



Session 7 ■ Special Interest Topic 1

Finding Jesus in the Old Testament Prophecies as Revealed in Revelation

The true centre of the book of Revelation is not the beasts, vultures, darkness, earthquakes, literal wars or oil in the Middle East.

The centre of Revelation is found in God the Father and Jesus Christ.

In Revelation, the symbols of the Old Testament are transformed because of what Jesus has done. In this book, John builds on the major themes of the Old Testament and transforms them in the light of Jesus' earthly life, His death and resurrection, and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. In doing this, John gives those Old Testament themes fresh and creative meaning.

Jesus is presented in Revelation as the One who succeeds where Israel failed. He is the New Israel. Consequently, He is also subject to the blessings and curses of the covenant God made with Israel in the Old Testament. The life, death and resurrection Jesus Christ experienced are modelled on the experiences of Israel.

By focusing on this, John joins other New Testament writers who consistently portray Jesus as the One who fulfilled the experiences of Israel in the Old Testament, from the Exodus to the Exile. We have already seen that in the New Testament, the Old Testament nation of Israel—spiritually speaking—is understood as being expanded to include the church (see Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 2:28, 29).

The New Testament also uses language from the Old Testament to present Jesus as a new Moses.

Similar to Moses:

- A king tries to kill Him when He is born;
- He flees to Egypt and comes out, as did the nation of Israel at the Exodus;
- He spends 40 days in the wilderness being tempted, just as Moses was 40 days in the mountain receiving the law and the nation of Israel was 40 years in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land;
- He gave principles of His kingdom from a mountain;
- He chose 12 disciples to replace the 12 tribes of Israel (see Matthew 19:28).

When James calls the church by the name of the 12 tribes (see James 1:1), it becomes clear what was once offered to Israel has now been expanded to the Christian church (see Exodus 19:5, 6; 1 Peter 2:9, 10).

By dying on Calvary, Jesus experienced the curses due because of disobedience to the covenant (see Galatians 3:13).

But because He faithfully obeyed the covenant, He is also able to empower His followers with the blessings of the covenant. We find that God is able to declare those followers in faith to be a “kingdom of priests” (see Revelation 5:9, 10), which was a promise once made to Israel if they remained faithful to the covenant (see Exodus 19:5, 6).

John is meeting his original hearers and readers where they are as he presents two models to describe the church.

1. He uses the model of Israel to describe what is happening to the church.

For example, in Revelation 7, we have the church described as 144,000 and coming from all the tribes of Israel.

The church is now descended from the witness of the 12 apostles (see Matthew 19:27, 28).

In this model, he sees the church battling with Sodom, Egypt and Babylon, just as Old Testament Israel had done in ancient times.

2. He also models the church as the one who follows in the footsteps of Jesus, her Lord.

He pictures the church as:

- Being both kings and priests (see Revelation 1:5, 6, 5:9, 10)
- Ministering for three-and-a-half years (see Revelation 11:1-3)
- Being slain and mocked (see Revelation 11:7-10)
- Resurrected and ascending to heaven (see Revelation 11:11, 12).