ years ago. Consider how this happens now: when God's people are abiding in Him with obedience while living their lives on earth, isn't the heavenly Jerusalem coming to their individually small portions of the earth?

We do not see a strong manifestation of the heavenly Jerusalem on most of the earth 2000 years later. Micah 4:1-3a has also been valid for this time. Why isn't there a greater manifestation of the Lord's government on earth for so long? Considering Ephesians (Chapter 4), 2Chron. 7:14 (Chapter 5), and many other Scriptures, I conclude that this weak manifestation is caused by our not governing and walking according to His will. Specifically, in the time since Jesus' ascension and Pentecost, our failure to stand in our place before His face on Mt. Zion and the Holy of Holies has been a bottleneck that in practice has limited how much His perfect will and His kingdom (government) comes to the earth. This failure causes other failures.

Here is good news: Scriptures like Eph. 4:13-16 and 3:9-10, Isa. 60:1-3, Malachi, and Zech. 2:11 convince me that God will greatly improve the intercession and daily life of His people before Jesus returns for His Church (we consider this further in Apx. 6 and 7).

Therefore let us not assume from our past record that "heavenly Jerusalem" will not greatly increase on earth in even the near future! I believe this Jerusalem is now coming to earth to the extent that we are praying – interceding on holy Mt. Zion and walking accordingly on earth – that our Father's kingdom come and His will be done in specific people, situations, and governments on earth as it is in heaven.

Spiritual Mt. Zion Identified by the Scriptures in Apx. 5

The Scriptures in Apx. 5 have revealed a "spiritual Mt. Zion", so that now we can precisely identify it. This Mt. Zion is the Lord's holy mountain and throne room where He dwells (p. 67) and reigns in His pure holiness (p. 68-71), and from which He sends forth His law, mercies, and judgments to whole nations in addition to individuals (p. 73). Therefore Mt. Zion today is the seat (center) of God's government

of the whole earth. His people are to participate actively in His government to bring His will from heaven to earth – to both individuals and governments (p. 73-77).

Notice how the meaning of “mountain” as “government” makes many Scriptures bloom with insights. Notice too how connotations of Jerusalem and Zion also open up insights from many Scriptures.

In Psalm 99 (p. 71) we began to see how God's pure holiness affects us in His government of the earth in His holy throne room. Let us see further effects of His holiness in Psalms 24 and 15. Remember also from p. 71 that the word for “mountain” (*har*) is translated as “hill” in these Psalms: this is the Lord's holy mountain. A Bible study on p. 90-91 confirms that “His holy hill” today is Mt. Zion.

Psalm 24: Standing in Mt. Zion by Receiving Righteousness from God

The Hebrew Scriptures – the Old Testament – often uses a literary device called a “parallelism”, where God says or asks the same idea, almost the same idea, or a contrasting or opposite idea in two different ways by using closely corresponding terms. In Psalm 24 alone, there are parallelisms in v. 1, 2, 3, 7, and v. 8 with v. 10. Here we shall examine v. 3-6, so that we shall quickly see one.

V. 3 asks key questions in this parallelism: “*Who may **ascend** into the **hill of the Lord**? And who may **stand** in **His holy place**?*” These parallel questions again connect the Lord's hill (*har*) – spiritual Mt. Zion – with His holy place, which is the Holy of Holies in heaven.

And so who may ascend spiritual Mt. Zion and stand in the Holy of Holies in heaven? Ps. 24:4-6 provides a Scriptural answer:

*⁴He who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully. ⁵He shall **receive** a blessing from the Lord and **righteousness from the God** of his salvation. ⁶This is the generation of those who seek Him, who*

seek Your face – even Jacob.

James 4:8 gives tremendous insight into how Ps. 24:4a helps us to draw near to God, which can take us to His holy place or throne:

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Sinners and double-minded people each have a problem that keeps them from drawing near to God effectively. Sinners have a problem with what they do, which is represented by their hands. Therefore they need to “cleanse their hands” in order to draw near to God. Sinners can be cleansed from their sins by confession (1John 1:9): in confession I honestly say what God says about the real issues, so that I repent and receive His forgiveness in Jesus by faith.

James 4:8 is a parallelism with precisely corresponding parts. Double-minded people have a problem: they want to draw near to God and at the same time want something else that is pulling them away from following through with their good intentions. (Consider Matt. 6:21 and its context: a person's heart is with his treasure, or what he values most.) Therefore one who is double-minded needs to purify his heart – his whole “inner man” (his soul, spirit, etc.) – from his wrong desires, which distract him away from God and give rise to manipulative, deceitful, selfish, or twisted motives, attitudes, and actions.

In these ways James 4:8 with Ps. 24:4 shows our need for clean hands and a pure heart to draw near to God in the Holy of Holies or on Mt. Zion, the Lord's holy throne room. This requirement for ascending Mt. Zion and standing in the Holy of Holies is fitting for coming and participating at the seat of God's government of the earth. Such a person can pray and intercede better for bringing God's will and His kingdom to earth in specific people and situations and ways, because

his prayers are not twisted by selfish or self-serving motives, attitudes, or goals. (On p. 82-87 we return to how God protects His government.)

The rest of Ps. 24:4 shows a manifestation of purifying the heart: those who ascend and stand on Mt. Zion have not been lying and deceiving in their personal lives.

Ps. 24:5 shows that the person who ascends Mt. Zion with clean hands and a pure heart and “*shall receive...**righteousness from the God of His salvation***”. This enables him to stand in the Holy of Holies – God’s pure holiness in His holy throne room, His seat of government of the earth. Even the best person’s righteousness pollutes this purity, and so God provides His righteousness to His people in Jesus for this purpose. What a special “Old Testament insight”! And other than believers in Jesus, who receives this marvelous provision?

The final feature that we shall examine in the Lord’s answer in Ps. 24:4-6 is “*who seek Your face*” in v. 6. V. 3-6 show that “seeking the Lord’s face” is fulfilled in His holy place. Consider this position directly in front of His face in His pure holiness at the seat of His government of the earth: what is a more fitting place to intercede to God for individuals and even entire nations – to hear and pray His will? In view of this, consider 2Chron. 7:14 again: the third action in order to heal a land is for the Lord’s people in the land to “*seek My face*”.

Why does God use “Jacob” in the context of seeking His face in Ps. 24:6? Why not his newer, God-given name of Israel? By name and nature Jacob was a supplanter or conniver, seeking to get what he wants by trickery or treachery if he cannot see another means. But Jacob’s name and nature were both changed as he wrestled with God (Gen. 32:22-32), and after this he was a broken man who walked with a limp. Likewise, we typically begin seeking our Lord’s face with our own willful desires, but as we continue to seek His face we are

transformed into Christ's image and embrace God's desires.

Psalm 15's Addition to Psalm 24: Live Righteously to Stay in Zion

Ps. 24:3-6 provides the big picture, while Psalm 15 gets specific in our daily personal conduct. These two Scriptures together provide a balance that is easily missed by considering only one of them.

Ps. 15:1 asks these parallel questions: “O **Lord**, who may **abide** in **Your tent**? Who may **dwell** on **Your holy hill** [har]?” His tent was the Tabernacle of Moses, and specifically the Holy of Holies in it. This is asking the Lord, “Whom do You allow to abide or dwell in heaven’s Holy of Holies or spiritual Mt. Zion – Your holy throne room?”

The remainder of Psalm 15 (v. 2-5) answers this pair of questions:

*²He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. ³He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; ⁴in whose eyes a **reprobate** is despised, but who honors **those** who **fear the Lord**; he swears to **his own hurt**, and does not change; ⁵he does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.*

This answer shows that a person who dwells in God’s holy throne room practices personal integrity and faithfulness that overcome self-serving desires. V. 2-5 specify his speech, conduct, and attitude toward others, and his consistent discernment in practice between people who fear the Lord and reprobates. He does not change his word of commitment even if it hurts him to fulfill it. He refuses to be greedy (charge no interest) and refuses bribes to corrupt justice.

All of this shows that the righteousness from God which He puts into the person is also being worked out in his personal life. Ps. 24:5 shows that God gives us the thorough righteousness required by His pure holiness on Mt. Zion. Psalm 15 adds to this foundation, showing that in order to abide and dwell on Mt. Zion, we must faithfully express

His righteousness in our daily living. We are kept out of this error: that the clean hands and pure heart refer only to the great cleanup by Jesus and the Holy Spirit when we prepare for His holy place. This cleanup is complete, but might not keep us abiding in God's holiness.

This added foundation from Psalm 15 is strongly supported by 1John 3:7a: *"Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who **practices righteousness** is righteous."*

God's Pure Holiness Causing a Better Government of the Earth

I said that God calls His people to participate in His government of the earth on Mt. Zion. One of the most pleasing confirmations of this claim is to see how His requirements for us to ascend and dwell in His holy throne room are ideal for establishing a good and just government by intercession. People in government there seek what is right, just, and good far more than they seek for their own provisions. (The earth already has too many governments whose officials seek foremost to serve themselves). Consider how these Psalms fit into our governing.

We saw (p. 79-80) how the Lord's requirements of clean hands and a pure heart in Ps. 24:4 purify the intercession for bringing our Father's will and His kingdom to earth in specific people and situations. Specifically, the purified heart has removed selfish and deceitful goals, attitudes, and motives. Psalm 15 further limits the people who can abide or dwell at the seat of His government: they also must have overcome their self-serving desires in their own personal deeds. This leads to the practical result that their prayer requests are committed to justice and not pulled away from God's will by seeking foremost for oneself, bad discernment, or more subtle problems of impure hearts.

Let us go deeper. *"He swears to his own hurt, and does not change"* (Ps. 15:4b) shows that he refuses to back down on his oath even if it hurts him to carry it out. This requirement shows that these

people in God's holy government have overcome personal temptations for comfort, convenience, and other short-term gains. Ps. 15:4a shows that they who abide or dwell on His holy hill consistently discern between those who fear the Lord (who repent when they see their sins) and reprobates (who will never repent). This discerning must be consistent: to judge one person wrongly can condemn the innocent, an awful sin.

Heb. 5:14 says: *"But solid food is for the **mature**, who **because of practice** have their senses trained to discern good and evil."* Good discernment comes from a long practice of realizing what is God's Spirit or work, and what turns out to be from flesh or tricky evil spirits. Discernment also comes from learning wisdom from God about His ways and work with many people and situations: much of this wisdom is clearly given in the Bible and discovered after many not-so-wise experiences. Discernment is developed with good long-term practice.

To illustrate, one may fail to appreciate that a temporarily "bad situation" or a certain stage of development may be needed for ultimately producing extremely good results in an individual or individuals. As a specific example, it may have been very good for my ultimate development to go through a five-year period in my teens, during which I lost confidence in any organized church, the Bible as God's word, and eventually in the existence of a personal God who cared or did anything on earth now. This was followed by ten years of essentially being an agnostic or atheist, during which time I sowed the seeds to destroy my marriage and created other problems.

What great good did God work in me by letting me go through this destructive stage of development? Later I saw clearly how corruptible and bankrupt I am without Jesus as my intimate Lord, and the Holy Spirit and the Bible as my guide. My heart thoroughly knows that I can

produce nothing truly good and constructive apart from the true God. No matter what the situation since I repented and came to know the living God, my heart has not looked for “greener pastures” away from Him – and I know that I would have if I had not found the emptiness of solutions without God. Like Peter in a trying situation, I can ask, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). My heart really knows the answer: nobody and nowhere!

Therefore people who may abide or dwell in the Lord's holy throne room consistently discern His will for various situations and people by the Holy Spirit. Should a situation be quickly changed? Or do specific people need greater strength from God to persevere through a situation while intercessors patiently pray for perseverance? Or have specific people become truly reprobate and ripe only for God's just judgment? Or does God propose some other alternative? For example, if people in a land desperately need to wake up and respond to Jesus, it is not good to pray against every shaking, but instead to pray for us to wake up, or pray for our response, or pray for God's will that each person receive his full opportunity to respond to God, or pray....

Ps. 15:4 gives wonderful requirements for being a part of God's holy government, because self-seeking desires and short-term gains easily blind a would-be intercessor from seeing and appreciating God's eternal purposes in other people and situations as well as for oneself.

To summarize, the requirements of God's holiness in Psalms 15 and 24 for ascending and dwelling on the Lord's holy mountain serve to keep many people – including “carnal Christians” – from coming, standing (participating), and dwelling (staying) at the seat of the Lord's holy government of the earth until they become adequately prepared for this. From a “New Testament” perspective, prepared people must be believers in Christ Jesus, who receive righteousness from Him and

have let the Holy Spirit work reliably with power to produce integrity, faithfulness, and discernment in their personal daily walk, conduct, and speech. Moreover, the believer needs to walk without serving himself foremost, even allowing himself to get hurt in order to do good and be just. Therefore in God's government on Mt. Zion, he shall seek God's will to be done over his own will, and shall discern what God's will is.

More Scriptures on God Protecting His Government by Pure Holiness

God's holiness justly keeps sinners and workers of lawlessness from approaching this seat of power lightly or without a just judgment.

Isa. 33:5 says that the Lord ***“has filled Zion with justice and righteousness”***. Isa. 33:14 adds, ***“Sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning?”*** In Isa. 31:9 the Lord says that His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem. These Scriptures can help anyone see that Zion is a terrible place for an unrighteous, unrepentant person, because God's pure holiness is calling for all that is unclean and impure in Zion to be burnt and purged in His justice and righteousness. This is a severe problem for anyone who refuses to separate himself from a sin.

Ex. 26:33 says, ***“...the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies”***. By preventing sinful people from entering into the presence of God's unveiled pure holiness in heaven, the veil in heaven serves to protect them from prematurely receiving the just judgment required by His pure holiness there. In that sinful condition they would provoke a just judgment, perhaps death, instead of receiving true life. God desires that each of us have our full opportunity to repent – to change our heart-attitudes about our sins and sinfulness – and to come to life in Jesus. This means that a

premature just judgment may also be an unnecessary one.

God ripped open the veils to the Holy of Holies on earth and in heaven when Jesus was crucified, and His flesh broken for us is the way through the veil in heaven. His loving grace and just requirements for ascending, standing, abiding, and dwelling in His pure holiness has kept and keeps many believers from a premature and unnecessary just judgment. God wants our coming before Him to be life-giving in Jesus, not curse-producing. He also wants His chief government of the earth to be a good one, not self-seeking and undiscerning.

To keep us from trying to get holy by our own strength if we find ourselves failing to remove a sin quickly, notice the balance of God's holiness and His grace and provision to those who seek Him humbly:

*For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a **high and holy place**, and **also with the contrite and lowly of spirit** in order to **revive** the spirit of the lowly and to **revive** the heart of the contrite."* (Isa. 57:15)

Do you recognize the high and holy place where the Lord dwells? It is Mt. Zion, His holy throne room. The contrite are revived there! It is vital to honor God's holiness while one is not yet holy in himself, but the good response is to receive humbly what God provides by faith for those in Jesus (which includes a humble, repentant attitude). By freely receiving His costly forgiveness and love, we can grow in our love for God. We do not shrink back into trying to live apart from God until we get holy enough. But if we want to stand, abide, and dwell on Mt. Zion, then we must also let God's righteousness come out in daily living (Psalms 24 and 15 again).

Luke 1:74-75 shows that God grants the descendants of Abraham (by faith) the opportunity to "*serve Him **without fear**, in **holiness and righteousness** before Him [lit., **in front of His eyes**] all our days*".

Successfully seeking the Lord's face puts us in front of His eyes. God faithfully provides each of His people with all that is needed for being blessed by drawing near to God in the Holy of Holies. And to all who want to be complete believers, God promises to reveal any attitude that is not pressing on to their upward call in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14-15). Heb. 7:25 proclaims: *"Therefore He is able to **save** forever [lit., completely] those who **draw near to God through Him**, since He always lives to make **intercession for them**."*

What do we see? Our great High Priest Jesus fully provides for us, so that we may draw near to God for our life and the lives of others.

Further Insights About Zion in Two Psalms.

Ps. 84:5-7 can add insights about the spiritual meaning of Zion:

*⁵How blessed is the man whose strength is in You; **in whose heart are the highways to Zion!** ⁶Passing through the valley of Baca [weeping], they make it a spring, the early rain also covers it with blessings. ⁷They go from strength to strength, every one of them **appears before God in Zion**.*

V. 7 specifies Zion as a place where certain people appear before God. This picture fits perfectly into Heb. 12:22-24: the place where believers in Jesus go when they come before God is called "Mt. Zion". But v. 5 adds a new perspective: the roads to Zion are in the heart of a believer. This makes sense: the Father and Son dwell there (John 14:23), and Ps. 24:3-4 and James 4:8 call for pure hearts. V. 5-7 emphasize that we go to Zion in our hearts, and help to prevent us from projecting spiritual Mt. Zion to be some place "out there".

Also notice that the people of Ps. 84:5-7 have found the power of the Holy Spirit (as symbolized by the "spring" and the "early rain") to make harsh problems or tribulations (the valley of weeping) to become a spring with blessings. Finally, our strength is in God (v. 5): this can

remind us believers in Jesus that our good works come through our “Sabbath rest” in God while we rest from our own works (Heb. 4).

Psalms 132 can also add to our understanding of “Zion”. Notice that v. 7 exhorts “us” to go to the Lord’s place, and v. 8-9 are a prayer.

*⁷Let us **go** into **His dwelling place**; let us **worship** at His footstool. ⁸Arise, O **Lord**, to **Your resting place**, You, and the ark of Your strength. ⁹Let **Your priests** be **clothed with righteousness**, and let Your godly ones **sing for joy**. (Psalm 132:7-9)*

V. 8-9 are a prayer for us to meet the Lord at His resting place (v. 13-14 identify this to be Zion, where He dwells), for His priests to be clothed with righteousness, and for His godly ones to sing for joy. Indeed, notice how v. 13-16 show the answer to this prayer and more:

*¹³For the Lord has chosen **Zion**; He has desired it for **His habitation**. ¹⁴This is **My resting place** forever; here **I will dwell**, for I have desired it. ¹⁵I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread. ¹⁶**Her priests** also I will **clothe with salvation**, and her **godly ones** will **sing aloud for joy**.*

Notice how God’s promise to clothe Zion’s priests with salvation answers the prayer in v. 9 with a remarkable Old Testament insight: God clothes believers who draw near to Him in Zion with the saving righteousness of Jesus (this is like the same rare insight in Ps. 24:5). Ps. 132:7-16 can help us to appreciate even more fully the great and abundant provisions that Jesus made for us to come before our God on holy spiritual Mt. Zion and the Holy of Holies in heaven.

V. 18 adds that the crown (which indicates a king or high priest) of the Lord’s Anointed One shall shine upon Himself. Jesus is the King and High Priest of believers, and His believers form a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 1Pet. 2:9). Ps. 132:18 describes the “spiritual Mt. Zion” of Heb. 12:22-24, where His believers have been going for the past 2000 years through our great High Priest and King.

A Conclusion: Our Self-Limited Participation in God's Government Now

Chapter 5 emphasized that we draw near to our Father in Mt. Zion or the Holy of Holies primarily for intimate personal fellowship. All of the Scriptures in this Apx. 5 can help us appreciate that this also is the spiritual place for us to participate in His government of the earth by His Spirit and according to His will. As I consider how little most of the Body of Christ has participated up to now – so many of us are not even aware that we should be participating in God's government of the earth from spiritual Mt. Zion – I believe that these Scriptures are worthy of our prayerful consideration, digestion, and personal application.

This Apx. 5 has focused on Scriptures about spiritual Mt Zion, and we have seen many clues about our participation in God's government of the earth from there. In this paragraph I present a picture without its Scriptural justification that also strongly suggests our participation in His government there: God calls us to be conformed into the image of Christ Jesus, who was like God except for the limitations He took on to live on earth in a human body. God adopts us believers in Jesus to be His children, and as His adopted children we increasingly adopt His ways over our previous ones in our lives. One way is that He judges justly: we are to learn to judge not with our limited perspectives, but with our Father's judgment that provides righteous justice and mercy. We need to be humble enough to appreciate our great ability to err if we do not provide His righteous judgment. Then we might get an opportunity on spiritual Mt. Zion to judge a government of the earth.

Consider Paul's "mysterious" question in 1Cor. 6:2a: "*Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?*" What might surprise us is that God is calling us to move into some of this judging now, even while we avoid judging without discerning His judgment (Matt. 7:1-5).

In the Bible, the Lord's Holy Mountain Now Is Mt. Zion

This section is a little appendix to Apx. 5 – a Bible study to verify that Mt. Zion is the only mountain that the Lord clearly calls “My holy mountain” in our day of rebellion. Then we can know that when the Lord says “*My holy hill*” (or mountain) for a time that includes today, He refers to Mt. Zion – even if He does not mention it by name in the context. Many readers can accept this conclusion and may want to skip this 2-page section, which sets us up to understand Psalms 15 and 24 (p. 78-85).

First, realize that Zion is the mountain on which the city Jerusalem is located. We saw (p. 74-77) that each term has its connotation, but both refer to the same physical or spiritual (Heb. 12:22-24) place.

Next, realize that the Bible consistently refers to “the mountain of God” in a different way than “the LORD’s holy mountain”. The mountain of God most often refers to Mt. Horeb, which is Mt. Sinai. Heb. 12:18-24 contrasts Mt. Zion with Mt. Sinai, which brings out the contrast between LORD (*YHWH*) and God (*Elohim*). *Elohim* is an impersonal title and *YHWH* is His name, which is His character or nature. *YHWH* is the name given to those who can know Him better than only as the impersonal God of the Law. Mt. Sinai’s majesty can inspire an awe that hinders getting to know what God is like as a person. Through Jesus we can relate intimately with God on Mt. Zion, which helps us to worship Him with His holy majesty without being paralyzed by it.

(Note: the New Testament translates the Hebrew words for both “LORD” and “Lord” with the same word “*kurios*” or “Lord”, and I also use the same word “Lord” except in the preceding paragraph).

In Ps. 68:15-16 Bashan is called “a mountain of God”. Then it is asked why it looks with envy at the mountain which God has desired for His abode – the Lord will dwell there forever. This reinforces our

conclusion that His chosen mountain and dwelling place is spiritual Mt. Zion – not because it is a majestic mountain, but because He chose it.

Ignoring Mt. Zion, Jerusalem, and mountain of God, I find a holy *har* (mountain or hill) in only the following Scriptures: Ps. 3:4, 15:1, 24:3, 43:3, 87:1, 99:9, Isa. 11:9, 56:7, 57:13, 65:11, 65:25, Jer. 31:23, Ez. 20:40, Ob. 16, Zeph. 3:11, and Zech. 8:3. Except for Ez. 20:40, all are consistent with “the Lord’s holy mountain” being “Mt. Zion”, and none suggests a different location.

Ez. 20:40a says: “*For on My holy mountain, the **high mountain of Israel**,’ declares the Lord God, ‘there the **whole house of Israel**, all of them, will **serve Me in the land**.’*” V. 40 shows that the high mountain of Israel is the Lord’s holy mountain. If Israel’s spiritually high mountain is Mt. Zion, then the rest of this section shows that Mt. Zion is the only mountain that the Bible identifies as the Lord’s holy mountain.

But it is slightly possible that v. 40 is the only verse in the Bible saying that another mountain in Israel is the Lord’s holy mountain. Even if this slight possibility were true, this section’s conclusion stands. Ez. 20:40 does not fit today because Ez. 20:38-44 occurs when God has regathered the whole house of Israel from the nations, and when all Israel is serving Him in the land. I see v. 40 as describing the future when “*all Israel will be saved*” (Rom. 11:26). And when all Israel is saved (Apx. 12), it will be serving Him on spiritual Mt. Zion. This is being set up now for later in “our day”, but v. 40 is not yet happening.

From examining these Scriptures and the ones on p. 66-67, I conclude that Mt. Zion is the Lord’s holy mountain where He dwells, and also the reverse: that “the Lord’s holy mountain” today refers to “Mt. Zion”.

