

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

Introduction

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is revealed in the midst of the Church, often depicted in Scripture as the Body, or the Bride of the Lamb. It is imperative to understand the origin of the Church and who comprises it.

To understand the Church is to understand its identity as and connection to the Israel of the Bible. We learn from the Old Testament that Israel is God's chosen people. Indeed, the Hebrew people that became Israel through Abraham, Isaac, and **Jacob** (Israel), were God's chosen. God's promises and blessings were abundantly poured upon them in obedience to God's rule over them. Unfortunately, many of the chosen were not faithful, continually disobeying God even when the prophets of Israel repeatedly warned them. This led to the Messiah, Jesus, who would usher in a New Covenant and would expand the family of God beyond the Hebrew people to include Gentiles, to "**whosoever believes in Him (Jesus)**" (**John 3:16**).

Like most of the Hebrew people who failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, many people in the world today, including Bible-believing Christians, do not understand nor have they embraced fully how Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross brought many others into God's promises and blessings, and expanded the chosen people, the Israel of the Bible. Many still see the faithful remnant of Old Testament Israel (those who walked faithfully with God) and New Testament Israel (those redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ) as two separate entities, when they are actually one and the same. **Ephesians chapter 2** and **Galatians 3:26-29** underscore this clearly. More will be shared about this shortly. Israel is a continuous line of people who love and serve God in *faith*, having been chosen in His mercy and grace.

The word Israel is a combination of two Hebrew words ('Isra' meaning *he strives or struggles with*, and 'el' meaning *God*). When combined, the word Israel means *he struggles with God*. The man for whom Israel was originally named, Jacob, received his name after wrestling with the Lord during a long, sleepless night (**Genesis 32:22-32**). The name **Israel** would denote him, his Hebrew posterity who constantly strived with

God, and others who would be brought into what we will call the **Household of Faith** after struggling with God in sin but finding salvation in Jesus Christ.

This Household of Faith is comprised of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (**Revelation 7:9**). Beyond the initial Israel of the Hebrew nation, Gentiles would be allowed into the household. The apostle Peter, after witnessing this Gentile inclusion, said, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (**Acts 10:34**). From Abraham’s time forward, the Household of Faith has been growing. Let us explore this in more detail.

Establishing a Faithful People

To get the complete picture, we must go all the way back to Adam and Eve, back to the very beginning. God created them to have communion and fellowship with Him. The life God breathed into them was eternal in nature. Scripture indicates that humanity was created as an immortal society. Humanity was a perfect creation of God, with whom He intended to maintain an intimate relationship.

Just as God had created humanity to be immortal, He also gave them free will. God wanted people to choose Him. He did not create robots who would praise and serve Him involuntarily. He wanted an obedient people who would praise and serve Him for who He is, making the step toward God on their own and not by force.

Unfortunately, it was in that free will that the separation between God and humanity began. Most are familiar with the plight of Adam and Eve (**Genesis 2 and 3**). God had given them instructions and they did not obey. He had sought from them an obedience and love that would honor the Creator. They willed not to obey God. The origin of sin was theirs. The perfect creation became defiled in that it rejected its Creator’s will. As a consequence, Adam and Eve spiritually died, becoming subject to physical and eternal death. All humanity from that point forward shared their fate.

God, who is holy and pure, could not allow sin to go unpunished in a universe so properly ordered and disciplined by His laws. Death was the punishment, though God did not love humanity any less. His great love for humanity was eventually demonstrated in Jesus, the Savior. Even at the point of Adam and Eve’s fall, God began the process of reconciling humanity to Himself, as He clothed their nakedness with animal skins and promised them a Redeemer (**Genesis 3:15, 21**). The redemptive process that was culminated in the obedience of Jesus Christ at Calvary actually began thousands of years before.

A God of Covenants

God guaranteed His promise to Adam by establishing a covenant with humanity. A covenant is a contract between two parties. This one was a contract between God and humanity. The vessel with whom God chose to establish the contract was Abraham.

Genesis 17 records the event – “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (**verse 7**). “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (**verse 11**).

The important word is ‘*everlasting*.’ It was not going to be a short-term covenant. There would be no termination date. When you enter into a contract to buy a home, you usually agree to a price, a down payment, and a date at which the contract is null and void if financing or other contingencies of the contract are not met. Contracts have definite time boundaries. The covenant God presented to Abraham was *everlasting*, one that would never come to an end.

Further details of the covenant with Abraham, more broadly in the context of the Old Covenant recorded in the Old Testament of the Bible, were given to Moses at Mt. Sinai (**Exodus 19:1ff**). The Hebrew people received Ten Commandments, as well as other rules and regulations for their lives with God at the center, i.e., The Law. The Old Covenant is known as the covenant of the *Law*. The New Covenant, by contrast, was established through Jesus Christ and is known as the covenant of *grace*.