An Application of Apx. 5: Mt. Zion and Its Related Terms in Obadiah

Readers of Apx. 5 and also Apx. 2 or my book on Obadiah and the U.S. (p. 211) have a unique opportunity. Apx. 5 (p. 65-91) equips us to better understand how Mt. Zion, Zion, the Lord's holy mountain, and the mountain of Esau are used in Obadiah. In both Apx. 2 and my book on Obadiah, I introduced meanings of these terms as they arose while explaining the applications of Obadiah today. In this section (an appendix to Apx. 5), I shall quote statements in Apx. 2 or my book about the meanings of these terms. I did not use Obadiah in Apx. 5 (p. 65-91), so that readers of Apx. 2 or my book can see that I did not make up a meaning to get an interpretation for any verse in Obadiah.

Obadiah is addressed to and about Edom, the nation descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob. They were the only sons of Isaac and were grandsons of Abraham. There is a thorough analogy between ancient Edom and nations today with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage from past generations (I stated this on p. 20 in Apx. 2 and explained it with many practical applications in Chapter 2 of the Obadiah book). I called such a nation a "modern Edom", and this specifically includes the United States.

There is a key new term that we need to discuss in this section: the connotation of "Esau" in Obadiah. God inspired Obadiah to use "Esau" to represent Edom six times – four times in the term "**mountain of Esau**". "Esau" adds a connotation to "Edom": the nation's foundation laid by its forefathers, and more specifically to the Judeo-Christian part of the foundation. Esau's Judeo-Christian contribution to ancient Edom's foundation was weak, but it was probably all that the nation received: Esau married two wives from a pagan nation, and "*they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah*" (Gen. 26:35) – not joy from their

conversion. (The Bible also does not show any positive result from Esau's marrying a third wife as a token to appease his parents.)

In Ob. 6 "Esau" adds this reminder: the U.S. has special blessings that come through its relationship with God's people of the promise in past generations (Christian forefathers). The U.S. is tempted to deny this relationship now and repudiate it later in order to be like a stranger or foreigner (Ob. 11, Apx. 2, or Chapters 2, 4, 9 in the Obadiah book).

"House" in *"the house of Esau"* in v. 18 means the modern Edom as a people (Germans, Americans, etc.). "Esau" in this term can remind us that the Edom did have a good but very imperfect beginning, and does have an opportunity to turn to the God of the modern Edom's Christian forefathers instead of being destroyed from being a people.

The *"mountain of Esau"* in v. 8, 9, and 21 means the government of the Edom, which arose out of its partly Judeo-Christian foundation and usually because of that part. We shall soon consider what v. 21 reveals with this meaning, but in Ob. 8 and 9, it gives some practical insights into the government of an arrogant U.S. if we refuse to repent:

*⁸"Will I not on that day," declares the Lord, "**destroy** wise men from Edom and **understanding** from the **mountain of Esau**? ⁹Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman, so that everyone may be cut off from the **mountain of Esau** by slaughter."*

If the U.S. refuses to repent, God will destroy understanding in our national government for *"that day"* leading up to our national judgment. Government leaders will not comprehend the obvious as we plunge headlong into the ambush that takes away our national sovereignty and actually makes us slaves. In this picture, "Esau" in v. 8 can remind us that while we have a good form of government due to the Judeo-Christian part of our national foundation, the quality of our government in practice will be no better than the quality of the people who staff it.

Ob. 8 specifically shows that government leaders of the U.S. will lack even ordinary wisdom and understanding when judgment comes on an arrogant U.S. V. 9 shows that all in our national government will be slaughtered. Most government officials would have been elected by arrogant people and would be among its leaders in arrogance. They also would have been successfully establishing laws and policies to promote further arrogance.

The context of *"the mountain of Esau"* in v. 19 shows a different meaning than in the other three verses. In v. 19 this term is just like all other terms there: all refer to land areas near Israel's borders today. Specifically, v. 19 shows Israel beginning within its 1948 borders and then possessing the West Bank and Gaza Strip (this happened in 1967, but the issue stays alive). V. 19 prophesies Israel's possession of two lands (the mountain of Esau and Gilead) that are in the nation of Jordan now (the East Bank of the Jordan River and south of that).

The relationship between Israel and Jordan and most other Islamic-Arabic nations remains explosive, and v. 19 suggests a future crisis. Is the U.S. prepared to withstand the enormous temptations, deceptions, and pressures that will surely come to get us to betray our brother nation from Jacob? That would destroy the U.S. forever (v. 10).

Although the mountain of Esau refers to the land of ancient Edom in v. 19, "Esau" keeps its practical meaning for modern Edoms. In Deut. 2:5 God says, ***"I have given Mt. Seir to Esau as a possession."*** Ob. 19 shows Edom's loss of it. "Esau" can show a modern Edom that if it arrogantly rejects God and His people, then its inheritance through His people would be taken from it and ultimately given to His people, even as v. 19 shows about the inheritance of ancient Edom.

In v. 21, there are other terms to identify: *"The deliverers will ascend Mt. Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom will*

be the Lord's.” Except for a few parentheses, I quote the meanings that I assigned to each of the terms in Apx. 2. Our discussion in this Apx. 5 shows that these are merely standard meanings of the terms.

“The deliverers are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are the only people qualified to come into His holy throne room. Mt. Zion is the Mt. Zion of Heb. 12:22-24 and Micah 4:1-3a: the Lord’s holy throne room in heaven. From there He sends forth His law and renders decisions for mighty nations. Judge means to govern: good examples for the meaning of the Hebrew word for judge are the Judges of ancient Israel, who were deliverers and government leaders instead of mere rulers in court cases. The mountain of Esau is the modern Edom’s government, which arose out of its partly Judeo-Christian foundation and usually because of it.

“These meanings in Ob. 21 can show how a modern Edom is delivered from its underlying iniquity (arrogance in v. 3), its fatal sin (betraying brother Jacob in v. 10-14), and the consequent destructive judgment. Believers in Jesus ascend into the Lord’s holy throne room on Mt. Zion in heaven, which is before His face. There they ‘govern the government’ of the modern Edom by intercession, so that it will become the Lord’s with Jesus being its King in practice. This makes an Edom a kingdom, regardless of the form of its visible government.

“This intercession before God on Mt. Zion is the ‘pray and seek My face’ of 2Chron. 7:14. This requires holiness and is the key missing ingredient for Christians in prosperous modern Edoms: we have so many distractions from seeking His face. V. 14 and Ob. 21 together can show that if these actions are fulfilled in any Edom before its judgment, then the other ones in v. 14 will also be fulfilled, and then the Edom will be delivered and will become the Lord’s possession.”

The previous three paragraphs are on p. 29-30. Here I add my

belief that while Ob. 21 is a conditional promise only to modern Edoms, the nature of “governing the government” by intercession should produce the same result for any nation now. Moreover, Zech. 2:11 (“*many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become **My people**...*”) helps us to see that “becoming the Lord’s” is another way to express “becoming a national disciple of Jesus”.

Notice how this picture from Ob. 21 fits neatly with Micah 4:1-3a (or Isaiah 2:2-4a), Heb. 12:22-24 and all of Hebrews, and Psalms 2, 99, and 110, in addition to 2Chron. 7:14. All these Scriptures combine to show me that God invites His people to volunteer to participate in governing the earth according to His will by intercession on spiritual Mt. Zion, the seat of His government of the earth.

“Zion” is also used in Ob. 17, which says, “*But on **Mt. Zion** there will be **those who escape**, and it will be **holy**....*” V. 17 identifies three priorities of God for our day that will be fulfilled differently in repentant and unrepentant modern Edoms.

His first priority in v. 17 is to provide an escape for each one of His people in a modern Edom’s national judgment. If the national judgment is destructive, the believer’s escape may be to heaven or for a further productive life on earth. Or if the national judgment is a blessing that comes by national repentance and receiving Jesus’ perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (1John 2:2), then the Edom has many more believers who escape.

God’s second priority in v. 17 is to keep spiritual Mt. Zion holy in our day. His grace has kept many believers out of His pure holiness in order to give them their full opportunity to repent. (Not many people are dying like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, or by taking communion without regarding the body of Christ as needed). But this lack of believers in holy Mt. Zion can kill a nation.

Believers in a repentant modern Edom will treat Mt. Zion as holy – the Lord’s holy throne room, the Holy of Holies in heaven – on the way to obtaining the promise in Ob. 21. Their intercession on Mt. Zion is needed for the land to become a part of His people, a national disciple. By such intercession the Church in the land turns from the wicked ways that had distorted the image of Jesus to the people there, and so believers in the nation make the good corporate response needed for receiving the Lord’s healing of the whole land.

In contrast, believers in unrepentant modern Edoms corporately fail to respect God’s holiness in Zion. But He will keep it holy, and they cannot fulfill Ob. 21. As a result, the land receives the Joel 2 judgment. God shows that He will keep spiritual Mt. Zion holy even if this means that mighty nations get destroyed because their believers would not go there as needed to rescue their land. People – not He – must adjust.

(God’s third priority for our day in Ob. 17 is *“the house of Jacob will possess its possessions”*. This priority is a major topic in Apx. 9, and its final section on p. 140 shows that it impacts all nations today).

In Ob. 16 the Lord says: *“Because just as you drank on **My holy mountain**, all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow, and become as if they had never existed.”* As we consistently saw in Apx. 5, *“My holy mountain”* is Mt. Zion. Nations with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage have established many laws based on the Law of God that goes forth from Mt. Zion (Micah 4:2-3).

A repentant modern Edom strengthens the Judeo-Christian part of its foundation and heritage. This transforms the nation so much that the sinful nation of the past becomes as if it had never existed. As discussed on p. 54-56 in Apx. 4, this is a great blessing, not a devastation. But an arrogantly unrepentant modern Edom turns from this good input and is destroyed forever by holy justice in judgment.

The last part of Ob. 16 shows that the same results are extended to all the nations after each nation has had an opportunity to drink of good laws from the Lord's holy mountain – Mt. Zion. This can remove a misconception about Matt. 24:14: *“And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”* This witness and preaching of the kingdom will be much more substantial than speaking the words of the Gospel message clearly: *“For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power”* (1Cor. 4:20). Ob. 16 can show that every nation will get at least this much witness: an opportunity to taste having good laws that come from the Lord on Zion, His holy mountain.

While I am convinced from Scripture that we are living in the time leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus – even “soon” – this is one of many indications in Scripture that His global return is not “maybe tonight”. There is much to be done in the Church and through it to the nations. While major changes will surely continue to accelerate, surely also there is time remaining for modern Edoms to experience thorough testings and blessings of national discipleship to Jesus, or else the awful ultimate national judgment (which Ob. 10 and 18 show will forever destroy an unrepentant modern Edom from being a people).

This completes a survey of the Scriptural background for many terms in Obadiah from a perspective that could not be established as well when going through Obadiah (in Apx. 2 or the book on Obadiah). Hopefully readers can see by now that I do not make up my own definitions of terms to give desired meanings of Obadiah. Instead, God inspired Obadiah over 2500 years ago, and everything there meaningfully applies to the United States now or in an easily projected “near future”.

Appendix 6

ALL OF EPHESIANS HELPING US TO BECOME THE FULLY CHRIST-LIKE CHURCH

In Chapter 4 we saw how Eph. 4:11-16 shows God's calling for the Body of Christ to be built up into the fullness of Christ, to grow up in all aspects into Christ. John 1:17-18, 5:19, and 14:9-10 show us a major purpose for Jesus Christ to come to the earth as a Man: to reveal the true nature of invisible God. A fully Christ-like Church will also corporately reveal God to a world that greatly needs to see what He is really like, so that people will turn to Him in truth. But the Church has manifested many wicked ways (Chapter 5) that have hindered people from seeing and experiencing His true nature.

In Chapter 5 we examined a concise description (2Chron. 7:14) of what individual believers can do to help the Church in a land to turn from the Church's corporate wicked ways. Then it can manifest the true nature of Christ and our Father to the people in the land, and then the nation and its people can repent and join themselves to the Lord Jesus and become a part of His people. As we have seen from many perspectives, believers in our day have this awesome responsibility.

The book of Ephesians further reveals how believers help the Church grow into becoming fully Christ-like, so that we manifest God's true nature to the people in a land. I call this our "corporate calling" or "corporate vision", and we saw it in Chapter 4. In this Apx. 6 we see how Ephesians – from start to finish – helps us grow into a fully Christ-like Body of Christ in practice. (How all of Ephesians relates to this

corporate calling is explained more thoroughly in the 21-page Apx. 2 of *Healing Nations*, which can be seen for free at www.lulu.com).

All of Ephesians Helps Us Grow into the Fully Christ-like Church

As emphasized in Chapter 4, Eph. 4:11-16 is about the growth and building up of the whole Body of Christ, and we individual parts of the body form only a part of the picture. Reconsider v. 12-16:

*¹²for the **equipping** of the **saints** for the work of service, to the **building up** of the **body of Christ**; ¹³**until we all attain** to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ**. ¹⁴**As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming**; ¹⁵**but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the Head, even Christ**, ¹⁶**from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.***

To corporately express God's full nature, each individual part of the true Body of Christ must work well: each believer must do his own work (v. 16) and not be a mere spectator. Therefore Ephesians gives many insights into how individuals can become properly working members of this body that fully reveals God's true nature, even while deception and the sin nature is clearly operating in people (v. 14). God will accomplish His amazing work in us because we will:

- * personally find who we are in Christ and receive His lavish grace;
- * know that by His grace He has seated us with Christ Jesus, so that He gives us authority that is far above all rulers and authorities;
- * exercise His supreme authority according to His will like Jesus did;
- * be rooted and grounded in love;
- * preserve the unity of the Spirit so as to form one body in practice;

- * speak the truth in love;
- * embrace all of His gifts and His corporate vision for us;
- * put off the old self and put on the new self in daily life;
- * imitate God as beloved children do parents, and so walk in love just as Christ loved us;
- * make the most of our time by being led by and filled with the Spirit;
- * relate well to others in our families and at work;
- * put on the full armor of God;
- * stand firm against the devil's schemes; and
- * pray at all times in the Spirit.

Let us see these and other insights in Ephesians. I recommend that readers open their Bibles to Ephesians for a closer look either while reading this appendix now or when examining it later.

Eph. 1:1-14

Find Who We Are in Christ and Receive Lavish Grace to Be Like Him

Paul starts Ephesians by showing God's lavish grace that blesses us saints with every spiritual blessing in Christ (v. 3, 8). V. 4-11 mention a few key blessings. This all helps us move into our corporate calling by helping us personally to bond with and receive from Christ.

Eph. 1:15-2:10

Know Our Calling and Authority in Christ and Exercise It Like Christ

In v. 17-19a Paul prayed for the hearts of the Ephesian believers to grasp the vision of God's wonderful calling for all of us believers:

*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **glory**, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of **revelation** in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the **eyes of your heart** may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the **hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the **glory of His inheritance in the saints**, and what is the **surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe**.*

It is good to apply this prayer to us individually, but knowing God's calling, the glory of His inheritance in us saints, and His great power toward us believers are all needed to move into our glorious corporate calling that Paul was about to reveal in this letter. Our hearts knowing these truths help us grow into the fully Christ-like Body of Christ.

This prayer flows into a description of the exalted position of Christ in Eph. 1:19b-23, which reveals His power for our calling. Christ Jesus is far above all authority, power, dominion, and name both now and forever, and God has put all things in subjection under His feet.

This is a source of His great power toward us. Eph. 2:6 shows that God has exalted us believers to this same place of authority – we have been raised up and seated with Him in the heavenly places. If the corporate Church is to be like Christ to the world, we need His exalted authority and power, and need to exercise them as Christ did: do only what God the Father is doing (John 5:19). The context, v. 1-5 and 7-9, clearly emphasizes that our highly exalted position in Christ is not a result of what we did, but is completely from God's grace and love toward us. These verses help us know that the great work in the corporate Church will also be His work by His grace – not because we are better than other people in the world except for His work.

Eph. 2:10 says: *"For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would **walk in them**."* Notice how this applies to the Ephesian vision: God will take us ordinary people and make us into a body that reveals His nature to the world. But forgetting v. 10 hinders staying in Christ.

Eph. 3:11-21

Be Rooted and Grounded in Love in Order to Move into Our Calling

1Cor. 13 shows that we cannot build anything good without love, and 1John 4:19 shows that we love by first receiving God's love. Paul

had helped us to receive God's love in Eph. 1: he reminded believers of our great blessings in Christ, which help us to personally bond with Christ more closely. This is essential for our hearts to embrace the corporate vision of Ephesians. In Eph. 3:16-17 Paul is nearly ready to reveal this vision, and so he prays that the Father would strengthen the saints with power through the Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith. Paul is getting us rooted and grounded in love, so that we will embrace and move into this vision and calling. Then he prays that all the saints will have the strength to grasp *"and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that **you may be filled up to all the fullness of God**"* (Eph. 3:19).

V. 19 concisely reveals the vision: it is unveiled and staggering! We believers are to be filled up to all the fullness of God! This seems impossible, but Paul's next words aptly fit an impossible vision:

*...that you may be filled up **to all the fullness of God**. Now to Him who is able to do **far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**, according to the **power that works within us**, to Him be the **glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus** to all generations forever and ever. Amen* (Eph. 3:19b-21).

V. 20-21 are often used as a general blessing, but Paul was referring to the humanly impossible calling that God was revealing to the Church. For centuries God's corporate goal for it – the Body of Christ being filled up to all the fullness of God – has proven to be far beyond all that we ask, think, or even imagine. Eph. 4:11-16 states this incredible miracle more explicitly: *"to the building up of the **body of Christ until we all attain to...the fullness of Christ**"; and "we are to **grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ**"*.

The meaning of Biblical glory in Eph. 3:21 – the manifestation of internal qualities that come from His special presence – clearly reveals the vision of the fully Christ-like Church. As we saw in Chapter 4,

Almighty God made Himself invisible to people so that His true nature and character may be revealed by the two means He has chosen: Christ Jesus and the Church. Jesus Christ glorified God – perfectly manifested His invisible character through a human body – to the people of Judea and to believers today (the Bible and Holy Spirit help His manifestation today). God calls for the Church to grow up in all aspects into Christ, so that we do for the world as He did for Judea.

The fully Christ-like Church will be helping people see the invisible God and turn to Him and experience Him, even as Christ Jesus has helped us. The Christ-like Church will be glorious, but this will make invisible God all the more glorious by showing people His nature and making Him much more accessible to them. As v. 21 says so clearly, to God be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus....

A well-known Scripture in John can help us grasp the Ephesian vision and thereby move into it better. What was Jesus' chief glory on earth? Surely it was to manifest God's nature and character to the world by having His full presence within a body. Now consider:

*The **glory** which **You have given Me** I have **given to them** [all believers], **that they may be one**, just as **We are one**; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, **so that the world may know that You sent Me**, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (John 17:22-23)*

The Father glorified Jesus by letting Him manifest God's true nature that was within Him, and now He has given us that same glory. God now lives within us, and He calls us corporately to show the world what He is truly like, but we have not yet manifested Him much. And this glory given to us – God's special presence in us and His true character manifested through us – produces our unity or oneness that enables the world to know who Jesus is (His true character specifically includes love and truth). This fits into the vision of Ephesians, which

emphasizes God's glory in us and our unity in Christ that help people turn to our invisible God. John 17:22-23 confirms His staggering calling and empowerment of the Church in Ephesians.

Eph 2:11-3:15, 4:1-16

Preserve the Unity of the Spirit....Until We All Attain...

John shows that we must be unified in Christ for the world to know God's true nature. Near 60 A.D., the primary divider in the Church was between Jewish and Gentile believers. Eph. 2:11-3:15 directly addressed this problem, showing in many ways that we have been called to form *one body* in Christ. Paul first showed that Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall in order to make the two groups into *one new man*, reconciling them both to God *in one body*. Through Christ we both have access *in one Spirit* to the Father, so that all of us are of *God's household*. Then we see God's fitting all of us together to grow into one holy temple in the Lord, and we *are being built together* into a single dwelling of God in the Spirit. Clearly this was all given to help the Ephesians move into the vision for the unified Body of Christ.

Indeed, Eph. 4:1-6, 13, and 16 all emphasize the unity of the Body of Christ in the ultimate expression of this vision. Today we have many potential sources of division in the Body of Christ today, such as doctrines, denominations, races, tribes, genders, and individual preferences. We must not let such dividers keep us from moving into God's great corporate calling for His people.

Eph. 4:15-16

Speaking the Truth in Love – Essential for Moving into the Vision

In the culminating statement of the vision, Eph. 4:15-16 says that we shall reach God's staggering goal for us because each individual part of the body will do its own jobs by receiving from Christ. As we

receive Him, we shall speak ***“the truth in love”*** and cause ***“the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”***. Only God can make something to be like Himself, but here He emphasizes that He will work through the truth with love from each individual member to build up the other members and the whole body into fulfilling this prophecy.

A symbolism in v. 16 suggested by Derek Prince adds insights into the fully Christ-like Body of Christ: a bone represents an individual believer and a joint is a relationship between believers. Every joint should be a committed relationship between two believers with the right authority and flexibility, and in every joint each believer should speak the truth in love to the other.

To consistently speak the truth in love, we must be rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3:17, p. 103).

Eph. 4:7-16

Embrace All of God's Gifts to Do the Impossible

Eph. 4:7-13 emphasizes that gifts have been given to us in the Body of Christ until we all attain to the measure of stature belonging to the fullness of Christ Himself – growing up in all aspects into Him. These gifts are needed to build the fully mature Body of Christ (v. 11-16), which has not yet been manifested. Why would some of these gifts be removed before we grow into the fullness of Christ? Is the completed Bible enough for the saints today to manifest the full nature of Christ? Don't we need all of His gifts now for the Church to fulfill our corporate calling? God gives these gifts to equip all of us saints to do the impossible – to build up one another and others until we all attain God's goal for us: the corporate expression of all the qualities of Christ, which is the fullness of Christ by the Body of Christ.

Eph. 3:19-4:3, 4:15-17

The Corporate Vision Helps Individuals to Walk in It

Paul's approach in Ephesians to teaching individuals how to live provides a valuable practical insight into helping others and oneself get motivated for a long-term work: we all need a good vision of God's calling to keep us on track as we walk with Him for a long time.

Consider Eph. 4:1: ***"Therefore I...implore you to walk...worthy of...[your] calling...."*** The "therefore" indicates that v. 1 should result from what was previously considered. Paul's plea for personal walks came immediately after Eph. 3, where he briefly revealed our calling to be filled to all the fullness of God and affirmed that God is able to accomplish such an amazing work. But Paul had not yet told us enough about our glorious corporate calling in Christ Jesus.

When Paul told us in Eph. 4:11-16, he again used the corporate vision as a foundation to explicitly describe the nature of our individual walks in Eph. 4:17-6:9. The transition in v. 15-17a clearly shows this foundation for that huge section about our individual walks:

*but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what **every joint supplies**, according to the **proper working of each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. **So** [same Greek word *oun* as "therefore" in v. 1] *this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you **walk**...**

Here is the point: Paul consistently did not begin discussing the nature of our individual walks (or lifestyles) until we could put it in the context of our glorious corporate calling in Christ. Why? Our corporate vision is a vital part of God's provision for the fervency, direction, and purpose needed for our personal walks.

After Paul did establish our corporate calling, he did describe the nature of our personal living, because our corporate calling contains

the proper working of each part of the body (Eph. 4:16). Indeed, all of Ephesians up to 4:16 provides a vision of our personal and corporate life and identity in Christ – who we are in Him – and our glorious corporate calling is the defining context of the subsequent Scripture about how we live: Eph. 4:17-6:9.

Eph. 4:17-6:9

The Nature of Our Walk That Flows Out of God's Corporate Vision

Eph. 4:17-6:9 describes our personal walk in Christ. Here we omit the many pages that we could write about how to live personally: good teachings on personal living from Ephesians are available elsewhere. Therefore let us look at only a few key features in this huge Scripture. Our primary goal in this appendix is to see how all of Ephesians can help us move into the vision of the Christ-like Church. Seeing that this whole Scripture is related to this vision helps us to move into it by giving us extra motivation and direction to live accordingly.

The basic approach to daily Godly living is given in Eph. 4:22-24:

*that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, and **put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

We live in Christ by putting off the old self and putting on the new self, and our hearts' moment-to-moment decisions to do this are strengthened by a God-given vision (a part of the renewed mind) that helps us to lay aside distractions from the world, the flesh, or the devil.

V. 25 to Eph. 5:18 provides 11 applications of what we put off and put on in our personal lives. This putting on includes imitating God as beloved children do parents, walking in love just as Christ loved us, making the most of our time, and being filled with the Spirit. Then v.

19-21 describe the Spirit-filled life and flow into Eph. 5:22-6:9: how we are to live as Spirit-filled believers in our families and at work.

Paul was still actively viewing the fully grown Body of Christ near the end of Eph. 4:17-6:9. At the end of Eph. 5, Paul used Christ and the glorious corporate Church as the perfect example to teach the behavior and relationship of wives and husbands. He concluded:

*because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but **I am speaking** with reference to **Christ and the Church**. Nevertheless each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband (Eph. 5:30-33).*

Even while Paul was providing the classic Scripture about the relationship, attitude, and behavior of husbands and wives in v. 22-33, Christ and the corporate Church had come back to be foremost in his speaking. Paul needed to return to the issue at hand – husbands and wives – to provide a clear conclusion about how they should treat each other. What a demonstration that he was still viewing this vision of God's glorious calling for the corporate Church! It is the context even near the end of the discussion about our fitting personal conduct!

Eph. 6:10-18, 4:14

Wage Effective Spiritual Warfare – Especially Including Good Prayer

To become the fully mature Body of Christ with the proper working of each individual part, we must wage effective spiritual warfare. Any life-or-death warfare is won by using strength effectively, and strength in spiritual warfare is easy to identify. Eph. 1:21-2:10 shows that by grace God has seated believers in Christ Jesus with Him in the heavenly places, far above all rulers, powers, authority, and every name that is named. In Christ we have all authority and the “*strength*

of **His might**" (Eph. 1:19, 6:10) to do all that we should be doing.

If we are abiding in Christ and letting His words abide in us, we can "**ask whatever we wish, and it will be done**" for us (John 15:7). This promise and other ones by almighty God make us all-powerful for doing whatever He calls us to do, but these promises and the Spirit-led praying of Eph. 6:18 require us to let our Lord and His words shape what we wish. Then the devil has no power to fight us directly!

But the one with greater total strength often loses to a truly weaker enemy who finds ways to disarm or destroy the stronger one before he uses his strength effectively. The variety of ways is endless: examples are lies, deceptions, an ambush, manipulation, intimidation (especially by creating fear of unacceptable harm in the strong one), destroying the will to fight, using one's own strengths better than the strong one uses his, or increasing his strength by getting help from others. For longer wars, one can also grow stronger or weaker or not persevere.

All of this is useful background for discussing spiritual warfare:

¹⁰Finally, be **strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might**.

¹¹Put on the **full armor of God**, so that you will be able to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil**. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places**. (Eph. 6:10-12)

We have unlimited strength in Christ to do all that we should do, so that we can be strong in Him. But the command for us to be strong (v. 10) shows that we can also lose our strength in Him. V. 11 shows how: schemes of the devil. Jesus fully disarmed the devil of his power over us believers so that he has no strength to beat us directly. But he can still try to disarm us. He works with crafty schemes to tempt us into choosing to leave our exalted position in Christ, or to intimidate or discourage us, or distract us from using His authority well – to deceive

us out of staying in Christ or using His authority according to His will, wisdom, and words.

To stand firm against such schemes, we put on the full armor of God (v. 11, 13). Examining the specific armor in v. 14-17 would show us that each piece protects and equips believers in special ways that keep the devil from bringing us down from our position of unlimited power in Christ for doing God's will – from disarming us before we use our great strength in Him to harm that kingdom of darkness.

Eph. 6:12 identifies our real enemy: the wicked spiritual forces of darkness in the heavenly places (these same ones are in Eph. 1:21 and 3:10). Being aware of the real enemy weakens its greatest strengths: being unseen, subtle, crafty, and cunning.

Eph. 6:11-12 also shows us clearly who is behind the unusual amount of trickery and craftily deceitful scheming that is described in Eph. 4:14 – which is in the middle of the most thorough description of God's vision for the Body of Christ. Our enemy tries to corrupt our wills and confuse us, so that we find many desperate, deceitful schemes to stir up our flesh or pull us away from what God would have us do – much spiritual warfare. But our enemy is overmatched: God has given us full authority and power in Christ. We do need to learn His ways and purposes to use it with His Spirit according to His will and wisdom. Because of what God gives us in Christ, our battle in spiritual warfare is to choose to keep standing firm in Him and listen with obedient faith.

Because our real enemy is invisible and such a subtle liar and deceiver, we need to learn to not look at things outwardly (2Cor. 10:7, 4:16-18, 5:7). 2Cor. 10:3-4 instructs us further:

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the **weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses** [strongholds].*

We are to let God's Spirit and word in the Bible show us the truth and His perspective. This includes praying in the Spirit in Eph. 6:18.

Praying for all of the saints in v. 18 is especially fitting in view of God's calling for His corporate Church, which involves good work from all of us, and in view of the opposition against us corporately and individually. As Eph. 4:13-16 shows clearly, none of us attains our corporate goal if some of us don't.

What do I conclude from these Scriptures in Ephesians? We get His full strength by letting God put us in Christ; we keep it by standing firm in Him and letting His Spirit lead us into all that we should be doing; but we can lose it if we let our weaker enemy disarm us.

A more complete discussion of Ephesians, spiritual warfare, and using the armor of God and the sword of the Spirit to keep us in Christ, is given in *Healing Nations* (its PDF file is free at www.lulu.com).

A Conclusion about Insights from Ephesians for Moving into Its Vision

What do we do to become the fully Christ-like Body of Christ while the rulers and authorities do their best to stop it? We will: bond with Jesus, receive God's lavish grace in Christ, exercise our full authority in Him according to His will, be rooted and grounded in love, preserve the unity of the Spirit, embrace all His gifts, speak the truth in love, put off the old self and put on the new self in daily life, walk in love as Christ loved us, make the most of our time, be filled with the Spirit, relate well in our families and to others, put on the full armor of God, stand firm against Satan's schemes, and pray at all times in the Spirit.

We have seen that Ephesians from start to finish helps us to move into being the Christ-like Body of Christ. This corporate vision fits into and adds to the pictures from 2Chron. 7:13-14, Joel 1-2, Isa. 58-60, Malachi, John 17, and other Scriptures.

Appendix 7

THE FULLY CHRIST-LIKE CHURCH, THE SUN AND MOON, AND LIGHT AND DARKNESS

We have already seen amazing prophecies about the Church in Chapter 4 and Apx. 6. The Body of Christ is to “*grow up in all aspects into...Christ*” (Eph. 4:15). God gave gifts to build up the Body of Christ until “*we all attain to...the fullness of Christ*” (Eph. 4:12-13). And Christ Jesus is fully like Father God (John 14:9, 5:19, Heb. 1:3). Eph. 1:23 calls the Body of Christ “*the fullness of Him who fills all in all*”: only God fills all in all, and so this Scripture calls the Body of Christ the fullness of God. In Eph. 3:19 Paul prayed that the Ephesian saints together with all the saints will be “*filled up to all the fullness of God*”.

We also considered that Biblical glory is the visible manifestation of internal qualities (God especially emphasizes the internal qualities). This enabled us to see the stunning content in “*to Him [God] be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 3:21, book p. 33): with great wisdom God made Himself invisible to people so that His true nature may be revealed by the means He has chosen – Christ Jesus and the Church, which is the Body of Christ. God lives within each believer in His Church and provides our distinctive qualities, and we are to manifest His full nature to the world even as Jesus did.

And the glorious Church will glorify God: the Church is not made glorious in order that we become the focus. Even the Church’s manifestation of God’s full nature will not rival His glory, but will enable people to see Him and it much better. His glory increases with a more glorious Church and will stay far greater than the Church’s own glory.

In Apx. 6 we primarily stayed within Ephesians. We did not use Scriptures that reinforced or added to its profound truth if they needed some interpretation. The Scriptures in Apx. 7 need a little interpretation – otherwise the truths would be better known and explicit instead of profound new insights. But in Apx. 7 we shall see that we need very little interpretation to discover the amazing truths in many Scriptures. Isa. 30:26 is a good introduction to the simple interpretation that opens up these Scriptures, and v. 26 reinforces and adds insights into God's glory in the glorious Church.

The Fully God-like Church in Surprising Scriptures

Isa. 30:26 graphically shows that the fully God-like Church makes God's direct manifestation perfectly brighter by means of simple symbolic meanings of the sun and moon. This same symbolism will be very meaningful in other Scriptures as well – including all three verses in Joel that refer to the sun and moon.

This is the symbolism: sunlight represents God's light to the world and the moon represents the Church. We justify this symbolism from the Bible and nature in the next section. Here let us see the added insights from Scriptures about the Church on earth. Isa. 30:26 says:

*The **light of the moon** will be **as the light of the sun**, and the **light of the sun** will be **seven times brighter**, like the light of seven days, on the day the Lord **binds up the fracture** of His people and **heals** the bruise He has inflicted.*

Notice that the sun and moon in this Scripture are not literal. This is a day of healing and binding the up fracture of His people, but seven times brighter sunlight is not a blessing – it would burn everything living on earth. But look at what v. 26 shows with this simple Biblical symbolism: when the Church shines forth as brightly as God, then He

will be seven times brighter. That is, when the Church grows up to be like Christ Jesus in all aspects, God's direct manifestation to the world will be perfectly brighter – not decreased – by the extra glory of His Church. When the Church grows up to function as it should, more people will finally be able to see what invisible God is really like.

“Glory” in Eph. 3:21 (p. 113) can show that we experience the opposite now: the poor corporate work by the Church in many lands has hindered people there from seeing Jesus as He is. Then they fail to realize God's nature and receive Him, and the lands are not healed. As we saw from Mal. 3:5 (Chapter 12), those who corrupt such lands normally experience slower conviction and justice than what is best for a healthy land. This is a key reason why we cannot simply pray away corruption in the U.S. and other lands. A poorly functioning Church lets darkness remain, but hardened sinners cannot hide from their just judgment if God's light reaches them. Righteous believers provide a witness and a testimony to sinners and make His grace for repentance more available to them – it is easier for sinners to repent. This will happen when the unity of v. 26, Eph. 4, John 17, etc., is produced.

This simple symbolism opens up insights from other Scriptures. Jesus concludes explaining the parable of the wheat and the tares with a revelation that fits into Eph. 4:11-16. Consider Matt. 13:40-43:

*So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the **end** [consummation] **of the age**. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.***

With this symbolism, at the “consummation of the age” (Apx. 10) the righteous children of God will shine forth like God to the world. This

is another picture of growing up in all aspects into Christ (Eph. 4:15), who manifested God's full nature to the world (Heb. 1:3). An additional insight is that Jesus will send forth angels to gather out from His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness before the glorious manifestation of the Christ-like Church.

Zech. 12:8 shows this remarkable development of the Church by another means: *"...the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the **house of David** will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them."*

What on earth can be compared to God? Only Christ! Also, the house of David is a natural Old Testament term for the Body of Christ, which is composed of people who are directly related to the Son of David. And "the Angel of the Lord before us" aptly describes Jesus before His Church. In this way Zech. 12:8 can show us that the Body of Christ will be like God, like the Lord Jesus Christ before us, with each individual member contributing mightily in that day: one who is feeble among us will be like David, the mighty warrior.

What an amazing restatement and confirmation of Eph. 4:13-16: with the proper working of each individual part, the Body of Christ will be like the Lord Jesus Christ, who is exactly like God the Father. God shows again His intention for His Church to those who hear.

We examine the context of v. 8 in Apx. 12, where we see that Zech. 12:1-10 is remarkably set up to be completely fulfilled in our day – and this fulfillment has already begun!

To summarize, we have seen that God proclaims and confirms His intention to have the Church manifest all aspects of Christ's nature to the world, which is God's true nature. He shows us this remarkable insight in various ways, including by using sunlight to represent light from Him and moonlight as His light from the Church.

Sunlight As God's Light to the World

Let us see the basis for this sun and moon symbolism. Then we shall apply it to the verses in Joel that use the sun or the moon.

Consider Scriptures and truths in nature that show how well the sun can be used to represent God, and sunlight to represent God's light to the world, and the moon to represent the Church.

Psalms 84:11 says explicitly, "*For the **Lord God is a sun**....*"

In John 8:12 Jesus said: "*I am the **Light of the world**.*" In John 9:5 He said more specifically: "***While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world**.*" And in Matt. 5:14-16 Jesus told the multitudes of disciples who were following Him: "***You are the light of the world**.*" (He adds that we are to let our light shine before men so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven).

In these Scriptures "light" clearly is being used symbolically to represent "God's light" for the world. In nature, the sun, moon, and stars are the sources of light for the earth.

The relationship of the Church to God is well illustrated by the relationship of the moon to the sun in nature, which also shows us many features of God's light from the Church to a land. All of these features in nature have spiritual applications that we shall see when we consider all of the verses in Joel about the sun and moon.

Notice that the moon has no visible light of its own, but gives light by reflecting some of the light that it receives from the sun. The Church also has no divine light of its own to give to the world, but at best can give only the light that it receives from our God.

Moonlight is useless to us when our side of the earth faces the sun, but at night moonlight keeps a land from being in deep darkness. People really do not need the Church's relatively dim light when they

are receiving a pure word directly from God, but the Church can keep them from being in deep spiritual darkness if they lack a direct connection to God through Jesus. (I have also found that God wants His people to have a healthy balance between the sources of His light: normally not all directly from Him, and not all from the Church).

Natural darkness on earth is always caused by light from the sun and moon not reaching the earth. Their light shines forth as much as in brighter times, but the light does not reach us if our part of the earth faces away from the sun (it does at night) and away from the moon, or if clouds or other obstructions (usually in the atmosphere or on the earth) block the light. Notice that such obstructions have nothing to do with the source of light and normally are relatively close to us. Even such small details are meaningful. For example, in a dark national judgment, God's light is shining in the land, but few can see it – most people have obstructions (deceived world-views, lies or intimidation from demons or one's own family or government, etc.) unrelated to the source of light that keep these people from seeing any of His light.

Finally, the moon cannot be seen from the earth before a new moon. Even then, the moon is reflecting light as usual, but it is not directed toward the earth. In the deep spiritual darkness that comes with the Joel 2 and Amos 5:18-20 national judgment, the Church in a land may be at least as bright with true light from God as it was before the judgment. But due to persecution of the Church, its light from God goes elsewhere and is not directed toward as many people as before the judgment. As we have seen in many lands that were under atheistic communism, many people had never heard any truth about Jesus even when the Church in their land was strong but persecuted. And any light they did receive was precious and potentially costly.

Spiritual Darkness and God's Light on the Day of the Lord and in Joel

Notice how God describes the Day of the Lord on an unrepentant land in terms of darkness, thick darkness, and gloom (another Hebrew word that is often translated as darkness).

*For the **day of the Lord** is coming, surely it is near, a day of **darkness** and **gloom**, a day of clouds and **thick darkness** (Joel 2:1b-2a).*

*Alas, you who are longing for the **day of the Lord**, for what purpose will the **day of the Lord** be to you? It will be **darkness** and **not light**; as when a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him. Will not the **day of the Lord** be **darkness** instead of light, even **gloom** with **no brightness** in it? (Amos 5:18-20).*

*¹⁴**Near** is the great **day of the Lord**, near and coming very quickly; listen, the **day of the Lord**! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. ¹⁵A **day** of wrath is that **day**, a **day** of trouble and distress, a **day** of destruction and desolation, a **day** of **darkness** and **gloom**, a **day** of clouds and **thick darkness** (Zeph. 1:14-15).*

*...I shall...make the **earth dark in broad daylight** (Amos 8:9).*

Sources of light are precious and useful in deep darkness, and more so when this darkness is spiritual (demonic) and the light is the true God coming to people either directly or through the Church in the land. As we consider every verse in Joel that contains natural sources of light, I shall remind you of its significant context: before or in the Day of the Lord on an individual land (Joel 2) or on all of the unrepentant nations together in the global Day of the Lord (Joel 3). You should remember the previous two sections about the moon and sunlight.

Joel 2:31 says: "*The **sun** will be turned **into darkness** and the **moon into blood** before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.*" V. 31 can show us a major development before the Day of

the Lord comes to an unrepentant land and also before that global Day comes. Then the people have obstructions (p. 118) that turn God's light and truth into darkness and lies. The moon being turned into blood shows the bloody persecution of the Church that will take place in these unrepentant nations at these two times.

Joel 2:10b is a part of the description of the Day of the Lord on an individual land, and Joel 3:15 is a part of the Day of the Lord on all the nations together. Both verses say the same thing: "***The sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.***" This is a vivid picture of people without the Lord Jesus being unable to see or use the true light from God from any source.

What do the stars mean? In Rev. 1:20 we are told explicitly that the seven stars are the seven angels or messengers of the seven churches in Rev. 1-3. With light meaning "God's light to the world", the stars represent angels or human messengers from God.

But they often do not reach people effectively. Most people have obstructions that hinder them from receiving God's light. When the dark Amos 5:19 or Joel 2:1-11 judgment comes on a land, unbelievers normally become hardened rather than repent, and the obstructions hinder effective evangelism by the Church. There is as much light shining then as before the judgment, but very many unbelievers are not able to see the light because of a spiritual darkness that the devil puts on each unbeliever and on the land. 2Cor. 3:14-16 and 4:3-4 show this for Jewish unbelievers in New Testament times.

Furthermore, the light of the Church normally will not shine in the direction of a potential believer as often as before the judgment on the land. The devil has much more control of the land and will use any means he can to keep the people away from God's light – no matter whether it comes from Bibles or His Church. We can see that the

darkness, famine, and thirst for the words of the Lord in Amos 8:9-12 come explicitly when a land is experiencing the Amos 5:19 or Joel 2 judgment: the “*dark in broad daylight*” in Amos 8:9 is clearly a spiritual darkness. And all of this shows that there are fewer opportunities for unbelievers to see and hear God and establish a healthy relationship with Him. The testimonies of new believers in China, the USSR, and Eastern Europe show how effectively many people were cut off from hearing anything about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But where iniquity abounds, God’s grace abounds all the more. We have many examples in both this generation and past ones to show us that God can more than overcome these serious obstructions, even though they do exist and work against God’s salvation.

This picture can help us better appreciate the darkness in the Joel 2 judgment, and confirms that the Day of the Lord in Joel 3 is awful for unrepentant lands in the same way. All three verses can further exhort us to work while we have the opportunity (John 9:4, p. 123).

The Sun As Human Wisdom Apart from God in Joel

Up to now the only symbolism in this appendix is related to sunlight representing light from God. I strongly believe this symbolism is true and is part of a valuable vision from Him. But this is only a symbolism: we should not lock ourselves into one symbolism and assume that God cannot have other valid meanings in the same Scriptures by another means.

A second symbolism of the sun, moon, and stars is almost the opposite of the first one, but the picture produced agrees with the first picture. Here sunlight is natural light and represents human wisdom separated from God. This meaning is suggested by Ecclesiastes: this book contains the phrase “under the sun” 29 times, even though it is

not used elsewhere in the Bible. Ecclesiastes provides a clear example of the ultimate emptiness (vanity) of even the greatest of natural human talents, wisdom, and resources with dedicated effort – all gifts from the Lord that were not used with Him or for Him.

Joel 2:31 says, “*The **sun** will be turned **into darkness** and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.*” This shows that at this time of great spiritual conflict – when God pours out His Spirit while Satan tries to lock up people from the Lord – natural wisdom does not provide true and relevant answers, but darkness and misdirection. Consider how useless and misleading Godless human wisdom is for finding the truth and life in Christ Jesus. We do not find our Lord by human wisdom alone: indeed, unrepented pride cause many intelligent people to get deluded and miss Him.

“*And the **moon** [is turned] **into blood***” (v. 31). Consider that the moonlight is produced from sunlight and the moon is revealed to us by sunlight. The things produced from human wisdom and revealed to us by human wisdom will ultimately turn out to be “bloody” before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes. That is, they will be used as instruments of death and will shed much blood. For example, biological and technological advances, secular (humanistic) laws and institutions, etc., will be used against people to kill them, or to keep them captive, enslaved, and away from coming to God and eternal life.

Notice how human wisdom, including medicine, is now used in many nations before their Days of the Lord for manipulation, control, abortion, euthanasia, etc. – supposedly for the sake of humanity. Consider how brainwashing and computer chips could be used in totalitarian nations to tightly control the lives of people before the Day of the Lord comes on the earth. Advances in technology can be used for good, but evil people will use them to do great evil, and Satan will

use his increased control over judged lands to put the people into power who will serve his purposes better. However, many people will come to Jesus despite such intense and mighty opposition.

“The sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness” (Joel 2:10b). When a land comes under the dark Joel 2:2-11 or Amos 5:19 judgment, all natural wisdom will offer no useful direction, and all human strategies, strength, and weapons will not help or protect them in that day. Amos 2:13-16 shows this in the example of ancient Israel. Joel 3:15 shows the same thing when the hardened and unrepentant nations gather against the Lord’s people, Israel, for their own judgment by the Lord.

Christians in lands with an opportunity to work now should consider and respond to Jesus’ warning in John 9:4: *“We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no man can work.”* That has happened in many lands. But we have also seen that if we bring God’s light to the U.S. (or any other land) soon enough, then our land will never experience the deep darkness of the destructive Day of the Lord judgment.

Another View of How to Receive God’s Light When It Is Dark

Appreciating light and darkness opens up Isa. 60:1-3. It gives a concise overview of the picture in the Minor Prophets for whole nations now, even for fulfilling Jesus’ Great Commission in our day:

¹Arise, shine; for *your light has come*, and the *glory of the Lord* has risen *upon you*. ²For behold, *darkness* will cover the earth, and *deep darkness* the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and *His glory* will appear upon you. ³*Nations* will come to *your light*, and *kings* to the *brightness of your rising*. (Isa. 60:1-3)

Thirteen Hebrew words are translated by the NASB as darkness, but the *darkness* and *deep darkness* in v. 2 are the same two as those

in Joel 2:2 and Zeph. 1:15 (p. 119) to describe the Joel 2 judgment of darkness and thick or deep darkness on a land. If a land fails to turn to God in the season of Joel 1, then the nation is confronted with the darkness of Joel 2 and Isa. 60:1-3: the capture of the land by atheistic communism, Christ-hating Islam, or other spiritual power.

As atheistic communism, Islam, or secular humanism cover nation after nation, darkness and deep darkness are covering the earth. In this situation, v. 1 tells God's people to arise and shine because our light has come and His glory has risen upon us. God's glory – the manifestation of internal qualities – is His presence with His nature and character manifested in His people. V. 1-3 show His people revealing His nature so brightly that the land and its leaders come to His light in His glorious Church! His light shows the truth of iniquity in people; but this is for healing, because a nation and its leaders come to His light (v. 3), not try to remove it.

V. 3 says that nations will come to our Light (Jesus) and kings to the brightness of our rising. Therefore the Church had turned from its corporate wicked ways in those lands, so that their people and leaders are able to see Him well enough to choose to come to Him, which will heal their lands (Chapters 4-5). This is God's healing of nations in our current world situation.

V. 1-3 describe the darkness covering the earth in especially the last 70 years – not the millennium! But this deep darkness will not cover the whole earth in our day. God's glory will rise on His people – the Body of Christ – when darkness and deep darkness are covering much of the earth, and with nations coming to Jesus our Light.

Isa. 60:1-3 distills the pictures of Ephesians, 2Chron. 7:14, Joel, Malachi, and Jesus' Great Commission into three verses.