Neither the Old Covenant of the law nor the New Covenant of grace is contradictory to the everlasting covenant God established with Abraham. Although the covenant of grace replaced the covenant of the Law, both were used by God as a method of carrying out the everlasting covenant established with Abraham. **Hebrews 8** sheds light on this truth, indicating that the first covenant had faults and necessitated a second or better covenant which would be mediated by Jesus. God did not institute a faulty covenant. The fault with the first covenant was humanity’s inability to keep it (**verses 7-8**).

The apostle Paul confirms this when he tells the Christians at Rome that the law or first covenant served only to bring a “**knowledge of sin**” (**Romans 3:20**). The covenant that was replaced was not the covenant of faith made with Abraham, but the covenant of the Law made through Moses. God used the Law to show humanity its need for grace, which would be given freely in Jesus Christ. Salvation in Jesus comes by the same kind of faith exhibited in Abraham, the father of faith.

The second covenant, that of grace, replaced the Law. In this New Covenant, the law would be placed in willing hearts and minds, not kept externally (**Jeremiah 31:33-34 and Hebrews 8:10-11**). “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (**Jeremiah 31:34 and Hebrews 8:12**). God remembered sins under the first covenant, the Law, because the Law exposed sin. In the second covenant, God forgets sins because they have been eradicated by the blood of Jesus. Both covenants were steps in God’s plan of salvation, supporting the everlasting covenant originally made with Abraham through faith.

Abraham’s character as a man of faith was evidenced when he trusted God’s request to sacrifice his only son on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). Though remembering that God had promised to bless him and multiply his seed after him and cause multitudes to be raised up through him, Abraham still trusted God, in obedience, bound Isaac to an altar, and raised a knife to slay him. God, of course, intervened and provided a ram as a sacrifice in place of Isaac, as He would do later with Jesus for the sins of humanity.

It is through faith that God calls for humanity to draw near Him. The ultimate faith would come in accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, in obedience and faith like that of Abraham. Reconciliation between God and humanity was instituted through Abraham, continued with the covenant of law at Mount Sinai, and would culminate with the work of the Cross of the second covenant. Both covenants contributed to reconciling humanity to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is but one faith covenant. It is comprised of subcontracts or covenant phases. Neither of these phases nullified the overall, everlasting covenant of God made with Abraham. God never intended to have two camps of followers, one called the nation of Israel (Old Covenant) and another the Church of Jesus Christ or spiritual Israel (New Covenant). When the Hebrew people failed to honor the first covenant, God transitioned to a second. Through both covenants, God is establishing one camp of followers who walk by faith. This camp is the Household of Faith.

Faithful people in the nation of Israel under the Old Covenant have been mistakenly separated from spiritual Israel, the Church under the New Covenant when, in fact, they are members of the same entity. Using a horticultural analogy, the apostle Paul says that faithful followers of Jesus Christ, outside of the initial chosen family tree of Hebrew people, are “**grafted in among the others**” to make *one* tree (the Church), with every branch drawing its nourishment and its vitality from the Root, Jesus Christ (**Romans 11:11-27**).

God is not divisive, nor has He made any mistakes in the lives of His chosen. God continues to work unity in all who would follow the path of obedience and righteousness. God has revealed that He is building *one* house (household) not made with hands, comprised of those who accept Him in faith through Jesus Christ. That house, of which Jesus is the cornerstone, is the Israel of the Bible. “As you come to him (Jesus), the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture, it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame” (Isaiah 28:16) (1 Peter 2:4-6).”

The Seed of Abraham

The apostle Paul in his letter to Christians at Rome explained spiritual principles concerning Israel and the everlasting covenant. **Romans 4** (justifying the faith of Abraham) should be read and compared to **Genesis 17** where the initial covenant was established through Abraham.

Paul was a Jew by birth. He called himself “a Hebrew of Hebrews” (**Philippians 3:5**), who understood the Hebrew family and the covenant of the Law. After he was born again in Jesus Christ, spiritual truth about Israel came into focus for him. He wanted the people of his own flesh to find salvation in Jesus Christ. To help them understand, he explained ‘the seed of Abraham’ and who would inherit the promises of God. When God established the everlasting covenant with Abraham, He said, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy *seed* after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy *seed* after thee” (**Genesis 17:7, KJV, emphasis added**).

The *seed* was not simply those born of the flesh in the family of Abraham. Paul perceived the broader picture, in the Spirit, and wrote, “For the promise, that he [Abraham] should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law [or the receivers of the law, the Hebrew people alone], but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise [the initial Abrahamic covenant] might be sure to all the *seed*; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all (**Romans 4:13-16, [emphases]added**).