We have already seen the dark part of the picture fulfilled before

our eyes in many lands. Now let us see that the context of v. 1-3 shows how God will provide for the fulfillment of the bright part in our day. How do His people work with Him so that our light will come and we rise in darkness? The great fasting chapter, Isa. 58, shows how. Notice what God promises if believers do what He says in Isa. 58:6-12:

*Is this not the **fast which I choose**, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? **Then your light will break out like the dawn**, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, "Here I am." **If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday.** And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell (v. 6-12).*

Many people have taught the practical meaning of Isa. 58's requirements and results, and so I will not do that here. I shall only make two unusual observations about Isa. 58:1-60:3.

Isa. 58-60:3 forms a unit that shows how God's people receive His light and glory even when we begin like all people: hopelessly wicked (Romans 3). This wickedness is described in Isa. 59:1-16a. V. 16b-21 show that God took the initiative upon Himself to provide a Redeemer and Intercessor for Zion. It is God's great provision of Himself in Jesus (Isa. 59:16b-21) that rescues His people from being hopelessly lost

ourselves (Isa. 59:1-16a) into fulfilling God's requirements for good fasting and seeking Him (Isa. 58). In turn, doing Isa. 58 enables our light to rise brightly in darkness, so that nations will come to our light, even as Isa. 60:1-3 says.

The second observation is to relate Isa. 58 with 2Chron. 7:13-14 (Chapter 5). If God's people humble themselves, turn from their own wicked ways, pray, and seek His face (2Chron. 7:14), then they will also be fulfilling His requirements for good fasting and seeking Him in Isa. 58. And those believers who are fulfilling the requirements of Isa. 58 are doing their part to fulfill 2Chron. 7:14 (humbling themselves, praying, seeking God's face, and turning from their own wicked ways). The two descriptions consistently use different words to give the same picture, so that each description supplements the other.

But there is a basic difference between these two Scriptures. The requirements and promises of Isa. 58 can apply to individuals or to different kinds of groups of God's people in many different situations. 2Chron. 7:14 applies to His corporate people in a land that is in the season of v. 13, and they need to turn from their corporate wicked ways in order to bring His healing to the land (Chapter 5). In short, Isa. 58 has many applications and 2Chron. 7:13-14 provides God's promise for a very specific situation with a more widespread response by His people in a land.

If God's people in a land corporately practice what Isa. 58 says for a long enough time for His healing to spread throughout the land, then they will also fulfill what 2Chron. 7:14 specifies, and God will heal the land that is in the season of v. 13.

Appendix 8

THE UNSPECIFIED LAND AND TIME IN JOEL 1-2 AND THE NATIONS IN JOEL 3

A mix of terms for the land in Joel 2 perplex scholars who need to find a land and time in order to supply a historical context. When using names, Joel mostly called his land Zion and Jerusalem (and Judah in Joel 3), all of which refer to the Southern Kingdom, Judah. But 3 times he called it Israel, the Northern Kingdom. These two kingdoms often fought each other after they split and stayed separate, so that mixing up the two nations is strange – somewhat like a U.S. citizen calling his land “Canada”. This is a reason why some Bible scholars date the man Joel as living after the exile in the 400s BC, and others date him in the 900s BC. But these opinions also have weaknesses.

For example, Joel 2:1b-2 says: *“For the day of the Lord is coming, surely it is **near**....There has **never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations.**”* This land was near to a national judgment that would be incomparably worse than anything in his land’s history or future. How can his prophecy be after the Joel 2 judgments that annihilated ancient Israel about 750-720 BC and left Judah with only 4600 exiled Jews in 610-580 BC (Jer. 52:28-30, 44:24-30)? Nothing happened after these judgments that could fulfill Joel 1-2 until Judea and Jerusalem were destroyed near 70 A.D. All of this suggests a time like shortly before 750 BC or 610 BC.

Could a great repentance have delayed the Day of the Lord judgment, so that it was not near? Extremely unlikely! Wouldn’t Kings,

Chronicles, or another book have recorded any great repentance that rescued the nation from such great devastation and awful afflictions? But so many scholars justify their conclusions that Joel's prophecy was given at mutually contradictory times like in the 900s BC or the 400s BC. And so who really knows when Joel was written?

To start Chapter 3 I said that Joel described an invasion of locusts on an unspecified land at an unspecified time. Now I add that God inspired Joel to consistently use terms for His land in Joel 1-2 that meaningfully apply to Gentile nations and their believers today.

This brief Apx. 8 is a technical discussion to establish these conclusions, and does not add major new insights. Each term is discussed elsewhere, and here we organize these discussions from the perspective of all the terms that may help identify the land in Joel. I recommend that you open your Bible to Joel for a survey of it.

Here are the results of my survey, so that you can check for their accuracy as we go through Joel: Every term in Joel is consistent with Joel 1-2 applying to Gentile nations and their believers today. Also, the people of the land are not called the Lord's people nor the land called His land before Joel 2:17. This changes in Joel 3, because at this consummation of the Age of the Gentiles, He restores the nation of Jewish people and judges for all others of His people as well.

Notice the following terms as you survey Joel. Joel 1 refers to the house of the Lord (or God), priests, and ministers of the Lord or of God (v. 9, 13-14), but names no land. Joel 2 refers to "*the priests, the Lord's ministers*" (v. 17), the Lord's land and His people (v. 17-19, 27), Zion (v. 1, 15, 23, 32), Jerusalem (v. 32), and Israel (v. 27). Joel 3 makes clear references to the Jewish people and nation, but this is merely consistent with the way Joel 3 fits into Joel, which is to describe the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles later in our day.

Let us see how all of these terms in Joel 1-2 fully fit believers in Christ Jesus today. Here I shall refer to the place where a term is introduced from Scripture or explained the best for this discussion, so that we can avoid long repetitions.

In Chapter 3 (book p. 21-22) we saw Scriptures (Rev. 1:6a, Rev. 5:10, 1Peter 2:5-10) that show how well the terms in Joel 1 describe believers. God calls believers in Jesus to be His priests in nations today – we are His representatives to people who do not yet know our invisible God. We also serve Him, which makes us His ministers; and Heb. 3:6 identifies the house of the Lord Jesus Christ as His believers. Chapters 6-8 also show how this meaning of priests, the ministers of the Lord, and the house of the Lord enabled each verse using these terms in Joel 1-2 to apply most appropriately to nations and their believers today. I conclude that Joel's land is not specified in Joel 1.

Fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission for the discipleship of whole nations before He returns has been a central theme of my book. The people of a land surrender themselves and their land to the Lord Jesus to become His land and a part of His people. Zech. 2:11a shows that many nations will become the Lord's land and people: ***"Many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become My people."*** The book's Appendix shows that the context fits our day.

In Apx. 5 we see that both Zion and Jerusalem can refer to believers in Christ Jesus who come before God in His holy throne room (Heb. 12:22-24, etc.). Jerusalem and Israel are also discussed on p. 198-202. I refer you to that discussion and call your attention to the three times God uses Israel in Joel (2:27, 3:2, 3:16). Each time the context connects Israel to God's people. Indeed, Israel in its three contexts in Joel fits individual believers in Jesus, believing nations, and the nation of Jews in this time leading up to Jesus' return.

Joel 3 is the time of the restoration of the fortunes (or captivity to God) of the Jewish people, so that we find fitting references to the Jewish nation and people in Joel 3. V. 2b-8 and 18-21 refer clearly to Judah's homeland and its surrounding regions and to historical events of the sons of Judah. We have often seen how the New Testament uses Jerusalem and Israel to refer to believers, but Judah has no such meaning. Joel 3 is the consummation of a great spiritual war where all the mighty unrepentant nations of the world gather against all of the Lord's people, and this is His time to restore the fortunes of all His people – specifically including the nation Israel (Apx. 9-12, p. 199-202).

Joel did not specify his own land or time as Biblical prophets usually did, and Bible-believing scholars do not agree about Joel's land and time. But instead of being a problem, this can be a clue to help confirm how Joel applies today.

On p. 38 we saw that three Minor Prophets prophesied about an ancient Gentile nation. Every other Minor Prophet began his book by dating it except Joel, Habakkuk, and Malachi. These 3 provide general principles that meaningfully apply to many Gentile nations today. The other six Minor Prophets teach Gentile nations today primarily through their historical applications (some also include prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled). Therefore with Minor Prophet books that are not about Edom or Nineveh, being undated is a consistent clue that the book provides general principles which apply to nations today.

Believers can agree that God inspired Joel to say what God wanted. Chapters 6-10 provide much evidence that God inspired Joel to speak so that the word can apply to nations today and show us much about fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission. Knowing Joel's land and time is not needed for this application because, as these chapters show, God's word is clear enough about how it applies without that.

Appendix 9

SCRIPTURES SPECIFYING ISRAEL'S DEVELOPMENT IN OUR DAY

Let us consider God's work in Israel today, which is a major point of controversy in the Church now. Many believers see God's hand in the restoration of the nation of Israel, and many other believers see foremost Israel's continued rejection of the Gospel and the general news media message about that land. In Apx. 9 we first consider some Scriptures that precisely describe Israel's current situation and future development. Then we see a few Scriptures which definitely show that the restoration of Israel now is not a false start, but is starting the fulfillment of many Scriptures about Israel's future blessing. In Apx. 10 we see how this development of Israel fits into Jesus' Olivet Discourse, which is part of a profound picture of the consummation of this age.

Israel's Current Situation and Future Development in Our Day

*"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? **Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once?** As soon as **Zion** travailed, she also brought forth her sons. Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?" says the Lord. "Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?" says your God (Isa. 66:8-9).*

This Scripture was remarkably fulfilled on May 14, 1948 as the nation of Israel was brought forth and born in a single day.

Some Christians believe that the nation of Israel now is not a part of the Lord's people, because it generally does not believe in Jesus as their Messiah. And many Jews do passionately reject Him (or at least

reject a distortion of Him), even as Paul once did. But Ez. 37 shows that Israel is developing according to God's prophecy for Israel, and that God will change this lack of life in them.

Ez. 37 shows the development of the descendants of Jacob into one nation, the house of Israel. God breathes life into Israel only after He puts the nation together with structure and strength – which is now! V. 8 exactly describes the present condition of this nation by pointing out the sinews, flesh, and skin on the skeleton while it has no breath – no Spirit of God (the Hebrew word for “breath” is “spirit”). V. 9-10 show that God will change this condition in the future as He commands the breath to go into the people of Israel in order to give them life.

Rom. 11 shows this restoration after Israel's rejection of Christ Jesus. In v. 1-25 “Israel” clearly refers to the Jewish people. V. 25-26 show a partial hardening of Israel “...***until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel shall be saved...***” The “all Israel” to be saved includes the nation of Israel, even if believers – the “Israel of God” in Gal. 6:14-16 – are also included. Rom. 11 shows the nation of Israel being restored when the times of the Gentiles are being fulfilled.

Rom. 11:25-32 shows clearly that the nation of Israel will be restored because of God's grace – not because Israel does anything to deserve it – even as every believer is saved by mercy and grace without deserving this blessing. Rom. 11:30-32 tells Christians about Jews for the time when He sovereignly takes away the sins of Israel:

*³⁰For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so these [Gentile Christians] also **now** have been disobedient, that **because of the mercy shown to you they [Israel] also may now be shown mercy.** ³²For God has shut up **all in disobedience** that He might show mercy to all.*

“Now” in v. 31 is the time of the fullness of the Gentiles in v. 25.

God showed mercy to us Gentile believers because of Israel's disobedience. Then we who received God's mercy in Jesus have also been disobedient – haven't we? – so that God may justly be merciful to Israel. Therefore the current unbelief of the nation of Israel as a whole is no reason for Christians to suppose that God is not starting His good work in Israel. Instead, Israel is developing just as Ez. 37 and Rom. 11 prophesied about it. As we saw, this word shows that by His grace God removes Israel's unbelief after this current stage of development.

Israel's international situation is also described in many Scriptures that are being fulfilled in our day. Joel 3:1-2 shows that God restores the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem while mighty unrepentant nations gather against it. This is the consummation of the Joel 2 national judgments – national darkness or else national blessings. We have seen (Chapters 7-9 and p. 131-132) how all of this has been taking shape before our eyes since about the time of Israel's birth in 1948.

Israel's situation in our day is so crucial for all nations that the Bible describes it repeatedly: Zech. 12:2-3, 14:2-3, Jer. 30:5-9, and Ob. 11-15. Zech. 12:7-9 and Jer. 30:7-9 show that Jacob gets saved this time, in contrast to similar situations in Biblical times. In Apx. 12 we see much more about Israel's salvation and relationship to the Church in our day from Zech. 12:1-10.

As explained systematically in my book on Obadiah (p. 211), each verse in Obadiah applies to the U.S. in our day. Ob. 11-15 precisely describes the current crisis of Israel with many Islamic-Arabic nations (aptly called "strangers" and "foreigners" in Ob. 11). This crisis clearly has been, is being, and will be fulfilled specifically in our day. The book on Obadiah shows that nations with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation must be faithful to Israel in this time of subtle deceptions and enormous pressures to forsake Israel.

God's Restoration of Israel Is Definitely in Our Day

A combination of Scriptures show that God is now fulfilling His highly emphasized promise in Scripture to give specific land to the circumcised descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God makes this promise over forty times in the Bible, but these few verses clearly demonstrate that God's permanent restoration of Jews to their homeland is not any previous gathering nor any future re-gathering.

The first Scripture is Psalm 60:6-8:

God has spoken in His holiness: *"I will exult, I will portion out Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter. Moab is My washbowl; over Edom I shall throw My shoe; shout aloud, O Philistia, because of Me!"*

Here God clearly declares His sovereign right to do whatever He chooses with certain lands – roughly ancient Canaan, including lands in the present nation of Jordan – although many of their inhabitants probably object to His sovereign choices (because of jealousy, etc.).

In another Scripture, Psalm 108:7-9, the Lord says almost exactly the same thing. He also begins this Scripture with, **"God has spoken in His holiness."** Is this repetition in Scripture significant? What does God tell us by the introduction of "speaking in His holiness"? Indeed, let us see that this phrase makes the repetition especially significant.

Heb. 6:13-18 answers both questions. God shows that when He merely told Abraham, *"I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you"*, He was swearing by himself (v. 13). God's mere statement was also His oath, which made it impossible for Him to compromise on His unchanging promise (v. 17-18). If God's mere statement to Abraham was swearing by the ultimate – Himself – and making an oath to show that His purpose would not change, how much more emphatically does

God reveal His unwavering purpose by repeatedly declaring in His Scriptures that He has spoken in His holiness about these lands?

In other Scriptures (like Psalm 24:1) God declares His possession of the whole earth and all it contains, but Psalm 60:6-8 and 108:7-9 together emphatically establish His absolute possession of specifically these lands for His sovereignly chosen purposes.

Let us see God's clearly stated purpose for these lands now: to give them to Jacob to possess at this time – that is, during the raging controversies now, not when Jesus returns to personally settle all things. We shall see that “now” really is specified again and again.

Luke 21:24 uniquely identifies our day as the time that God has chosen for Jacob to possess Jerusalem: “...*Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*” In the Bible “trampled under foot” always crushes the trampled, as in a winepress. Luke 10:19 best illustrates the meaning of this word. It is translated “*tread on*” as Jesus tells His 70 disciples: “*I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.*”

“Trampled under foot” in v. 24 gives a picture that Jews could not prevent what some Gentiles would do in or to Jerusalem. God would give various Gentiles a dominant authority over Jerusalem for a limited time, and Jews would not be able to stop them during this time.

V. 24 has been fulfilled. Gentiles have controlled Jerusalem from 70 A.D. to 1948, and a part of it until 1967, so that the times of the Gentiles were not previously fulfilled. Then Jews have obtained and maintained control over Jerusalem with no Gentile authority over them for more than 60 years. Consider Jesus' prophecy in Luke 21:24: this single event can show that the times of the Gentiles are being fulfilled since around 1948 or 1967, but not at any time before then. Is it even

possible for the Jews to do what they have done now without God's active release of Jerusalem to them? We can know that God has lifted His ban against them.

(V. 24 is discussed again in its context in Luke 21 on p. 142-143. For many reasons I conclude that the start is near 1948, not 1967. But this difference should stay irrelevant into the distant future.)

Isa. 11:11-14 with Acts 2:5-11 also uniquely specifies our day. Isa. 11:13-14 shows that the united tribes of the descendants of Jacob will seize both the Gaza Strip (Philistia) and lands in the nation of Jordan (Edom, Moab, Ammon). Isa. 11:11-12 shows the timing for this:

*Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again **recover the second time** with His hand the **remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush [Ethiopia], Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea** [islands are coastlands or continents]. And He will...assemble the **banished ones of Israel**, and will gather the **dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth**.*

Notice: this recovery from the lands of exile is not the first or third time, but the second. Let us see that this second recovery is occurring now, not before now or after now.

In Acts 2:5-11 God shows explicitly that one recovery from these many lands was fulfilled at the time of Jesus. V. 5 says that "*there were **Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven***". In further confirmation, most of the lands in Isa. 11:11 were named explicitly in what could seem like a useless list of names in Acts 2:9-11: all the names in each list were those at the time of each Scripture, but the overlap of the lands on the two lists is unmistakable.

This recovery documented in Acts 2:5-11 was wiped out by 70 A.D. That recovery has passed. The recovery from all nations starting in the 1940s and continuing since then is not the first: this must be the second recovery from all over the earth prophesied in Isa. 11:11-12.

As indicated on p. 133, every verse in Obadiah can apply to the U.S. in our day. Ob. 11 (p. 23-27) describes today and Ob. 19 fits in v. 11. V. 19 shows Israel's expansion to possess key lands in our day when the Day of the Lord draws near on all the nations (Ob. 15). In v. 19 God specifies essentially the same land area as Psalm 60:6-8:

*Then those of the **Negev** will **possess the mountain of Esau**, and those of the **Shephelah** the **Philistine plain**; also, **possess the territory of Ephraim** and the **territory of Samaria**, and Benjamin will **possess Gilead**.*

V. 19 shows the land Israel started with in 1948-67: the Negev and the Shephelah. V.19 also shows Israel's amazing 1967 expansion to possess the West Bank (Ephraim and Samaria) and Gaza Strip (the Philistine plain). V. 19 goes further and shows that Israel will also possess Gilead and the mountain of Esau. Both lands lie within the current nation of Jordan. (Psalms 60, 108, and Isa. 11:14 add Moab: there is no reason to expect that the brief list in Ob. 19 specifies all the land that the descendants of Jacob will possess in our day).

All of these Scriptures in this section repeatedly and uniquely pinpoint the time since the 1940s as the time when the remnant of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will receive lands that God has promised them. Look at these Scriptures again! God promised the land of ancient Canaan to the chosen descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob over forty times in the Bible. The above Scriptures specify many lands in that region and show that God is fulfilling this promise in our day.

God's Restoration of Israel in Our Day Is Permanent

Is this a false start of Israel, as some assert? I believe Luke 21:24 answers this clearly: Jerusalem has not been trampled under foot by the Gentiles since 1948 (or 1967), so that the times of the Gentiles

must be fulfilled in our day.

Even now, however, mighty nations vehemently demand that a major portion of Jerusalem be given back to the Gentiles. Will they succeed? And will this second recovery be removed like the first recovery in 70 A.D.? Many mighty nations passionately desire this. Perhaps the Lord will make some future recovery to be the permanent one. Luke 21:24 clearly shows "NO". Some translations of Isa. 11:11 show "NO" just as clearly, but let us consider a possible objection.

V. 11 in the NAS Bible says clearly that this recovery will remain: *"...the Lord will again recover the **second** time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from...."* Some translate v. 11 so that the key phrase merely restates the meaning of a remnant: that relatively few are left from the dispersion. The New King James Bible gives that meaning: *"...again the **second** time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from...."* The New International Version is like the New King James Version, saying: *"...a **second** time to reclaim the remnant **that is left** of His people from...."* The King James Bible is not clear about the key point: *"...again the **second** time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from...."*

"Shall be left" is in the Hebrew future tense, which can mean that the remnant will be left in the land after they had been recovered. But "shall be left" can also mean that they have been left alive so that they can be recovered, which restates the meaning of a remnant. Now nothing in the context of v. 11 or in Luke 21:24 suggests that this second recovery will shrink back or disappear. Is v. 11 a useless repetition of a remnant or a clear confirmation of Luke 21:24 and other Scriptures? I suggest that you ask our Lord and consider the following Scriptures.

Remember the first Scripture we saw about Israel in our day:

⁸*"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? **Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once?** As soon as **Zion** travailed, she also brought forth her sons. ⁹**Shall I bring to the point of birth, and not give delivery?**" says the Lord. "Or **shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?**" says your God. (Isa. 66:8-9)*

God brought Israel to birth in 1948 and has nurtured it against truly impossible opposition to fulfill Ez. 37:1-8: to have structure and strength, but without the breath of life from God. Answer this question: won't He save Israel from its enemies – who have never stopped seeking its total removal from its land – until He breathes on it and makes it alive before Him (v. 9-23)? God has given Israel birth (Isa. 66:8). Will He "*not give delivery*" (v. 9a)? Isa. 66:9a makes it clear that He will. And the rest of Ez. 37 (v. 24-28) makes it clear that Israel's life under the Heir of David (Messiah Jesus) will continue forever.

Will God "*who gives delivery shut the womb*"? (Isa. 66:9b). In other words, will God stop this restoration or let it be stopped? Amos 9:14-15 with Joel 3 confirms that Israel's restoration will be permanent:

*"Also I will **restore the captivity of My people Israel**, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. **I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,**" says the Lord your God. (Amos 9:14-15).*

"Captivity" in v. 14 refers to being in captivity to God (like Paul): it is the same Hebrew word as "fortunes" in Joel 3:1-2, where He says:

*For behold, in those days and at that time, when I **restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem**, I will gather all the nations and...enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel....*

As I mentioned (p. 133) and shall discuss much further in Apx. 10, Joel 3 is the very consummation of the Age of the Gentiles, which is

the consummation of the national decisions in Joel 2 for or against becoming a part of the people belonging to the Lord Jesus. We have seen its amazing fulfillment beginning around the 1940s.

Is Israel now making a false start, like in the first recovery? I conclude that this is the second time, and this time the remnant will remain and not be rooted out from their land, even if the whole world demands that they leave!

Why Is the Possession of Mere Land Such an Important Issue?

Let us consider one further point that probably disturbs many Christians, even as it had once disturbed me. God's repeated statements about who possesses these lands that He promised to the chosen descendants of Abraham shows that this is a clear priority of God. This seems to contradict His New Testament priority for the hearts of people, not possessions of people.

This apparent conflict is easily resolved. The faithfulness of God is clearly being challenged! This controversy over Jacob's possessions is really not about property, but whether God will be faithful to fulfill His word at His intended time, and whether any specific nation will be with Him or against Him as He faithfully fulfills His promise to His people. Mighty demanding forces on earth and real pressures from Satan will make it very hard to be with God for Israel, but listening to God in a close relationship to Him can produce the faith for this.

Appendix 10

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE OF THE GENTILES IN OUR GENERATION

We have seen many Scriptures that prophesy unusual or even unique developments in nations happening in our day. In Apx. 10 we systematically see how these and other Scriptures provide a basis for this conclusion: we live in the generation that leads up to Jesus' return at the very consummation of the Age of the Gentiles. We also consider the specific meaning of this, and see why it is important for Christians to recognize this season in which we live.

The Questions Jesus Answered When Leaving the Temple

Luke 21:24 (to be quoted soon) uniquely identifies our own day. V. 24 is a part of Jesus' answer to His disciples' questions after they came out of the temple. This is usually called the Olivet Discourse and is recorded for us in a chapter in each of three Gospels. Each chapter gives a partial report of the same answers by Jesus to the same questions by the disciples in this unique situation (this was one event). While each Gospel gives a valid account of the conversation between Jesus and His disciples, each omits some details or small sections that are included in another Gospel account of that conversation.

When we examine the questions of the disciples in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, we can conclude that Jesus answered two questions: ***“...when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*** These questions are fully

recorded only in Matt. 24:3. Mark 13:4 and Luke 21:7 are less specific, saying “*all these things*” or “*these things*” instead of “*Your coming*” and “*the end [consummation] of the age*”.

I use certain terms as we examine Jesus’ answer to the question about “***the sign***”. Based on the disciples’ question, I generally use “Age of the Gentiles” instead of the “times of the Gentiles” that is used in Luke 21:24. I also use the term “consummation of the age” instead of the simpler “end of the age”, because there is a crucial difference in their meanings. I quote from Vine’s Expository Dictionary (the second word for “end”): “*sunteleia*...signifies ‘a bringing to completion together’ ...marking the ‘completion’ or consummation of the various parts of a scheme....The word does not denote a termination, but ‘the heading up of events to the appointed climax’.”

This is a consummation or fulfillment. Because “end” omits this key meaning and is often used in this context to mean a “devastating termination”, I believe it is a much better to translate *sunteleia* as “consummation”.

Because this heading up of events has already begun, in Apx. 10 I distinguish between two closely related timings. “Consummation” refers to this whole time leading up to the climax, which includes now. “Very consummation” or “climax” refers to only the climax itself: Jesus’ return at the great aggression of His enemies against His people.

The Fulfillment of the Age of the Gentiles Is Definitely Now

Two parts of Jesus’ answer are the most useful for identifying our day: Luke 21:24b and the parable of the fig tree and all the trees.

We examined Luke 21:24b on p. 135-136: “*Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles **until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.***” There we saw that God decides who gets Jerusalem, and

that Jews are not able to possess it until God ordains this change. Jews could not from 70 A.D. until “now” – until this time since 1948 or 1967. V. 24 also shows that God makes the possession of Jerusalem by either Jews or Gentiles to be a key for identifying His timetable for the world: in the times of the Gentiles, some of them get Jerusalem; and when their times are fulfilled, God takes it out of their possession.

The ability of Israel to possess Jerusalem now means that we have come to the change of the ages. Therefore v. 24 gives us a most powerful but straightforward conclusion: the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled in 1948 or 1967, or else this is in the process of being fulfilled.

God has given Jerusalem back to the Jews before accomplishing some other events that come with fulfilling the times of the Gentiles to consummate this age. This shows that the transition between the times of the Gentiles and Jews is not immediate, but is taking place over a period of time that certainly includes 1948 or 1967.

How Long Is This Consummation of the Age?

Jesus’ answer in Luke 21:24 raises the question: How long does it take to complete the transition from the times of the Gentiles to the time in Luke 21:32 when “all things have taken place”? (Matthew and Mark say “all these things”). We shall quickly see that Jesus answered: within a generation. We shall soon see that there is a good question about what “generation” means, and that this question can and should be answered with the right precision.

Indeed, the “parable of the fig tree” in Luke 21:29-32 both answers this question about “how long?” and shows that it is very important for His people at this time to know or recognize this season:

*²⁹Then He [Jesus] told them a parable: “**Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;** ³⁰as soon as they put forth leaves, **you see it and know***

for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹So you, also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place." (Luke 21:29-32)

Being a parable, v. 29-32 tell us to draw an analogy between the development of trees in a season and "something else", which can offer a convincing sign to the generation that sees the corresponding development of that "something else". Jesus says that this sign shows the nearness of the Kingdom of God and the taking place of all things related to the disciples' questions. This includes the glorious return of the Lord Jesus in Luke 21:27 and Matt. 24:3 (*Your coming* in v. 3) and the consummation of the age (*times of the Gentiles* in Luke 21:24).

Interpreting This Parable: Trees and Nations

What is this "something else"? A parable must be interpreted to get its real meaning. Jesus' disciples turned to Him to learn the real meaning of His parables, and we should do likewise. We can ask the parable's Author – God! I believe He gives us this key: in this parable the fig tree represents the nation of Israel; by extension, all the trees represents all the nations.

You can check many confirmations of this symbolism while you ask and hear from the Author. One group of confirmations comes from scriptural precedents for it, like the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:6-9. This can be done with a concordance and will not be done here, because the extra insight is not worth the discussion. Another group of confirmations comes from examining the rich practical meaning that this symbolism gives this parable. We shall consider this group here because it can give us a firm conviction about our own generation.

When Israel and all the nations are put into Luke 21:29-32, this parable shows that Jesus' disciples in "this generation" can and should

recognize that the Kingdom of God is near by seeing the development of Israel and all the nations. We can know for ourselves that the crucial time is “now” if the nations are developing according to what God specifies for that time in His Scriptures, because God makes this to be “***the sign***” of Jesus’ coming and of the consummation of the age.

God shows much about nations at the consummation of this age, so that this sign gives an unmistakable message to Jesus’ disciples in our own generation. First let us consider what kind of developments in Israel and all the nations is prophesied to occur at this consummation of the age. The key is given in Joel 2-3, and so we review the basic pattern in Joel with our new perspective here.

Joel 2 describes the crucial choice for one of two opposite futures by each Gentile nation during these days. Many Gentile nations choose to become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and many other unrepentant nations come under the Joel 2 judgment of darkness that – by the time of the climax – will be a steadfast rejection of Him.

Joel 3 reveals a true consummation: the Joel 2 darkness or else discipleship of every Gentile nation is brought together for a climax. Thinking they can easily destroy God’s people, the mighty unrepentant nations gather against His people, but here God completes His judgment on the unrepentant nations as He delivers His people.

Joel 3:1-2 shows that this consummation occurs at a time when the Lord restores the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, and when He gathers all of the unrepentant nations against what He calls “***My people and My inheritance, Israel***” (v. 2). As explained on p. 198-202, “My people” in this verse are the restored nation of Israel, individual believers in every nation, and the repentant nations of Joel 2. Notice how the ultimate opportunity of Gentile nations to join themselves to the Lord Jesus and become a part of His people (Zech. 2:11) is an apt

fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles and is accurately called the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles.

Now that we know what kind of developments to look for, we can see how far this unique development in Israel and all the nations has progressed in our generation. First we review the fulfillment of key unique developments in the nation of Israel to see the clear sign that the fig tree gives to our generation of Jesus' disciples. We examined the Scriptures in Apx. 9, and so here we indicate the fulfillments without most of the references and explanation (see Apx. 9 for that).

The nation of Israel was brought forth and born in a single day in 1948, and since then God has been restoring the fortunes of Israel while mighty unrepentant nations gather against it. But God saves Israel this time, in contrast to similar situations in each final generation of ancient Israel, Judah, and Judea. Most of Israel does not yet believe Jesus is their Messiah; but the nation is developing just as God showed in Ez. 37:8-10 (Apx. 9), and later God will change this lack of life in them. Rom. 11 shows this restoration after Israel's rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ: the nation of Israel will be restored by God's grace when the fullness of the Gentiles comes.

Luke 21:24 and Isa. 11:11-14 uniquely pinpoint the time since the 1940s as the time when the Lord began His restoration of the fortunes of the remnant of the descendants of Jacob (p. 135-137). In Isa. 11, God promises to gather the dispersed exiles of Israel and Judah from the four corners of the earth for the second time (not the first or third). One recovery at the time of Jesus (Acts 2) was wiped out in 70 A.D., and so a recovery that began in full force in the 1940s is the second recovery. This time the gathered will remain and will not be rooted out from their land (Isa. 11:11-12, 66:8-9, Amos 9:14-15, p. 137-140).

What a clear sign from the fig tree alone! Now let us consider

such developments in “*all the trees*” or all the nations. There are so many that I only point out highlights, so that we keep our perspective of seeing a convincing sign that we are living in the season of the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles.

First, remember that the whole prophecy of Joel is at various stages of being worked out in every nation. Many Gentile nations are in the season of Joel 1 with each one approaching its Day of the Lord, including the U.S. Many other nations began the Joel 2 judgment of darkness since about 1940: Eastern Europe (Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, etc.), Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Angola, China, Viet Nam, Cambodia, North Korea, Cuba, and many others, including many that have become Islamic nations. And while I am convinced that people in these nations and probably these whole nations will get a further opportunity to join themselves to the Lord Jesus, we can realize the stage is also being set for these results in Joel 2 to be consummated in Joel 3.

Obadiah has amazing prophecies about the U.S. and other Judeo-Christian nations as the Day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. Highlights are discussed in Apx. 2 and much more is given in my book on Obadiah (p. 211), where we see how Obadiah specifies many vital features of the U.S., and how all 21 verses can meaningfully apply to the U.S. now or in the near future. Now consider how these features in the mere 21 verses of Obadiah combine to describe only our day:

- * the Day of the Lord draws near on all the nations (Ob. 15);
- * each part of Ob. 7 describes important features of the U.S. global foreign policy since about 1945 (my book on Obadiah explains how) – and these features did not begin until the 1940s;
- * a nation of Jacob’s descendants possesses the land containing Jerusalem – this alone eliminates the time from 70 A.D. to 1948;

- * many nations that are aptly called “strangers and foreigners” to the Lord’s people are attempting to carry out each of the three specific kinds of aggressions in Ob. 11 (p. 23) against this nation from Jacob;
- * every nation with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation from its past is both standing aloof from Jacob and close to decisively becoming like a stranger or foreigner (Ob. 11-14, p. 23-27); and
- * each of the three specific prophecies in Ob. 19 has already caused heated controversies and strong temptations for unfaithfulness by every nation with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation, or else will surely cause these things when the other part of v. 19 occurs (it is already set up).

Ob. 19 (quoted on p. 137) shows: Israel’s possession of the Negev and the Shephelah at its beginning in 1948; its expansion to include specifically the very controversial West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967; and its possession of lands in the present nation of Jordan in the future (p. 137). Israel’s taking possession of the lands in Jordan could occur at almost any time, because open warfare involving Israel’s borders is usually ready to break out – no matter who starts it.

Consider how precisely these features in Obadiah are being fulfilled in our day and had not been fulfilled until the 1940s. These features together pinpoint our day and repeatedly exclude all times since 600 BC. And not only does all of Obadiah apply to the U.S. in our day, all prophecies in v. 10-21 also apply to all other nations with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation from past generations. Also, every aggressive nation against Israel is aptly called a stranger and foreigner in Obadiah and is doing precisely what Obadiah shows.

The prophecies of Joel and Obadiah alone can enable a reader to realize how unmistakably the nations in the parable of the fig tree are identifying the time in which we are living. Let us consider only a few more examples of the unique development of the nations now.

The current role of Russia (the former USSR) among nations now – by whatever name and composed of whichever specific nations – is repeatedly specified in Scriptures. It is the northern army of Joel, the bear of the Amos 5:19 judgment on many unrepentant nations today, Obadiah's eater of the U.S. bread that sets an ambush for the U.S., and the tribes from the uttermost north of Israel that will join together and attack Israel in Ez. 38-39. Of course, Ez. 38-39 follows Ez. 37, and we have seen (especially p. 132 and 139 in Apx. 9) that Ez. 37:8 precisely describes the condition of the nation of Israel today. The hostile, aggressive attitude by many nations and peoples of the USSR against Jews and the nation of Israel in our day is another indication that much of the USSR is now getting set up for fulfilling Ez. 38-39.

I add that God is fully able to deliver some nations from being a part of the enemies of His people while other nations from the extreme north return to their prophesied roles against Israel and as a primary instrument of God's judgment on unrepentant nations.

In Isa. 43:5b-6a the Lord says to the people of Jacob:

*I will **bring** your offspring from the **east**, and **gather** you from the **west**. I will say to the **north**, "**Give them up!**", and to the **south**, "**Do not hold them back.**"*

The Hebrew word for "bring" literally means "cause to come". Notice that eastern Jews are caused to come, but western Jews are freer and are gathered, because persecution, etc. are not causing them to come. In contrast to these two, the USSR has held Jews captive until the great release in recent years, and the Islamic-Arabic nations to the south intensely try to hold Jews back from returning to their land of promise.

These prophecies in Isa. 43:5-6 that are being fulfilled so specifically in this generation harmonize with the prophecies in Zech.

2:6-13, which were shown to apply so exactly to our day in the book's Appendix. Let us consider only the prophecy related to Isa. 43:5-6. In Zech. 2:6 God tells His people who have been dispersed in all directions: ***"Flee from the land of the north."*** In v. 7 God adds: ***"Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon."***

The Hebrew words for flee and escape both mean getting away from something dangerous, but flee emphasizes a rapid motion from it. This aptly describes the way that Jews in the lands of the north in our day have truly needed to jump at the few opportunities that do come to get out of the land of their captivity. In contrast, He calls these sons of Zion to escape from the idolatrous land of their exile – a true daughter of idolatrous Babylon – where they have much more freedom to leave at their choosing. (Of course, Christians on Mt. Zion today also need to escape from the idolatry of their land, as discussed on book p. 124).

The amazing prophecies of Isa. 19:16-25 show us major developments in three nations. The prophecy in v. 16-17, which show that Israel becomes a terror to Egypt, was unfulfilled and unbelievable before 1967. But this was suddenly fulfilled in 1967 and 1973, and now this no longer even seems like a miracle.

The prophecies in v. 19-25 have not yet been fulfilled, and you shall see that they are quite unlikely. This helps people living now to appreciate that God is showing truly amazing changes, not mere outcomes that wise observers would predict.

V. 19-22 show that Egypt will cry to the Lord due to oppressors; and He will deliver them and make Himself known to them, and strike them but heal them, so that they will turn to the Lord – in contrast to Islam. V. 23-25 prophesy that Egypt and Assyria (a northern part of Iraq) and Israel will be aligned together in the worship of the Lord and will be a blessing on the earth.

Yes, there are some remarkable changes in the future. These unfulfilled changes can show us that we are not yet at the end of this age for Gentile nations to make their decisions for or against joining themselves to the Lord Jesus as His national disciples.

We have been examining the development of specific nations according to the prophecies about them in this time before Jesus returns. There are two additional general developments of nations that give us further insights into the prophesied development of nations in this crucial season. In Matt. 16:18 Jesus says: “...*upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*”

Islam is a gate of Hades that has kept many nations captive from life in Jesus, overpowering the Church's fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission in every one of those lands. This will definitely change before He returns, because His word will not be broken: this gate will release its captives! We again find that huge changes in nations remain to be accomplished before this season is over.

The other general development of nations in this season is the remarkable development of new nations since the 1940s. African and Asian peoples have shed their distant ruling powers and formed their own nations, although their governments are often dictatorships and not yet a direct expression of the will of the peoples there. A nationalism that increased with the forced unity under communism re-established many new nations (but historical peoples) out of the old USSR and Eastern Europe. This formation of new nations in this generation serves a spiritual purpose: each new nation can make its own decision for or against national discipleship to the Lord Jesus.

A Conclusion to the Parable of the Fig Tree and All the Trees

The “nation of Israel and all the nations” in this parable of the fig

tree and all the trees gives a clear and unmistakable sign for our own generation since the 1940s. Notice how many unique, specific, and amazing national developments are prophesied for “the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles”. What a clear and unmistakable sign of the coming of Jesus and the nearness of the kingdom of God!

With so much clear evidence, I will not discuss things here since biblical times and only increased now: earthquakes, famines, rampant sins, and a greatly increased potential for a one-world system under the Antichrist, etc. What we have seen can stand by itself, but other Scriptures can confirm that we live in this special time.

Which Generation Is “This Generation”?

In the last two verses of the parable (Luke 21:31-32) Jesus says:

*So you, also, **when you see these things happening, recognize** [or know] that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all things take place.** [Matt. 24 and Mark 13 say “**all these things**”, and the Greek word for “recognize” in v. 31 is more often translated as “know” – as in v. 30.]*

Which generation is “*this generation*”? I have seen three answers proposed for it: one provides vital information and fits into the context, and the other two do neither, so that I call them “poor answers”. The good meaning of this generation is the one that is seeing “these things” happen (v. 31), because these are the disciples who will see the sign (p. 141-144) and will be greatly involved in and affected by “all these things taking place” in their day. From the Scriptures about the nations, we clearly live in “this generation”! But because many Christians firmly believe the poor answers, let us consider them.

One poor answer is that “this generation” referred to the disciples who were there talking with Jesus. This interpretation has major problems. First, Jesus gave this word for those who see these things

happening (v. 31), and much did not happen then: everyone in the First Century passed away before “all these things” took place. Two specific things are the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles (not before 1948) and Jesus’ coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Some assert that His coming at Pentecost fulfills the latter. But what did they see in the fig tree and all the trees to help them prepare for Pentecost? It came within two months of Jesus’ words and long before the Gospels were written. Moreover, His coming then was not in great glory, because then nearly the whole earth was untouched and unaware of what happened in Jerusalem. Pentecost was merely a step toward His future coming in great glory, which is yet to happen: God’s pledge that He shall fulfill began at Pentecost (Eph. 1:13-14).

In the 1900 years before these special things happen, they would not affect or be seen by believers, who would have little use for this Scripture and sign. But the first 11 disciples needed to hear this word to pass it on to us: as Jesus said in John 17:20, we “**believe in Me through their word**”. Jesus gave them this word only for us, their spiritual descendants. When the 11 asked to know if Jesus was restoring the kingdom to Israel in their own time (Acts 1:6), Jesus told them in v. 7: “**It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.**”

The other poor answer is based on translating this Greek word as “race” – here the Jewish race. This is another legitimate translation of this Greek word, but this makes v. 32 to become a useless statement and does not fit into its context like the good meaning does. This will be clear when examining the context of v. 32 after the next section.

How Long Is “This Generation?”

How long is “this generation” in Luke 21:32? What time span does

God appoint for “all these things” to take place? The right answer can help believers in this special generation fulfill their calling.

A “generation passing away” normally means that everyone in it dies. This fits well in v. 32: one or more people will live from the beginning to the end of the time period for the fulfillment of the events in Luke 21 that provide the sign of Jesus’ return at the very consummation of this age. Because Jesus says, “*this generation will not pass away until **all things** take place*”, one person might be left, or very many people might live through all these things.

This meaning of this generation in v. 32 implies an inexact time limit for all these things to take place. This is neither timeless nor with a predictable end point.

How This Approximate Time Limit Serves God’s Purposes for Good

This inexact time limit is perfect for God’s purposes for this whole Scripture. Indeed, what this specific meaning of “this generation” supplies to the context of v. 32 strongly confirms this meaning over the two “poor answers”. Most importantly, this meaning provides a much needed time frame for Jesus’ commandment in v. 31: “**Recognize** [know] *that the kingdom of God is **near**.*” How near is “near”?

The great need for such a time frame can be better appreciated if we realize the remarkable developments that must be accomplished in and by His disciples before His return at the very consummation of this age – therefore a part of the “all things” in the prophecy of v. 32. Let us briefly reconsider some of these developments.

The discipleship of all the nations that are willing to come to the Lord Jesus Christ must be carried out. This will be accomplished only through the remarkable development of the Body of Christ that God will produce in this generation – our day! God gives us a summary of

this great development in Eph. 4:11-16 (Chapter 4), which shows that His entire body will grow up into Christ Jesus in all aspects.

This involves the joining together of God's people into a unit that includes: the nation of Israel, which will be believing in Jesus its Messiah; Gentile nations which have joined themselves to the Lord Jesus; and individual believers in Him. This unit is a body that corporately functions like Jesus in every way: in His worship of God in Spirit and truth, in His dedication, in His love and other fruit, in His power, and in corporately manifesting God's full nature to the world.

This growth of His Church on earth into the fullness of Christ Jesus implies a tremendous quality in many specific ways and shows that we are not close to fulfilling this prophecy. This agrees with our conclusion from prophecies about Egypt and Assyria (Isa. 19:19-25, p. 150-151) and the Church's prevailing against the gates of Hades (Matt. 16:18, p. 151), which also seem distant now.

Therefore we ask: "How long before all things take place?" (v. 32). V. 31 says that when we see these things happening – the development of the fig tree and all the trees – then we are to know that the kingdom of God is "near". In view of the eternity of God, our own eternal life, and the little development of the Church in almost 2000 years, how soon is near? Another 2000 years or so? NO! We realize that all will be fulfilled within someone's lifespan, because Jesus follows this revelation of the sign by saying that *"this generation will not pass away until all things take place"*.

Therefore in v. 32 Jesus gives with a much-needed time frame that explains the meaning of "near" in v. 31, so that we can understand the practical meaning of ***"the kingdom of God is near"***. If this generation of believers understands this, then it is encouraged to move ahead toward accomplishing the tremendous work that must be

accomplished within a lifetime, even by exercising faith that God will enable us to make such tremendous transformations during this relatively short time period. Specifically, we can expect His astounding prophetic development of His Church to be fulfilled in the “near future” instead of “many generations” later.

This insight can be abused. This generation must treat our parents and posterity with respect instead of considering itself special. A key ministry of the Church before the great and terrible Day of the Lord comes to a land is reconciling the fathers and their children (the Elijah ministry, Chapter 13, and p. 205-206 of Supplement 13).

Now notice that Jesus commands His disciples to recognize and know the kingdom of God is near when they see the sign (although the verb could also be translated in the indicative mood, a statement). His command is fully compatible with His clear warning in Matt. 24:36 and Mark 13:32 – that no one knows the day nor the hour of His coming – because this command is to recognize the season instead of trying to guess or figure out the precise time of His coming. This time frame of a “season” shows that even a “target year” is unreliable. Moreover, an insight about Jesus’ global return should not be a source of personal presumption for anyone: He can return at any time for any person, even as He has for nearly 2000 years!

Consistent with Jesus’ command to recognize the season in v. 31, v. 32 begins with a clause that signals a profound insight: ***“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.”*** Jesus shows that His disciples in this season really need to know that this crucial time and situation involves them, so that they will move with faith into fulfilling the awesome prophecies for their day.

In contrast, notice how weak “this generation” as “the Jewish race” is for Jesus’ disciples. This is not a profound insight – not at all! How

many Old Testament and New Testament prophecies have we seen that centrally involve the Jewish people? We know very well that the Jewish race will not pass away without considering v. 32.

Furthermore, what great purpose does this little intellectual insight provide for disciples who “*see these things happening*” (v. 31), so that Jesus begins v. 32 with “*Truly I say to you*”? Our knowing this Scripture has not greatly helped the Jewish race to survive through the centuries; God requires more in our relating to the Jewish people than is even suggested in v. 32 (do not be arrogant, comfort them, be their strength, etc.); and a surviving Jewish race is simply irrelevant for the important topic at hand – the special time and situation of these disciples, which can help them be better equipped for their situation.

Having seen the appropriate time frame that the good meaning of “this generation” gives to v. 31, let us consider how this meaning fits into the context on the other side of v. 32, that is, v. 33-36.

Jesus says in v. 33: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*” Believers would not get the sign in v. 29-32 for over 1900 years. V. 33 assures them that Luke 21, Matt. 24, and Mark 13 are true and will be important at the right time, even if nothing develops in their lifetimes. And v. 33 helps believers at the right time to see all that must be accomplished in and through them in their day.

Jesus’ warning in v. 34-36, for His disciples to “***keep on the alert at all times, praying....***”, is especially meaningful to the generation of disciples who “see these things happening”, because that is the only generation which will experience special pressures both from within each nation and person and from without. They arise primarily from the spiritual heavens being shaken uniquely hard for this crucial situation (for example, consider Luke 21:25-26 and Rev. 12:7-17, especially v. 12 and 17).

The identification of an inexact time period of within a generation shows why Jesus' disciples in that generation must keep on the alert in prayer: (1) Jesus will surely return within the potential lifetimes of some of these disciples. (2) Their futures will include special developments and much unanticipated opposition with God's power available for His solutions. (3) These disciples do not have any specific target time to aim for the completion of their projects without really hearing from Him, or to capture their attention from whatever they need to be doing now. This inexact time frame encourages and helps these disciples to live in a chronic state of being on the alert in prayer.

The Generation of the Consummation of the Age of the Gentiles

We have seen an unmistakable sign that we are now living in the season that leads up to the climax or very consummation of the Age of the Gentiles, which includes Jesus' return and the coming of the Kingdom of God beyond any comparison to its coming up to now. This will surely happen before everyone who was born by 1967 will pass away, and probably before everyone born by 1948 will die.

This insight may not help one who is fully hearing from God and fully focused on doing what He is telling him/her, but it can help many like me to better discern His will and be more focused in our lives on earth.

Appendix 11

CAN NATIONS REPENT IN OUR DAY? HOW SCRIPTURE USES “ALL”

A predominant theme throughout this book is that Gentile nations can repent and be joined to the Lord Jesus in our day, so that such nations will not be gathered against God’s people for judgment at the very consummation of the Age of the Gentiles. We have seen that “Israel” in Joel 3:2 can include repentant Gentile nations, because in v. 2 the Lord calls Israel *“My people and My inheritance”*. Likewise, “Jerusalem” in Zech. 12:3 is referring to believers of Jewish or Gentile origin (Apx. 12), and the same meaning can apply in Zech. 14:2. But the consistent use of the word “all” in these three verses can cause a believer to question if these verses allow such exceptional nations.

Here we shall see from the Bible that God clearly allows for exceptions when He uses this word. Like “all” in English, this very common Hebrew word is often used when there are no exceptions, but it is also used in another way: when there are exceptions that are not mentioned in a statement. This appendix contains some transparent examples. Such examples show us that these Scriptures in Joel and Zechariah do not say that every nation without exception will be against Israel or Jerusalem in our day. The use of the Greek words for “all” and “whole” in Rev. 13 is also examined with the same conclusion.

If you already realize that God sometimes makes exceptions when He uses “all” (so that every Scripture allows a nation to join itself to Jesus in our day), then this appendix is not written for you.

Scriptures Where the Hebrew "All" Clearly Allows for Exceptions

In each example in this section, we consider only the Hebrew word that is translated as "all" in Joel 3:2 and Zech. 12:3 and 14:2. This word is translated as "every" in many of these examples.

1. Gen. 7:4, 21-23, 6:12-20: When the Lord repeatedly said that He was blotting out "every" living thing from the face of the earth, He was clearly excluding Noah and his family and some animals.

2. Ex. 9:6 with Ex. 9:19-21: "All" of the Egyptian livestock (cattle) died, but Egypt still had livestock for a judgment on them a little later.

3. Joshua 8:3, 15, 21: "All Israel" did not include the 30,000 warriors who were hiding in ambush.

4. Judges 20:1 with Judges 21:8 (an especially clear example): "All the sons of Israel" assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah, but Jabesh-Gilead (one of the cities of Israel) did not even have a representative there (Judges 21:5, 8). Also, in Judges 20:11-13 "all the men of Israel" did not include the sons of Benjamin, even though the sons of Israel were still called their brothers.

5. 1Sam. 15:7-8, 32-33 with 1Sam. 30:1 and 2Sam. 1:8, 13: "All" of the Amalekites were utterly destroyed in 1Sam. 15, but there were plenty of them around 10 or 15 years later.

6. 1Sam. 17:24, 26, 32, 37: David was clearly excluded from "all the men of Israel".

7. 1Kings 1:9-10, 39-41: "All" the men of Judah and "all" of King David's sons were invited to the celebration feast, but Solomon and David's mighty men were not invited. Also, "all" the people in v. 39-40 did not include Adonijah and "all" of his guests.

8. 1Kings 4:24-25, 11:14-25, especially v. 25 in both chapters: Solomon was given peace on "all" sides around about him, and Judah

and Israel lived in safety "all" the days of Solomon; but Rezon of Syria was an adversary to Israel "all" the days of Solomon. Also, Joab and "all" Israel stayed in Edom for 6 months and struck down "every" male in Edom (11:15-16), but Edom survived as a reasonably strong people for many generations after that.

9. 1Kings 11:36: Solomon's son was given one tribe, so that David would have a lamp "always" before the Lord in Jerusalem. "Always" is literally "all" days, and we know about the fulfillment of God's warnings and prophecies of the exile of Judah from Jerusalem.

10. 1Kings 12:16-20: "All" Israel stoned King Rehoboam's official in v. 18, even though it is clear from v. 16-17 that there were very many exceptions – such as those who chose to live in Judah, and those who had "returned to their tents elsewhere".

11. 2Kings 11:1-2: Athaliah destroyed "all" the royal offspring, but in v. 2 we discover that Joash was excluded from the "all".

12. Jer. 44:11-12, 14, 27-28: The Jews in Egypt would perish until "all" were destroyed, but v. 14 and 27-28 show that a few would escape and return to the land of Judah from Egypt.

13. Zeph. 1:2-3, 1:18, 2:3: God clearly states that He will make a complete and terrifying end of "all" of the inhabitants of the earth (or ground or land). Then He exhorts the humble of the earth (same word as v. 18) to seek righteousness and humility, for in this way the humble may be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.

A Conclusion about This Hebrew Word for "All" in Scripture

We have considered an extremely common word in the Old Testament that is accurately translated "all". We have not considered a representative sample of how it is used, but have chosen examples which clearly show that the Lord does not intend for us to interpret the

word for “all” to mean “there cannot be any exceptions”. The Lord can use other Scriptures to show whether He has provided for exceptions to “all the nations” of Joel 3:2 and Zech. 12 and 14. As we have seen, Scriptures like Zech. 2:11 and its context (the book’s Appendix) show that there are exceptions, and unforced Scriptural meanings of the terms “Israel” and “Jerusalem” in the three key verses easily include these exceptions and further clarify the whole picture.

Two Similar Statements in the New Testament

Rev. 13:3-4 says that the “whole” earth followed the beast; and v. 7-8 say that the beast was given authority over “every” tribe and people and tongue and nation. Many people think these verses show that every nation without exception will come under the beast and follow him, and so we should also confirm that God allows for exceptions in these statements. Rev. 13 contains all of the examples needed to show that God inspired John to use the words for “all” and “whole” when there are unmentioned exceptions – even as these words are often used this way in normal English. (I do add a few examples from other Scriptures for further confirmation.)

“All” and “Every” in Revelation 13

The Greek word for “all” or “every” occurs four times in Revelation 13: in v. 7, 8, 12, and 16.

The beast’s authority over “*every tribe and people and tongue and nation*” in v. 7 apparently does not include at least the nation of Israel and the saints (holy ones), both of whom the beast would war against.

In v. 8, “*all who dwell on the earth will worship him* [the beast]” did not include those whose names were written in the Lamb’s book of life, which is stated in the last part of this verse.

In v. 12, where the second beast is given *"all the authority of the first beast"*, the exact meaning of "all" cannot be confirmed, and I see no reason to expect a hidden exception here.

There are many exceptions to the "all" in v. 16, because the beast cannot get the saints (Rev. 14:9-12) – and explicitly the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1) – to be given the mark of the beast.

Three Examples of "All" and "Every" Outside of Revelation 13

Paul points out explicitly that the Father is the exception to the "all things" that are put under the feet of Jesus, even though this exception was not mentioned the first time (1Cor. 15:25, 27).

In 1Peter 2:13, submission to "every" human institution (institution is usually translated "creation" elsewhere) would not include bowing to Caesar as god in the First Century, or submission to the Nazi holocaust in the 1930s and 1940s.

The end of "all things" in 1Peter 4:7 clearly does not include those things of the unshakeable Kingdom of God (Heb. 12:27-29).

"Whole" in Revelation 13 and Revelation 3:10

Notice that the "whole" earth following the beast in Rev. 13:3 does not include the saints of Rev. 13:8, where this exception is revealed.

Rev. 3:10 is another clear example with the same conclusion. Here we see that an hour of testing was about to come on the whole world and the church in Philadelphia would be kept from it. Much later but long before today, this church was destroyed and no longer exists, so that there can be no future fulfillment of this word for this church.

A Conclusion about Revelation 13

Seeing the use of these words, we can realize that Rev. 13 does not imply that a nation cannot join itself to Christ Jesus when the beast

tries to take over. Indeed, it is vital for believers to expect that nations as whole units will repent and join themselves to the Lord in our day. This conclusion also helps to keep us from turning God's prophecies into dead head-knowledge instead of letting them provide a foundation and framework for our Spirit-led actions.

Why Such Negative-Sounding Statements in Scripture?

I believe that God uses "all" in Joel 3:2, in Zech. 12:3 and 14:2, and in Rev. 13 to let us know that mighty forces (both world-wide and internal) are against the Church's releasing national repentance and healing to a land, so that this will not happen without very purposeful, Spirit-led actions by the believers in any land.

Knowing this truth can help us to move into fulfilling God's callings for us in each nation fully and completely. When circumstances are discouraging and work is hard, we can know that God's word is not against the nation repenting or staying repentant. Instead, Satan's increased opposition hinders repentance, and this will not simply "fade away" without our action in our Lord Jesus. Although this opposition has been far too successful up to now, by God's strength and His provision in Jesus Christ we will corporately overcome even greater opposition as we exercise faith in Him.

We have seen many cases that God uses "all" and "every" with clearly implied exceptions. On p. 159 we saw ways that exceptions are included in the specific Scriptures about all the nations gathering against His people. And we have seen a good reason why God may use "all" there without saying explicitly that there will be exceptions.

Aren't these Scriptures completely compatible with many nations repenting and joining themselves to the Lord in our day?

Appendix 12

ZECHARIAH 12:1-10: GOD'S AMAZING WORK IN HIS PEOPLE

Many in the Church and in Israel have conflicting opinions about their relationship. Rom. 11 (p. 132-133) shows clearly that Israel as a people will be saved after being hardened to the Gospel for a time, but the present unbelief, bloody acts of revenge, and fierce fighting cause many believers to think that God is not yet working to save Israel.

A simple identification of three terms in Zech. 12:1-10 opens up its remarkable insights into both current events and future developments of God's people – in both the Church and Israel. This Scripture adds much insight into the gathering of all the unrepentant nations against Judah, Jerusalem, and the Lord's people "Israel" in Joel 3. V. 1-10 are quoted on p. 171-172, but we should first establish a few meanings.

Three Key Terms in Zech. 12:1-10

Meanings of the three key terms are suggested within v. 1-10 as well as by some other Scriptures. (To avoid misinterpretation, these terms do not have these meanings in still other Scriptures).

Judah means the nation of Israel and the Jewish people before they come to believe in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah.

The house of David means the Body of Christ, the corporate Church, whose Head and foremost Member is Christ Jesus, the Son and Heir of David's throne.

In v. 1-10, the inhabitants of Jerusalem mean individual believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile by origin.

The Bible provides a solid basis for these meanings in v. 1-10.

V. 8 uniquely identifies the meaning of the house of David as the Body of Christ: “...*the **house of David** will be **like God**, like the angel of the Lord before them.*” What on earth is like God, like the Lord Jesus Christ? “*To whom will you liken God?*” (Isa. 40:18a). The Bible repeatedly shows nothing on earth – except Christ Jesus and therefore the fully Christ-like Body of Christ prophesied in Eph. 4:13 and 15! Referring to the Body of Christ, v. 15 says: “*But speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.***” Other Scriptures show that Christ Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature, with all the fullness of Deity dwelling in bodily form (Heb. 1:3, Col. 2:9, John 14:9).

The connection goes further. “*The Angel of the Lord before them*” clearly refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is before His Church and is David's Son and Heir as well as his Lord: Jesus is the true Lord over the house of father David. Remember that the Messiah is a special “son of David”, and the Greek word for “Messiah” is “Christ”. Therefore “Body of Christ” is the same term as “Body of Messiah”, which is well described by the term “house of David”, whose true head is David's lord. Indeed, the house of David consists of people who are closely related to him – his extended family – and the Body of Christ consists of people who are closely related to Messiah Jesus or Messiah Jeshua: His brethren (Heb. 2:11-18).

In many Scriptures “*the house of David*” refers to his physical descendants, his Messianic line, his royal line of descendants, etc. But if the house of David is “*like God*”, then we know it is the Body of Christ, the only thing on earth that will become “*like God*”.

Three New Testament verses suggest the meaning of inhabitants of Jerusalem as individual believers in the Lord Jesus Christ: Heb.

12:22, Rev. 3:12, and Matt. 5:35. As discussed in Apx. 5 (p. 66-67), the tense of the verbs in all three Scriptures shows that heavenly Jerusalem already existed 1900 years ago. Speaking to believers in Jesus, Heb. 12:22 says: “*But you **have come to Mt Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...***” Rev. 3:12 shows it was coming to the earth then. This Jerusalem is the city of the living God, and its inhabitants on earth are believers in Christ Jesus.

Other Scriptures convince me that Jerusalem also refers to that earthly city in Israel except in Zech. 12:5, 7; but heavenly Jerusalem is a valid meaning every time in v. 1-10.

Identifying Judah as the nation of Israel is easy: Israel is the only Jewish nation, and no Scripture uses “Judah” to refer to believers in Jesus. But why does Judah refer to Israel only before it comes to know its Messiah as a people? One reason comes from within v. 1-10. After the Lord saves the tents of Judah in v. 7, Judah is not mentioned again, even though it was used six times in v. 2-7. As soon as Judah is saved, God uses only “inhabitants of Jerusalem”, “Jerusalem”, and “the house of David”, even when He clearly includes the nation of Israel: the term “Judah” disappears, and the Jewish people are no longer separated from the other believers in the Lord Jesus.

The Use of Jerusalem, Judah, and House of David in Zech. 12:1-10

The use of Jerusalem and Judah in v. 2, 5, and 6 further justifies these meanings in other ways. By looking at the terms now, we can read v. 1-10 with a firmer understanding and better focus on their practical contents, and later we put each point in its Scriptural context.

V. 2 says: “*...when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.*” The nation of Israel is too small for its capital to be besieged by nations now without the whole nation also being attacked.

If v. 2 is restricted to mean Jerusalem and Israel in the Middle East, then both being besieged together is nearly automatic, and this Scripture lacks content or meaning.

In contrast, our terms in v. 2 show that when the nations besiege believers in Jesus, Jews and the nation of Israel will also be besieged. This is the aggression in Joel 3 against all of the Lord's people at the very consummation of the Age of the Gentiles (Apx. 10), when the siege against Israel reaches its climax and is worldwide.

The New American Standard Bible literally translates Zech. 12:5: *"Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'My strength is the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the Lord of hosts, their God.'"* (This literal translation essentially agrees with the main text of the New American Standard, the King James, the Revised Standard, Amplified, etc., but the New International Version is different.)

Like Zech. 12:2, v. 5 makes a greater distinction between Judah and Jerusalem than would exist between earthly Jerusalem and Israel. Notice that the clans of Judah referred to the Lord of hosts as their God, not our God: this shows Jerusalem and the rest of Israel differing vitally in their relationships with God. With the external pressures on Israel, it is very unlikely that the Jewish inhabitants of its capital would be converted to a very different kind of relationship with the Lord God than that of the rest of the Jewish nation.

But if Jerusalem is referring to believers, then we can see an important truth that is beyond what we see elsewhere. A time will come when the people of Israel will recognize and appreciate the truth that their strength is Christians working through our God! Let us take a page to consider this insight more thoroughly.

This insight is one of the Scriptures that reveal a calling from God for believers in our day: to be the strength of the Jewish people

through our God, especially when Israel does not yet recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and when the hostile nations are gathering their forces together against Israel. Consider two other Scriptures for us to fulfill. Isa. 40:9 addresses both Zion and Jerusalem as a bearer of good news, which describes believers with the Gospel:

*Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of **good news**, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, **bearer of good news**; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is **your God**!”*

Also, consider Isa. 52:7:

*How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings **good news**, who announces **peace** and brings **good news** of happiness, who announces **salvation**, and says to Zion, “**Your God** reigns!”*

Any evangelistic religious person is ready to tell a Jew, “our God reigns” or “Here is our God”. Jews normally have a built in defense mechanism against that message, which I believe is really from God – from Jesus! But who will show a Jew the nature and reality of Christ Jesus, and then humbly tell him, “*Here is **your God**!*” He reigns!”?

This slices their defense mechanism like the sharpest knife, arouses a great hunger for knowing God intimately, and provokes them to the healthiest kind of jealousy (Rom. 11:11 identifies this as a calling from God for Gentile believers). Personal experience, Jewish history, and Jewish teaching all help many Jews to want to know their God, but also be convinced in their hearts that this is hopeless or even that their good and loving God does not exist. They rightly have little patience for empty words, and they often question God’s will, love, or power to do good on earth. But if a believer shows a Jew their God in reality, and then humbly lets him know that this is “**your God**”, then this Jew will be deeply impacted!

In Zech. 12:6 the Lord says:

*In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the **inhabitants of Jerusalem** again **dwell on their own sites** in Jerusalem (Zech. 12:6)*

V. 6 aptly shows what the nation of Israel has been like to its surrounding peoples in our day. Because the last part of v. 6 is clearly being fulfilled for the inhabitants of earthly Jerusalem, it is easy to overlook a less visible way that v. 6 is being fulfilled for heavenly Jerusalem – believers in Jesus. At this time of the restoration of Israel, God will also lead real believers to again dwell in their own sites in the heavenly Jerusalem. What this means in reality is that believers will find their own places established by the Lord for them personally in the Body of Christ – places with committed relationships (that include the right authority), flexible functioning, and meaningful interactions with other parts of the body and outside of it.

Indeed, it is such committed and flexible relationships that enable individual believers to form the corporate Body of Christ Jesus in reality. Therefore the last part of v. 6 signals this development that is taking place in the Church in our day: believers are in the early stages of being joined together into a manifestly corporate body – that is, we function in reality like a real body. Each member works for the good of the whole body according to his abilities and responsibilities, and he is joined to specific other members of the Body of Christ by joints with strength and flexibility. This picture is provided by Scriptures like Eph. 4:16 and Col. 2:19, and by considering how a healthy body does a demanding task in practice.

When Zechariah gave this prophecy, he was not thinking of this meaning of “*the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem*”. But remember that God is the real Author of this

coherent picture from v. 1-10, and He confirms it. For example, the corporate Body of Christ is represented in this picture by the house of David, which is not introduced in v. 1-10 until v. 7, and then it is used three times by v. 10. This fits precisely into what v. 6 has been showing us: believers do not form a functional corporate Body of Christ in reality until they fulfill v. 6 by dwelling and functioning in that place in Christ's body where God calls each one. God sees His Church, but there is no functional body on earth.

Zech. 12:1-10 (from the New American Standard Bible):

*¹The burden of the word of the Lord concerning Israel. Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him, ²"Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is **against Jerusalem**, it will **also be against Judah**. ³It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.*

*⁴"In that day," declares the Lord, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment, and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. ⁵Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are [lit., **My strength is**] the **inhabitants of Jerusalem** through the Lord of hosts, **their God**.' ⁶In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again **dwelt on their own sites in Jerusalem**.*

*⁷"The **Lord** also will **save the tents of Judah first**, so that the **glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah**. ⁸In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the **house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them**.*

*⁹And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the **Spirit of grace and of supplication**, so that they will look on **Me** whom **they have pierced**; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a first-born."*

A Verse-by-Verse Analysis of the Contents

God introduces this section in Zechariah about the judgment of nations in our day by proclaiming three of His great works. We examined v. 1 in Apx. 4 (p. 40-41). What are the basic conclusions for our discussion here? God shows His right to judge whole nations, and He carefully provides what is just and good to each one of His people while He is judging nations as whole units.

In v. 2a the Lord says that He will *"make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around"*. The earthly Jerusalem is and surely will be such a cup to its neighbors. But believers also fulfill v. 2a wherever their lands are hostile to the Lord and are rejecting His words to them about their need to repent and turn to Him.

As discussed on p. 167-168, v. 2b shows that when nations turn against and attack real believers, the nation of Israel and Jews in those nations will also be besieged. This reaches a consummation (climax) at the time of Joel 3:1-2, when all unrepentant nations gather against all of the Lord's people at the consummation of this age.

In v. 3 God says: *"...in that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it."* We can realize that believers who are doing well will indeed be a heavy burden for an unrepentant people, who see the Lord as a lion instead of as a lamb or the Father (Amos 5:19, Chapter 7). Any nation that fails to repent and

consequently turns against God's people will surely seek to remove them from their rightful place in the land – as Amaziah and ancient Israel did to Amos, who had been protecting the land from a premature just judgment (Amos 7, Apx. 1). Any nation that removes the heavy stone – believers who give God's word – will be hurt badly in the judgments of Joel 2 and 3, as were Amaziah and ancient Israel.

Here is an easily missed point. If God's people in a nation do as they corporately should before the Joel 2 judgment comes to the land, then it will receive God and His word and be healed. The unrepentant nations in v. 3 are those in which some believers do well, but the corporate actions had not been enough to bring the land to Jesus.

The last part of v. 3 shows the same prophecy as Zech. 14:2 and Joel 3:2: all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem and Israel for God's judgment on those nations. In these verses "all" may allow exceptions: in Apx. 11 we saw thirteen clear examples where God did not specify exceptions in the statement He inspired with this Hebrew word for "all", and the exceptions are clearly revealed in another way.

In this case the terms contain the exceptions. In Zech. 12:3 and 14:2 believers and believing nations fit into the term "Jerusalem" – the heavenly Jerusalem of v. 1-10 and other Scriptures – and the nation of Israel is specified in the Zech. 12 and 14 contexts. Joel 3:2 identifies Israel as the Lord's people and His inheritance, and Zech. 2:11 shows that His people include believing Gentile nations in addition to individual believers and descendants of Jacob. Yes, v. 1-10 and the whole Bible consistently allow Gentile nations to repent in our day.

V. 4 describes what will happen "*in that day*". Let us consider a symbolism in v. 4 that can also be used in Ex. 15:1, 1Cor. 10:1-2, and Col. 2:11-12 to show a major work of God in baptism: the horse represents the flesh or sinful nature of a person, and its riders are the

demons of Satan. In baptism they are washed into the sea through faith in the working of God. The analogy for v. 4 is that demons ride a person's sinful nature or flesh like a person rides a horse.

With this symbolism, v. 4 shows exactly what we have seen in our day: nations working "in the flesh" (which works against the Spirit) behave with blindness, bewilderment, and madness, while the Lord protects Israel from being afflicted with the same blind chaos.

V. 5 shows that in this situation, the clans or leaders of Judah will realize and appreciate that their strength is believers through the Lord their God – Jesus! (The Hebrew word in v. 5 can refer to either leaders or their whole clans. I prefer clan, because it fits so well into the entire picture for Israel in our day.)

V. 6 also takes place *"in that day"*, and we already saw (p. 170-171) how it is being precisely fulfilled in our day. We have also considered a vital but subtle point: that it is essential for Christians to dwell in their own sites in the Church in order for the corporate Body of Christ to be formed in practice. This incorporated body is represented in v. 1-10 by the term "house of David", which is not introduced until this point, and then is used three times in v. 7-10.

The Lord also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah (v. 7).

The Hebrew word for "save" is the same word that the Lord uses repeatedly when He refers to himself as the Savior of Israel. And remember that He does not refer to "Judah" any time after He has saved them in v. 7, even though He used Judah six times through v. 7 and continues to tell about Israel and the Jewish people. V. 7 shows the spiritual salvation of the nation of Israel! After this they would be believers in the Lord Jesus and a part of the Body of Christ.

Now notice this insight of great practical importance: God saves the nation of Israel first because He does not want Christians and the corporate Body of Christ to be magnified above the Jewish people. They are also a part of His beloved people. God will not fully bless one part of His people while they are exalting themselves over another part, especially as we approach the consummation of this age.

But that is exactly what too many believers and Jews do now. Fueled by things like personal anti-Semitism or news media reports – some true, some distorted, and some fabricated – many Christians look down on Jews as unbelievers whom God no longer regards to be a part of His people, because as a people they rejected their Messiah Jesus. But Rom. 11:11-32, especially v. 11 and 20, shows that a key purpose in our salvation is to make the Jews jealous, and that we must not pervert this purpose of God for us into being arrogant toward them.

Many Messianic Jews, for their part, make it very clear that they are not “Christians”. One might justify this by centuries of persecution of Jews by some real and fake Christians. This is also a way to reduce their own persecution or to reach other Jews better. But a Messianic Jew will perpetually insist that he is not a part of the Church, the Body of Christ (or Body of Messiah), only by rejecting this purpose of God.

God will purge this arrogance. If God would allow the current attitudes of many Christians and Jews to continue, then each group would find legitimate reasons to brag about themselves and put down the other part of God’s people. He will not allow this, and eventually they will not brag and put down: it will cost them too much spiritually.

Another point in v. 7 is important for those to whom it applies. The Lord says that He will save the tents or dwellings of Judah. This suggests that a Jew should be living at the right place “*in that day*”. I see this practical meaning: if God is calling a Jew out of his land to

Zion now, then he should go when he has the opportunity. Along this line you may recall cries of “flee” and “escape” (Zech. 2:6-7 in the book's appendix, or p. 150 of Apx. 10). You can also look up Jer. 16:16: God first sends fishermen, who operate by attracting fish to a lure; but then come the hunters, who search out their prey like Nazi Germany searched out Jews.

The meanings of the terms in v. 8 show that *“in that day”* a feeble Christian will be like David, and the corporate Body of Christ will be like God, like the Angel of the Lord before them. In other words, in our day we corporately will be like Christ through the proper functioning of each individual part of His body, each believer doing like David or better.

This agrees with Eph. 4:11-16, which is explicit and astounding, and with more symbolic Scriptures in Isa. 30:26 and Matt. 13:40-43. As we saw with the simple symbolism of the sun in Apx. 7, *“shining forth like the sun”* in Matt. 13 symbolizes shining like God to the world, and Isa. 30:26 shows that this development in His unified people actually enables the world to see God perfectly brighter.

V. 8-9 show that God will defend believers in that day and will set out to destroy all the nations that come against them. The term used to express this in v. 8-9 is “Jerusalem”, who are believers in Jesus – including the believing nation of Israel. This agrees with Joel 3:1-2.

The meanings of the terms in v. 10 show that the Lord will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication on His saved people, from both Jewish and Gentile origin, in the awesome situation of v. 9. They will enter into the presence of Jesus by His blood and will look on Him and mourn over Him. V. 10 offers a valuable hint about where and how the Lord's people will receive their strength to make that remarkable transformation in our day to be corporately like Christ Jesus. Only God can make anything to be like Himself.

It is most fitting to apply v. 10 to all believers. The revelation in v. 10 is essential for the supplication and intercession before our holy Lord and Father about the many great problems at that time. Consider that every one of us saved by the blood of Jesus is the very cause that our Lord Jesus was pierced. That is, the Father and the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be pierced so terribly only because the people belonging to Him desperately need to be saved justly. Therefore in a real sense all who have been redeemed by Christ Jesus are the ones who have caused Him to be pierced, and we mourn over hurting Him.

V. 10 has often been interpreted to mean “the spiritual salvation of the Jewish people” – they receive Jesus! However, we saw that God saves the nation of Israel in v. 7. In this picture the people of Israel become a part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the house of David in v. 7, and in v. 8-10 God rescues and imparts power to believers who come before Him by their crucified Messiah, Jesus. With this great deliverance, Jews especially would realize with great sorrow how they had rejected their Messiah Jeshua for so long, but this can empower them more than ever before.

Major Insights from Zech. 12:1-10 More Concisely

V. 1-10 provide a graphic picture of many major developments in our day, but this has been mixed with much explanation. I believe that it would help many readers to see the insights now with no explanation. I include some references to Scriptures outside of v. 1-10 for those who desire to see an insight from a different perspective.

* In a broad statement which includes many of the insights that follow, v. 1-10 put into order major developments in our day for the salvation of Israel (Rom. 11) and for the full maturing of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

- * God shows His great regard and care for each individual even while whole nations either repent or else come under destructive judgments (v. 1, Joel 2:32, Amos 9:8-9, Ob. 17, Jonah 4:11).
- * In our day real Christians will be a cup that staggers all the peoples who refuse to repent, and will be a heavy stone that causes all who try to remove it to get severely injured (v. 2-3, John 15:18-23).
- * When nations lay a siege against real Christians, the nation of Israel will also be besieged (v. 2, Joel 3:1-2).
- * All the nations will be gathered against the Lord's people, who are Israel and all individuals and nations that have joined themselves to the Lord Jesus to become His people (v. 3, Joel 3:1-2, Zech. 2:11).
- * While many other nations become blind and go berserk, God protects the nation of Israel from being confused, and it mightily burns up and consumes the surrounding nations in our day (v. 4-6, Isa. 19:16-17).
- * The Jewish people come to realize and appreciate that true believers in Jesus through the Lord their God are providing strength for Israel. This strength is demonstrated for all to see as this whole picture is fulfilled. The "flip side" to this insight is that Christians need to fulfill this responsibility of humbly providing real strength and support to the Jews (v. 5, Isa. 40:1-2 and 9, Micah 5:2-3).
- * Individual believers will again be joined together to specific other believers in committed, ordered, and flexible relationships in practice, so that the corporate Body of Christ can be developed in practice. This joining together must occur before Christians truly become a body in which the world can see Jesus effectively (v. 6-10, Eph. 4:16, Col. 2:19, Isa. 30:26, John 17:21-23).
- * God saves the nation of Israel in our day, so that the Jewish people come to know the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. Their salvation will come first – before the climactic manifestation of the corporate Body of Christ to the world – because the Lord does not want believers and the corporate body that we form to be honored or magnified above the Jewish people. For our part, we must not exalt ourselves over Jews and must repent of arrogance against them due to their unbelief. God will empower believers to become the strength of Jews, and we must not pervert this. God will honor Israel even while He saves them into one body with the other believers in Christ

Jesus: He is not forming a separate group of His people (v. 7, Rom. 11, Eph. 2:13-16).

- * In our day a feeble individual believer will be like David (v. 8, John 14:12).
- * At this same time the corporate Body of Christ will be like God – like the Lord Jesus Christ before us (v. 8, Eph. 4:13-16, Isa. 30:26, Matt. 13:40-43, and 1John 3:2, 4:17).
- * In our day God will defend His believers and will destroy all the nations which come against His people (v. 8-9, Joel 3).
- * The strength of the Lord's people at this time comes through the Spirit of grace and supplication provided to us for especially this crucial time. This requires our thorough realization that our sins and guilt caused the Lord Jesus to be pierced for us so that we can be reconciled to our holy God – reconciled so much that we become sons of God with power through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 10).

A Conclusion

Zech. 12:1-10 provides a neat Scriptural framework for many Scriptural principles and prophecies. This can help believers to realize major works of God in our day, such as reconciling Jews and Christians, building up the whole Body of Christ, and appreciating our very close relationship with the Jewish people. This can give Jewish believers a perspective of God's work with the Jewish people in the not-so-distant future and clarify their relationship with the Body of Christ, the Church, both now and in the future. This framework can also help confirm some of God's personal guidance to any of us. By helping believers identify some key areas to strengthen, we can better develop according to God's words for us and co-operate with His plans for the heavens, the earth, the Church, the nations, and individuals in our day.

Supplement to Chapter 7

**JOEL 2:2-11:
THE NATIONAL JUDGMENT OF DARKNESS**

God's Just Judgment of a Nation focuses on explaining the basic picture from especially the Minor Prophets about nations today. This basic picture focuses on what is most vital for U.S. believers to put into practice now or in the near future. Much material was omitted or shortened in order to help most of the readers who were learning the basic picture, even though this material could help some readers. Chapter Supplements 7-13 provide material omitted from each chapter for those who have read that chapter in the book.

In Chapter 7 we considered the transition from the Joel 1 season into the Joel 2 crisis. We did not fully discuss the Joel 2:2-11 judgment of darkness, but only enough for us to know that it is truly bad. We saw that this potential future is a grave danger for all nations in this time that leads up to Jesus' return. Then we moved on to other practical issues that more believers should realize now. In this Supplement 7 we look more closely at this dark judgment in Joel 2.

The Dark Joel 2 Judgment: an Unrepentant Nation's Day of the Lord

Remember (Amos 5:17-20, book p. 56-61 in the book's Chapter 7) the dark bear and snake judgment on unrepentant ancient Israel. This is an example for nations now and is being worked out in many nations where atheistic communism or Islam has taken over the government and tries to keep people from the light of Jesus. Here let us see highlights of what Joel shows about this terribly destructive judgment on a land. You may want to turn to Joel 2 in your Bible.

Consider Joel 2:1-3:

*Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the **day of the Lord** is coming; surely it is near, a day of **darkness** and **gloom**, a day of clouds and **thick darkness**. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; **there has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it** to the years of many generations. A **fire consumes** before them, and behind them a **flame burns**. The land is like the garden of Eden before them but a **desolate wilderness** behind them, and **nothing at all escapes** them.*

V. 2-3 show that this judgment is a time of darkness, gloom, and thick darkness – incomparably worse than anything in the history or the future of the land. V. 3 shows that this mighty army devastates the land, changing it from being like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness.

V. 4-5 describe the members of this mighty army:

*Their **appearance is like the appearance of horses**; and like **war horses**, so they run. With a **noise as of chariots** they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, like a mighty people arranged for battle.*

This is strikingly similar to the locusts from the bottomless pit in Rev. 9, which many of us recognize as demons. Notice its description of these locusts: their appearance “was like **horses prepared for battle**”; “the sound of their wings was like the **sound of chariots**, of many horses rushing to battle”; “they have as king over them, the angel of the abyss”, whose name is Abaddon (destruction) or Apollyon (destroyer); and “their teeth were like the **teeth of lions**” (Rev. 9:7-11).

The last point can be compared to the locusts described in Joel 1:6: this invading nation is mighty, without number, and with the teeth of a lion and fangs of a lioness. While the directions to the locusts for afflicting people and the land in Rev. 9 are not in Joel, these two

descriptions of the locusts are so similar that they suggest this army of judgment in Joel 2 is working under the destroyer, the devil. We shall soon see other clues that point to this same conclusion.

Joel 2:6-10 shows the extraordinary discipline of this army as it systematically overwhelms the people of the land. The members of this army do not break rank as each does what he is supposed to do to crush the land and its people. And v. 10b shows the total darkness of this judgment by saying: *“The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.”* (Apx. 7 shows some practical meanings of this).

A Hidden Meaning of the “Northern Army”

God tells a land that repents at its last chance, *“But I will remove the **northern army** far from you”* (Joel 2:20a). The human army in the two-fold curse on an unrepentant land has usually come from the north (as pointed out on book p. 60-61). “Northern army” describes Assyria, Babylon, and Rome on the three ancient Jewish nations, and describes the atheistic governments of the USSR, China, North Korea, North Viet Nam, and Cuba: they usually have afflicted nations that are south of them.

The other “northern army” of judgment is suggested by the connotation of this Hebrew word. The root of the word for “north” communicates both the features of demons and the darkness and gloom emphasized in Joel 2:2 and Amos 5:18-20. Consider how well Strong’s Concordance describes features of demons in the root word (#6845) for north: “to hide by covering over; by implication to hoard or reserve; figuratively to deny; specifically (favorably) to protect, (unfavorably) to lurk.” This causes the origin and connotation of “north” (#6828) and “northern” (#6830) to be “hidden, that is, dark...(gloomy and unknown)”.

This connotation aptly describes the way atheistic communism operated in many conquered nations, and also describes an army of demons – even the snake of Amos 5:19. Therefore this connotation of “northern army” describes the army of judgment on many modern nations and fits into the rest of the description of the Joel 2 and Amos 5 judgment of darkness.

The Lord's Army of Judgment on an Unrepentant Land

Everything up to now indicates that Joel 2:2-11 describes an army which brings darkness, gloom, and devastation. But v. 11a says, “*The Lord utters His voice before **His** army.*” This has caused many believers to think that v. 1-11 refer to God's army of believers.

Which army is this? We have already seen many clues that this is God's army of destructive judgment, and not His army of believers in Jesus. Let us put the clues together to answer this question.

First, God has more than one type of army in Scripture. He calls an instrument of destructive judgment on an unrepentant land to be His own. For example, He called idolatrous king Nebuchadnezzar “*My servant*” in Jer. 25:9 and elsewhere, and his idolatrous army devastated the nation Judah when it did not repent at its crucial time. And in Joel 2:25 God called the devouring locusts of Joel 1, “***My great army which I sent among you***”. These destructive, devouring locusts do not represent God's disciplined and victorious army of believers.

The next clue is the context of Joel 2:2-11 in all of Joel. To fit in, v. 2-11 should describe the judgment of a land which had continued to not repent at God's patient calls for repentance.

A third clue is that this army brings gloom and thick darkness on the land and turns it from being like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. This is not what God calls His army of believers to do.

This army is also like the locusts of the bottomless pit in Rev. 9 (p. 182-183). Their king is named “Destroyer”, which aptly describes the devil. And this army is under God’s sovereignty, which is emphasized in this section of Revelation: the Lamb breaks the seals in Rev. 6-11.

A fifth clue is that God provides ancient Israel in Amos 5:18-20 to illustrate and confirm for us the meaning of this Joel 2 judgment of darkness. Its fulfillment on ancient Israel shows this to be God’s army of destructive judgment – not His army of believers.

The judgment by the “northern army” on Judah, Judea, and many nations today clearly shows the fruits of the devil – not the Lord’s army of disciplined believers. Finally, remember (p. 183) the origin of the Hebrew word for “northern”, which can provide a connotation of evil.

For such reasons I conclude that God’s army in Joel 2:2-11 represents an army of demons and human servants of the devil. This is an army of judgment on a land that did not repent and turn to the Lord Jesus before this judgment of darkness began.

Contrasting the Armies of Joel 1 and Joel 2

There is a modern analogy that can help us to easily see a difference between the invading armies in Joel. In contrast to the impending invasion of Joel 2, the invasion of Joel 1 is like increasing guerrilla warfare. This can serve to wake up believers and stimulate them to function well. With good work by believers, the shakings caused by guerrilla warfare can be converted into helping individuals in the land to repent and thereby helping the nation as a whole to repent and truly turn to God. Alternatively, guerrilla warfare can serve to wear down the wills and corrupt the character and hearts of the people, so that they are too weak to defend themselves when the main army of the enemy invades their land in Joel 2.

The Viet Cong guerrilla warfare against South Viet Nam for a long time before the invasion of the main army from North Viet Nam illustrates the spiritual truth. The guerrillas were from both North and South Viet Nam. They and the main army worked for the same enemy, North Viet Nam's leadership, but they used very different tactics to capture the land. When the main army came, it used the groundwork laid by the guerrillas for years, because South Viet Nam's people and government did not meet the guerrillas with effective weapons – both force and providing the Gospel with its moral solutions for the people.

In general, the main army of an enemy can overpower, capture, and destroy a land and its individual people more systematically, more thoroughly, and in very different ways than the guerrillas of the same enemy had worked. This difference is described in Joel 2:6-10.

One kind of main army, the snake, is the demons that are suddenly and mightily released upon an unrepentant land. They can overwhelm the unbelievers because of the unanswered unbelief, iniquity, and true Godlessness that had been promoted and had been greatly increasing in the land for years. To illustrate, rationalism and humanism had worked in Germany for many decades before 1933 to undermine the faith of the German people, so that they did not have a good view of God's true nature for a long time. What happened there is consistent with the sudden release of a deceiving army of demons onto Germany at a crucial time, and they enabled Hitler to sweep into power. Blinded people have no effective defense against demons.

The other kind of main army, the bear, is also an instrument of the devil on the land after it decisively rejects God. This is an invasion and brutal domination of the land by a ruthless national enemy.

In Chapter 7 we saw that the winds in Jer. 4:11b-12 show a key difference in the problems caused by the armies in Joel 1 and 2:

*A scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness in the direction of the daughter of My people – **not to winnow and not to cleanse, a wind too strong for this** – will come at My command; now I will also pronounce judgments against them.*

God was warning Judah to repent shortly before its Joel 2 judgment. They had experienced the afflictions of Joel 1, which could help cleanse their land by shaking people from being complacent when they needed to repent. Such redemptive shakings on Judah or a nation today are quite different from the scorching, devastating national judgment in Joel 2 that will come on all nations which refuse to repent.

Islam and the Joel 2 Judgment of Darkness

This judgment of darkness describes Islam's overpowering of some nations many centuries ago. This invading army conquered many of these nations and their idolatrous churches by the sword, and has kept most of its nations captive in deep darkness until today.

However, a foreign human army did not come from the north against many lands, so that this did not precisely fulfill the "bear" part of the Amos 5 illustration of the Joel 2 national judgment of darkness. Most nations that have recently embraced Islam have not even had a foreign national army impose its darkness on the land. But I expect most believers who live in an Islamic nation would agree that Joel 2:2-11 aptly portrays the spiritual darkness which has come on their land and strives to keep its people from seeing the light and receiving the life in Christ Jesus. Therefore a judgment by a foreign army might not be a part of the devastating judgment of Joel 2:2-11 on some lands.

The darkness that an Islamic government imposes on the people of a land is harder to correct than the darkness imposed by atheistic communism. The latter emphasizes earthly materialism, but fails to produce earthly goods well and leaves the people empty and hungry.

Islam teaches about an “invisible God” who punishes and rewards after death, but this invisible god has a very different nature from what Christ Jesus has revealed to us. A person in Islam is not hungry for an invisible god and really needs to see Christ Jesus accurately to accept a claim that the God of the Bible is very different from what they have been taught. Islam has a far more subtle lie and a greater intimidation to hinder an “almost convinced” person from receiving Jesus. One must reject all false gods in order to receive Jesus, and powerful threats from what might seem to be Almighty God adds to the threats on earth by dominating and cruel humans.

Islam is clearly a “gate of Hades” (Matt. 16:18), which has held back many people from coming to the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matt. 16:18 convinces me that Islam cannot continue to prevail against His Church. Instead, those nations that have been in this darkness for centuries will surely get to see Jesus and have a real opportunity to respond to His Gospel before He returns. To tear down this gate of Hades, the Church must manifest God's nature much better than we have up to now – and we will!

The Darkness of a Satanic Invasion on Other Lands Today

The tragedies of nations like Uganda, Rwanda, and the nations of the former Yugoslavia should be considered in view of the Joel 2 judgment of darkness. In each case the works of the “snake” seem evident: a sudden demonic invasion was released on the land and brutally slaughtered many people. A foundation for the demonic attack was being laid by the iniquity of many people in the land for a long time, although the manifestations of the attack started suddenly and increased explosively.

No foreign “bear” attacked Uganda: for a few reasons I believe

that Uganda was under a very strong and oppressive demonic force that was able to establish savage rulers like Idi Amin over the land. The only “bear” that I see in Rwanda and Yugoslavia is a hateful and hated tribe or people group that had been forced to share the land without ever receiving the love of Jesus to minister to the deep hatred in so many of them.

Before the tragedy, the Church in each African nation was huge. But it poorly manifested the nature of Jesus to the people there, was divided over smaller issues, did not address the great iniquity that was festering in the hearts of many people, and did not bring down the spiritual strongholds that were over the land. In the former Yugoslavia, the real Church was small and had almost no influence on the people. In all cases, a far greater spiritual darkness came suddenly on the land, and the national foundation was shattered and many people were slaughtered. The surviving Church in each land was greatly strengthened, but at an awful price.

Supplement to Chapter 8

JER. 34: TESTING AFTER THE JOEL 2 DECISION

Joel 2:2-11 reveals an awful future for every unrepentant nation in our day. But it does not need to be this way: we saw in Chapters 7-9 that God provides us with an alternative future in Christ Jesus that is as good as v. 2-11 is awful. To go from the Joel 1 season of shakings and afflictions to a full healing that will last, a land needs to be joined to the Lord Jesus as His national disciple. Then the people of the land must strongly want this ongoing relationship with Him personally and nationally. But people usually do not, because they naturally have wrong ideas about God or themselves that keep them from Him. They desperately need to see the invisible God as He really is when they also realize that they cannot produce what is good and needed.

This is produced if believers in a land show what He is like in the Joel 1 season of afflictions, which can prepare people for the Lord Jesus by shaking them out of a deadly complacency when they need to repent and join themselves to Him. If this is not widespread enough during Joel 1, then the imminent Joel 2 crisis threatens to take away everything on earth. This can help adequately prepared people to stop holding on to whatever is distracting them from joining themselves to the Lord Jesus – to let go of their idols. In Chapter 8 we saw what Joel 2:12-17 shows believers to do in this crisis.

There is a weakness to the repentance produced in such a crisis: people do not get a good opportunity to separate their choice for the Lord and for self-preservation. As with individuals, God might accept a land's surrender to Him that is mixed with much self-preservation,

because He is gracious and this gives the land a greater opportunity to know Him better, which gives it a greater opportunity to truly repent and live. But what will the people do when God commands them to do something that seems to be against their best interests and is against their self-seeking motives? What can we expect God to do if the people turn back to self-serving sins after He removes the crisis?

God answers these questions with an example for us in Jer. 34. The king of Babylon had already conquered all of Judah except Jerusalem and a few other fortified cities. King Zedekiah of Judah made a covenant with the people of Jerusalem to set free all of the Hebrew servants as God's word commands. After God removed the "northern army" from Babylon, the people of Jerusalem broke their covenant before God and brought the servants back into subjection: when the crisis was over, the people returned to their self-serving, sinful practices. Therefore God declared that He would bring back the king of Babylon to burn Jerusalem with fire, and he did.

The repentance in Joel 2 rescues a land from coming under Satan's domination into becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. As with individuals, a nation's joining to the Lord Jesus starts national discipleship, but the discipleship itself occurs in the relationship afterward. The people must fulfill their approval of joining Him by their actions afterward, which reveal their real heart-decision. If the national repentance is not deep and full at first, then the nation needs to repent further for it to continue in God's ways after the northern army is removed. Without continuing, the oppressive Joel 2 judgment would eventually come upon them. The people in such a land may have thought that they were surrendering to the Lord in the crisis, but their actions afterward reveal that they were avoiding devastation more than seeking the Lord: they really had very little heart for Him or His ways.

Supplement to Chapter 10

JOEL 2:28-32 AND JOEL 3: WHEN GOD POURS OUT HIS SPIRIT, AND NATIONS AT THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

In Chapters 9-10 we considered highlights of Joel 2:18 onward, choosing topics according to what is most helpful for believers now and in the near future. We must get our land prepared for its just national judgment on its Day of the Lord, so that the nation will join itself to Jesus for a blessed future instead of an awful curse.

Supplement 10 shows how God's outpouring of His Spirit on the nation of Judea at Pentecost fits into the timing given in Joel 2:28-32, and also why we should expect this to be done differently in a nation today – and specifically in the U.S. We also identify who will be God's people in the Joel 3 consummation of these national decisions for or against receiving Jesus. This consummation is discussed further from additional Scriptures and other perspectives in Apx. 7-12.

Joel's Promise at the Specified Time for the Nation of Judea

Peter's use of Joel 2:28-32 at Pentecost in Acts 2:16-21 fits into Joel's pattern for nations. The Holy Spirit was not poured out on all mankind in the world at Pentecost, but was specifically on Jews. This came after Judea's season of Joel 1 – great shakings, afflictions, and a special opportunity to receive God – and before Judea's Day of the Lord near 70 A.D., when the Roman army came from the north to destroy Judea from being a nation. For about forty years the Gospel

was given to the Jews first, but as a people and a nation they continued rejecting the Holy Spirit, and only individuals among them were saved.

Peter's application of Joel at Pentecost is now better known than Joel's original prophecy. Therefore we may be tempted to follow the pattern of Judea at Pentecost more than the original Scripture for any land. But even Peter did not claim that Pentecost was fulfilling Joel's prophecy: *"but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel"* (Acts 2:16). What Joel was speaking can be worked out in other ways in other nations.

For example, it is easy to see good reasons for God to pour out His Spirit on Judea in full force suddenly at Pentecost to start His Church, but for Him to increase gradually in many other lands. We saw (book p. 85) why believers in lands in the Joel 1 season can expect this: as the Holy Spirit works more within His people, we will earnestly seek more of His close presence in ourselves and others. As more believers truly invite Him, more people get prepared to receive Him. Working through the faith and obedience of His people, God's Spirit will increasingly produce personal and national repentance and discipleship far beyond anything predicted from past experience.

There was another unique feature about Pentecost. Luke 19:41-44 shows that Judea made its national decision against God when it rejected Jesus in His flesh, because Judea did not recognize its time of visitation. God visits every other nation by His Spirit, not physically. Before its time of visitation to establish the just judgment, God's Spirit works with His people to help a nation repent until it is firmly accepting or rejecting Jesus at its time to be fully accountable to God.

What do I conclude? The key pattern for nations now is given in Joel 2:28-32 instead of the instructive example for us in Acts.

Preparation Needed for God's Spirit to Be a Blessing

The U.S. is approaching our Day of the Lord, our ultimate national judgment. The final outpouring of His Spirit is devastating if people are unprepared to receive Him. If unprepared, most people and the land as a whole unit will decisively reject Him in His holy justice while holding onto their sins: they refuse God's generous provision in Jesus to pay the just penalty for their sins. Then the nation must pay it, which causes the just national judgment to be devastating.

How can a land refuse its opportunity to join itself to Jesus and to let Him pay its huge sin debt? The same way that so many people do not receive their salvation and wonderful future in Jesus, so that they effectively choose to spend eternity in hell. They do not really believe the Gospel, because they cannot see its reality; and a subtle enemy works diligently to help people hold onto sins and to deceive them into believing that good is evil and evil is good. They do not recognize the true God or realize that His word in the Bible is true. God's remedy is for His people to reveal Him in practice by corporately doing 2Chron. 7:13-14 with His Spirit, who helps people to repent in this season.

Consider this further. Generations ago Satan designed deceptive schemes against each whole land to keep its people from ever receiving or even recognizing the true God. Without the Lord's people preparing the way for Him by the Holy Spirit, most people get hardened in these lying schemes, which make the truth look like a lie and the lie a truth. For example, God created us, but without good evidence most people think evolution is true and the Biblical account false. And many supporters of abortion call the baby "fetal tissue": this defines the baby as a non-person with no evidence. They also justify abortion as "compassion" and anti-abortion "heartless" to the mother. As Jesus told His disciples: "...an hour is coming for everyone who kills

*you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have **not known the Father or Me***" (John 16:2-3).

We must be able to see some reality before choosing to become Jesus' disciple, even though we get to see and know Him better after making that choice. Most people in the U.S. have heard about Jesus, but have not seen or tasted much reality of Him or His saving grace. As we see God's Spirit being increasingly poured out in the U.S. or any land, we should pray for ever more of Him, and also for His people to work with Him to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Him when He comes to them. It is vital for believers to know this truth. The Holy Spirit will surely come to everyone in any land before its Day of the Lord – its time to be fully accountable to God for its unresolved sins – but the results are so different if He comes earlier by invitation and most people receive Him instead of rejecting or ignoring Him.

Another Day of the Lord When God's Spirit Is Poured Out – Globally

In recent decades we have seen Joel 1-2 being worked out around the world. God's Spirit is increasingly poured out on mankind in many lands, but not yet globally, because many lands are still in darkness and contain very few people who have even heard of Jesus.

Many believers think that prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are imminent because of amazing developments in technology and strong efforts to produce a one-world government that is hostile to Christ Jesus and His word. For many other reasons from Scripture, I also think that we are approaching Jesus' global return, but it is not yet imminent. I discuss key reasons for this conclusion in Apx. 10 (p. 154-155), and here I bring out only the most relevant reason: the Church has not yet come close to fulfilling God's word in Ephesians about growing up to manifest all aspects of God's nature to the world,

(especially Eph. 4:11-16, which is discussed in Chapter 4).

Much development must be done in and through the Church before things are according to God's word for Jesus' global return. This distinction between approaching Jesus' global return and having it imminent is quite important in practice, because nearly all the Church is not aware of what God wants to do in the Church or the nations now and the near future. We do not live in a time when our work in Christ is nearly over: we live when we should be expecting an increased outpouring of God's Spirit on all mankind in all nations before Jesus returns. And we should be working with Him to make this to be good for each land where God calls us to minister His light and life. Indeed, our actions of faith by the Holy Spirit now and in the near future will shape much of what the more distant future will be like.

With an emphasis on now and the near future, the book focused on the "Day of the Lord" on an individual nation in Joel 2:31. The New Testament emphasizes a global Day of the Lord, which is described in Joel 3 and occurs when our Lord Jesus returns. This double meaning of the "Day of the Lord" enables Joel 2:28-32 to fit into its context in Joel in a second natural way. "After this" in v. 28 can refer to after the land receives either the judgment of darkness or else the blessings of becoming a part of God's people: both are described in Joel 2 before v. 28. This time is also before the great and awesome Day of the Lord as the Lord Jesus returns at the climax that Joel is about to describe in Joel 3. The global outpouring of God's Spirit up to His return will save many nations and many people in all lands, but there will also be much persecution (the moon into blood in Joel 2:31, as discussed in Apx. 7).

Jesus' return is getting closer and key developments related to it have already started. Many believers have many ideas about it – often a mixture of speculation and Scriptural truth. Therefore let us briefly

discuss the nature of this global Day of the Lord. This discussion can add direction and perspective to what we should be doing now.

The Consummation of the Age of the Gentiles

Joel 3 is closely related to Jesus' Olivet Discourse about the destruction of the temple, His return, and the consummation of the age (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and the topic of Apx. 10). Some translations use the term "end of the age" instead of "consummation of the age", but Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* shows a key difference in their meanings in the second word for "end": "*Sunteleia*...signifies 'a bringing to completion together'...marking the 'completion' or consummation of the various parts of a scheme....The word does not denote a termination, but 'the heading up of events to the appointed climax'". "End" is simpler, but misses the real meaning.

The repentance or else judgment of individual Gentile nations in Joel 1-2 leads up to a real consummation described in Joel 3. This is aptly called, "the consummation of the Age of the Gentiles", because this consummates – heads up to the appointed climax – the decisions by Gentile nations for or against joining themselves to the Lord Jesus as His national disciples.

Joel 3:1-2 shows this consummation:

¹For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. ²Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land.

At this consummation all the mighty Christ-rejecting nations from Joel 2 will be gathered against all of His people, and God awesomely judges the unrepentant nations and blesses and avenges His

persecuted people, as the rest of Joel 3 describes.

The “who” and the time when God restores the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem of v. 1-2 have been established at other places. Both “*My people and My inheritance*” and “*Judah and Jerusalem*” refer to the nation of Israel, believing Gentile nations, and individual believers in every nation. The time is later in our day. We review Scriptures that use these terms in this way in the rest of Supplement 10.

Both “Judah and Jerusalem” and “Israel” in Joel 3:1-2 Refer to Israel

Joel 3:2b-8 and 18-21 refer to Judah's homeland, its surrounding regions, and historical events of the sons of Judah. The Bible never uses “Judah” to refer to believers in Jesus. The Bible does repeatedly prophesy about Jerusalem and reveal the controversy over it among nations now. Joel 3:1 fits into v. 2b-8 and refers to the nation of Israel.

“Israel” in Joel 3:2 also includes the nation of Israel. But some believers claim that the Church replaces Israel and the Jewish people in positive Old Testament prophecies – a doctrine called “replacement theology”. This error will badly mislead believers in the consummation described in Joel 3. Therefore let us address this doctrine.

Gal. 6:16 uses Israel to refer to believers in Jesus, in contrast to those who called themselves Israel and required circumcision to be one of God's people: “*And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the **Israel of God.***” Rom. 2:28-29 also refers to believers as “spiritual Jews”. These Scriptures support the use of these terms to refer to believers in Jesus, but do not contradict the key role of the Jewish nation as a part of God's people and work in our day, which is clearly described in many Scriptures (like in Apx. 9, 10, and 12, including Ez. 37 and Rom. 11 on p. 132-133).

For example, as a nation Israel does not yet know Jesus as its

Messiah, but Ez. 37 shows this will change in our day. Rom. 11 shows that Israel, the nation of Jews, is still a part of God's people after the Jews rejected Jesus.

I conclude that "Israel" in Joel 3:2 includes that nation in our day. And the references to Jews in Joel 3 can help believers to embrace the nation Israel quickly and heartily as a brother nation in our Lord.

Believers and Believing Gentile Nations also in Joel 3:1-2

Heb. 12:22-24 and its context and many other Scriptures (Apx. 5) show that Jerusalem in Joel 3:1 can refer to believers in Jesus Christ who come before God in His holiness in His holy throne room. Gal. 4:25-26 contrasts the "*present Jerusalem*" to the "*Jerusalem above*" – contrasts the mother of those in bondage to the mother of believers. The "*new Jerusalem*" is the name given to the city of Christ's God and the holy city (Rev. 3:12, 21:2). All of these Scriptures clearly show a spiritual Jerusalem that is not physical Jerusalem, and this spiritual Jerusalem consists of believers in Jesus. And God is indeed restoring the fortunes (Joel 3:1) of believers in our day by pouring out His Spirit (2:28-29) to draw us to Him and to strengthen those who draw near.

The spiritual Jerusalem – believers – in Joel 3:1 is supported by the way that Joel always associates "Israel" with "the Lord's people", which definitely includes believers in Jesus. Let us see all 3 times.

Joel 2:26-27 is a part of v. 18-27 (Chapters 8-9), where the Lord claims the repentant land and people as His own:

*Then the Lord will be **zealous for His land** and will have **pity on His people**. The Lord will answer and say to **His people**, "...You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; then **My people** will never be put to shame. Thus you will know that I am in the **midst of Israel**, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is no other; and **My people** will never be put to shame."* (v. 18-19, 26-27)

God's promise to be in the midst of Israel is between His promises that His people will never be put to shame, which Rom. 9:33 and 10:11 clearly identify as a promise for believers in the Lord Jesus. And for believers, the Lord is "the LORD our God", and He is "in our midst".

In Joel 3:2 (p. 198), Israel is an appositive to "*My people and My inheritance*". This describes individual believers in Jesus in any land. V. 2 provides a picture consistent with many Scriptures and with the persecution today in many nations under the Joel 2 judgment of darkness. As Joel 2 moves into the climax in Joel 3, all of the mighty Christ-rejecting nations gather together against all of His people, and God intervenes climactically for His people.

In Joel 3:16b says: "*But the Lord is a refuge for **His people** and a stronghold to the **sons of Israel**.*" This parallelism (p. 78-79 in Apx. 5) matches the Lord's people with the sons of Israel. Joel 3:16 indirectly calls Israel "the Lord's people", even as Joel 3:2 does in another way.

All of this is evidence that "*My people and My inheritance, Israel*" and "*Jerusalem*" in Joel 3:1-2 include individual believers in Jesus.

Consider how "Israel" in Joel 3:2 includes believing Gentile nations. In Chapter 8 we saw how Joel 2:12-19 can apply to a Gentile nation that joins itself to the Lord Jesus and becomes a part of His people – "*My people and My inheritance, Israel*". This would fulfill His Great Commission for any such nation. Zech. 2:11a says, "***Many nations** will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will **become My people***", and the Appendix in the book shows that "*that day*" fully fits our day. While many Gentile nations become the Lord's people, many other Gentile nations will become the mighty attacking nations of Joel 3. These two kinds of nations are separated from each other by their decisions for or against fully turning to the Lord Jesus in Joel 1-2, which is consummated in Joel 3.

In Joel 3:2 God says that *“all the nations”* will be gathered against His people Israel, not “all the unrepentant nations”. A key question is, “How does God use ‘all’ in the Bible?” In the vast majority of cases this means “with no exception”, but there are also many clear examples where God uses this word to mean “all, with significant exceptions” that are not mentioned in the statement. I point out 11 such examples in the first half of the Old Testament in Apx. 11. (This demonstration may not be worth your time unless you are concerned about God’s use of the word “all” in Joel 3:2 or other Scriptures.)

As explained in Apx. 1 and 4, every nation without exception will be in this climactic confrontation in Joel 3:2, but not every nation will be against Israel. Because the believing, disciplined nations of Joel 2 become the Lord’s people and His land (Zech. 2:11), clearly they are a part of the *“My people and My inheritance”* instead of the *“all the nations”* that He gathers against His people.

Joel 3 describes the aggression of all the Christ-rejecters against all of His people, and describes His stunning sovereign intervention on behalf of His people at this consummation. And as we had stated, His people in v. 2 are the nation of Israel, believing Gentile nations, and individual believers in every nation.

The Time for This Consummation Is Later in Our Day

Joel 1-2 describes a build-up into a consummation of the “Age of the Gentiles”: at this time each Gentile nation must make its ultimate decision for or against joining itself to Jesus and thereby becoming a part of His people and His national disciple. And at this time God is restoring the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem: the land of Israel, its capital, and spiritual Jerusalem (the Church). God is setting up both the land of Israel and the Church to fulfill much unfulfilled prophecy in

our day, which will both restore our fortunes (our captivity to Him) and go far beyond any previous standard for either of us.

But we are only in the early stages of an explosive growth and development of the Church and the nation of Israel. We are in a time of transition: many amazing things must be accomplished by the time the Age of the Gentiles is fully consummated and the fortunes or captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is fully established. And all of this will be accomplished within a generation. I often call the time of this generation "in our day". (The conclusions about "this generation" and the consummation of the Age are established from Luke 21, etc., in Apx. 10. Key Scriptures about Israel's development in our day are discussed in Apx. 9.)

Jesus' Olivet Discourse connects God's restoration of Jerusalem's fortunes (or captivity to Him) to Jesus' return (Apx. 10). Before then, let us do what He is calling us to do at this time, which can make His coming a much better event for many individuals and whole nations. This is the emphasis of the book and most of this entire Supplement.

Supplement to Chapter 13

THREE EXTRA TOPICS OF MALACHI FOR TODAY

The cause and cure of the Post-Christian Syndrome in many prosperous Western nations were examined in Chapters 11-13. Three topics that did not fit well into those chapters will be discussed here.

God Gives the Church in a Land the Elijah Ministry

A major part of the book shows how God calls believers in a land to prepare the way for His coming to it in His holy justice. In Chapter 13 this was discussed from Malachi. From Mal. 4:5-6 and 3:1-4, this ministry was called the Elijah ministry to a land, which was carried out for the land of Judea by John the Baptist. In this section we see Jesus' statements about John's ministry that show he was not the ultimate fulfillment of the Elijah ministry, and that this ministry would come again after John had completed his ministry.

Mal. 4:5-6 – the conclusion to Malachi and to the Minor Prophets as a section of the Bible – reveals this Elijah ministry to a land:

*Behold, I am going to send you **Elijah** the prophet **before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord**. He will **restore the hearts** of the fathers to their children and the **hearts** of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.*

Realize that Mal. 4:5 does not imply the return of the man Elijah to do the job, because it was fulfilled for the first coming of the Lord Jesus by John the Baptist, who was not the man Elijah. When taken together, the following Scriptures about John clearly show this fulfillment.

In John 1:21, John the Baptist was asked: “*Are you Elijah?*” And he said, *‘I am **not**.’*”

In Matt. 11:14 the Lord Jesus said about John: ***“And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.”***

Jesus explained that the Elijah ministry is fulfilled more than once:

*¹⁰And His disciples asked Him [after John had died], “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹¹And He answered and said, “**Elijah is coming and will restore all things;** ¹²but I say to you that **Elijah already came**, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” ¹³Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about **John the Baptist**. (Matt. 17:10-13)*

Gabriel's prophecy explicitly shows how John fulfilled this ministry:

*It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him [the Lord] in the **spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the **hearts** of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:17)*

All of these Scriptures together show that the “Elijah” of Mal. 4:5 is a minister from the Lord who works in the spirit and power of Elijah in a spiritual wilderness (like Elijah did) in order to prepare the way for the Lord. These Scriptures (especially Matt. 17:11-13) also show that there will be another fulfillment of Mal. 4:5 after John the Baptist, and the man Elijah might not be the one who fulfills it.

Who is to fulfill this ministry to a land? Simply consider the goal: to prepare people for the Lord's coming with holy justice to a spiritually dry land. This is exactly what the four actions in 2Chron. 7:14 do if His people fulfill them in the season for the promise, which v. 13 identifies (Chapters 3 and 5). These features cause me to conclude that the corporate Church in each land has this Elijah ministry.

Our land will be unprepared unless we believers here move into and fulfill this ministry, and it must happen in this dry time.

To prepare others, we must let God prepare us. We have seen this picture from many places in the Bible and in *God's Just Judgment of a Nation* and this entire Supplement to it.

Transformed Hearts Needed for Being Jesus' National Disciple

On book p. 110-111 we began a discussion from Mal. 4:4-6 that God calls the Church to reach the hearts of the people in a land. If we do, then we can make good laws. If we do not, then good laws will not produce the long-term righteousness of a nation, even if believers can temporarily get enough political power to enact laws that go far beyond the moral base established in the hearts of the people.

Mal. 4:4-6 helps us see a way which God works with people that is directly opposite to Satan's and the world's way. Charles Simpson has shown a pattern in God's work to produce healthy groups that do not require a destructive just judgment (Charles Simpson Ministries, P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616, U.S.). God uses God-redeemed, healthy smaller units to produce healthy larger units.

We have examples of this pattern on many levels. God regenerates a person's spirit, and the healthy spirit is to spread health to the whole person. God gives redeemed people a priority of reaching their families. God works in healthy individuals and families to produce healthy churches and localities. And the proper working of all of these smaller units produces a healthy nation.

This applies directly to the Great Commission. God's normal way to disciple a nation focuses on redeeming hearts of people, but also eventually includes transforming the nation as a whole unit.

In contrast, Satan's world system – from secular humanism to communism to many Islamic nations – is based on the opposite order: from the top down. Such systems deny the sin nature of mankind to keep people away from the Gospel of Jesus, and promise to produce a great society and good people by providing the "right" training. Satan often helps those who embrace such a system to create a powerful government that tightly controls people and suppresses individual freedom, with bloody persecution if it is possible and helps their cause.

God has a strong will and has created man in His image. God is able to work through the free wills of people He created, but Satan cannot do that well and usually dominates the people of a land when he gets a chance. Notice how most stable democracies (having free elections) are located in nations with some Judeo-Christian foundation. In a democracy where Satan cannot crush people's wills through a dominating government, he often seeks to corrupt them by cultivating a lack of moral restraint, even as he did to Israel in Judges and in the wilderness (Num. 31:16). To stay working well, a democracy needs its people to be moral individually and as a whole unit.

We are seeing how God respects a person's will, and He wants each person to be able to freely choose Him without overwhelming pressure from other people. Real progress for a nation comes especially by God's people changing the hearts of people throughout the land, so that individually people choose to follow the Lord Jesus.

The U.S. Constitution: Consistent with Being Jesus' National Disciple

Truly fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission to disciple nations is a new thing, so that we do not yet have a good national model of it. We do have the frightening examples of a counterfeit by Islamic clerics in places like Iran, and Christian leaders in the U.S. who address government issues are often accused of trying to make the nation like Iran: a brutally legalistic society. What is Jesus' national disciple like?

We get glimpses of the answer from Joel and Malachi in Chapters 9-13, in preparing the land in Chapters 4-6, and in the previous section. It turns out that the U.S. Constitution – which says nothing about Jesus and nearly nothing about religion – is fully compatible with our becoming Jesus' disciple. Let us see how.

It is clear to me that God created the U.S. to be a nation where people from many cultures, races, and backgrounds should live in

harmony under a government and laws based on His word in the Bible. People from any background should be welcome to live here, but this definitely does not mean that we abandon the Judeo-Christian part of our foundation in order to become like the nations of the world that do not know the true God. There is a strong effort to get the U.S. to do exactly that through some U.N. treaties and many other means, but abandoning the ways of the God of the Bible is a sinful error, just as it was a deadly sin for Israel to become like the nations around them.

How can the U.S. maintain and strengthen its Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage with His purpose? He would have His people reach out to all people in this land with the Gospel of Jesus in word and deed. Because the heart of the Gospel is a healthy relationship with God (which is available only through Jesus and what He did for us on the cross and beyond), God wants each person to make a true choice for Him without being overwhelmed by pressures from other people. Through the Gospel in consistent word and deed, God will convert many people and gain the respect of still others. Then the Judeo-Christian part of the U.S. heritage can be made stronger than ever, instead of what has actually happened to it – become weaker.

What the U.S. Constitution actually says about religion is consistent with this picture of national discipleship to the Lord Jesus. One statement is: “Congress [the only part of the national government authorized to make laws] shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In recent decades some courts have made foolish interpretations of what establishes a religion: they contradict historical uses by the authors of this amendment and by other authorities before 1947. This First Amendment was written and passed to keep a strong government from dictating or interfering with a person’s decision about religion, and to protect his freedom of religious expression. This is consistent with

God's work through the free wills of the people He created.

The only other statement about religion in the U.S. Constitution says: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Beautiful! If meeting a religious requirement becomes a means to material success, then some people will meet it only to succeed. But God wants a true, ongoing relationship of people with Him. Without it, a religious requirement for an office breeds hypocrisy. With a healthy relationship prevailing in the nation, a good requirement is not needed: it will be fulfilled as the Holy Spirit leads the people. And as we saw in discussing Ob. 13 on p. 26-27, forming a state church – strong help from a government for a favored group – has always led to a loss of true spirituality both in the whole nation and in the favored group.

It is clear to me that God has already provided the U.S. with a Constitution compatible with His discipleship of our land, although He can also disciple without this. This Constitution is a blessing, but not a solution. God's solution lies in His people doing what He tells us to do to help people to turn to Him in Spirit and in truth. This work by His people is the crucial factor for healing the U.S. or any nation.

Even if someone does not know much about the U.S. Constitution, he can see a key feature in Jesus' national disciple: God's respect for each person's will and choices. When a person's choice significantly hurts another person, a law is made to provide justice, and the Law of Moses can help a land find God's wisdom about that. But the foundation for a national disciple of Jesus is its ongoing relationship with the God of the Bible, who will change the hearts of people. This causes a great expression of the fruit of the Spirit in the land – manifestations of Himself like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Five Books from the Bible about Healing Nations

I have written five books about discipling whole nations to Jesus in this time leading up to His return. Specific Scriptures give each book its own points and emphasis, but the books overlap because they all come from the same big picture in the Bible. A PDF download or a preview of each whole book is free at www.lulu.com under james tarter.

God's Just Judgment of a Nation Supplement is your 210-page book that is built around a 130-page "the book" with that title. I assume that you are familiar with both, so that I do not discuss them here. These books are my most thorough treatment about nations now from the Minor Prophets. Here I briefly compare and contrast the other four books, so that you can choose the best for you or others and supplement it where helpful.

A Nation's Day of the Lord is a brief introduction to the big picture. This book emphasizes a nation's Day of the Lord as the time when the Lord holds a nation to be fully accountable for its sins, which includes Jesus' provision to justly save nations today. This book provides extra Biblical examples and explanation of God's just judgment of a nation beyond those in your book. Ephesians, 2Chron. 7, and Rom. 8 are briefly discussed in this introductory 55-page book.

A Prophecy for the United States shows how everything in the 21-verse book of Obadiah applies to the U.S. now or in the near future. V. 10-21 apply to all nations with a partly Judeo-Christian foundation and heritage from past generations, and this includes the U.S. The other Minor Prophets are rarely used in this 168-page book, and the picture from Ephesians and 2Chron. 7:13-14 is introduced from the related promise in Ob. 21. With amazing detail Obadiah pinpoints the U.S. since the 1940s, including its key national and international issues.

GOD'S CURE for the Post-Christian Syndrome features the book of Malachi and starts with its description of the spiritual wilderness in the U.S. This book is mostly a different approach to Chapters 11-13 in your book. The pictures from Ephesians, 2Chron. 7:13-14, Rom. 8, Isa. 60:1-3, and Joel are introduced as needed in this 79-page book.

Healing Nations starts with a vision of the glorious Body of Christ in Ephesians and provides the most thorough discussion of Ephesians and the spiritual warfare needed to move into God's corporate calling for His Church (*Destroying Spiritual Strongholds* goes deeper into personal spiritual warfare). This 100-page book also thoroughly explains 2Chron. 7:13-14 and our calling to be sons of God (Rom. 8). The book omits the Minor Prophets because its reader is assumed to realize the great need of his nation to repent (they expose this need).