The *seed* God referred to in Genesis 17 is revealed in this Romans 4 passage. God was speaking of a people who walk in faith by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Most of the nation of Israel rejected Jesus. John, the gospel writer, said, “He came unto his own [Israel of the Old Covenant], and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them [people of faith] gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (**John, 1:11-13, [emphases] added**).

Paul underscores and crystalizes his point to the Christians at Rome, “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the *seed*” (Romans 9:8).

The household of faith is comprised of all people who, in faith, are born of God’s Spirit. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s *seed*, and heirs according to the promise” (**Galatians 3:28-29**). God no longer favors an Israel of the flesh. He favors a spiritual Israel, the household of faith, within which there is no racial favoritism. God loves everyone equally in the Church Jesus made possible and gives His favor in abundance to all who are the seed of Abraham in faith.

All scriptures pointing to the future blessings of God on Israel refer to a different body of people than national Israel or only the ancient Hebrew people (e.g., **Psalms 115:12; Isaiah 45:17; and Joel 2:27**). They refer to the faithful servants of God who come to Him in faith through Jesus.

In speaking to spiritual warfare the Church endures, **Revelation 12:17** says that Satan “went to make war with the remnant of her *seed*, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Note that the *seed* is described as those who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” This is not pointing to the modern-day nation of Israel nor the ancient Hebrew people who did not keep God’s commandments. It is pointing to those (the *seed*) who do keep God’s commandments and have a testimony of Jesus Christ (born again believers of the Church). And this includes Hebrew people through the centuries who have been converted to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. God is honoring and favoring the *seed* of Abraham by faith, not by flesh.

The Use of Prefiguring

In order to fully understand the truth about the Church of Jesus Christ, one must realize the symbolism used in the Old Covenant (Testament) that pointed the way to Jesus. The technique used is called *prefiguring*. Ask yourself this question, ‘Did God fail in His attempt to raise up a chosen people through the ancient Hebrews?’ It would seem that way, considering that God allowed the Israelites to be carried away into exile in Babylon, permitted them to return and rebuild, allowed them to prosper for a season, but then allowed the Roman Empire to utterly destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and kill over a million people. But God did not fail in His dealings with ancient Israel. The **people** failed to live by the Law, as noted in **Hebrews 8:7-8**, “For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the **people** . . .”

God actually accomplished much through the ancient Hebrew people, the nation of Israel. He demonstrated to the world that a Savior was needed. Their weakness in obedience paved the way for the Messiah to come and redeem a sinful world. That Messiah, Jesus Christ, was born of Jewish descent, yet was conceived by the Holy Spirit. In him would the victorious spiritual Israel blossom.

God surely anticipated this in His redemption plan from the very beginning. The all-knowing God of the universe engineered a plan that would make the opportunity for all people to be reconciled to Himself. Those people, should they choose God by accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord, would become part of a vast multitude of saints who would be one with God, His very intention before man’s sinful fall. What He accomplished in Hebrew Israel was preparation for the coming of Jesus and the revealing of principles of the Church that would follow Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. This was *prefiguring*. Jesus was the figure or focal point of the plan.

Other biblical terms for *prefiguring* are ***example*** and ***shadow***, as found in **Hebrews 4:5**, “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the ***example*** and ***shadow*** of heavenly things.” Other passages that clarify the meaning of the concept of ***examples*** and ***shadows*** are found in **1 Corinthians 10:6-11** and **Romans 15:4**. The priests of the tabernacle and temple in the Old Covenant were a ***shadow*** of our high priest, Jesus Christ, the substance that cast the shadow.

A shadow is not the real thing. It is merely an image that is projected because of the real object. Your shadow cast upon the ground is but a shape that has two dimensions.

It has no substance and cannot be touched. You, however, are real, a three-dimensional being that causes the shadow to have form and to give anyone who sees it an idea or an inkling of how you look. Biblical shadows do the same.

Images produced in a shadow box are good examples. Someone with talent twists and contorts fingers, hands, and arms many ways to produce images on a screen of animals or other things. The images produce a 'picture' in our minds of what the creator is projecting. The images are only two-dimensional, but the fingers, hands, and arms that produce them are three-dimensional. The same is true of Christ and the Church. The various aspects of the life of Israel under the Old Covenant were but a shadow or image of the true household of faith, the Church that was to come. Ancient Israel was used by God as an earthly shadow for heavenly things (**Hebrews 9:9; 10:1**). That is what prefiguring is all about.

The depth of detail that God used in this prefiguring process is remarkable. Every last detail of the Old Testament, in some way, foretold something in the New Testament. The tabernacle in the wilderness (**Exodus 25-31**) and later, in a more permanent fashion, the temple at Jerusalem, were used to prefigure the ministry of Jesus Christ and the dwelling place of God. God was using the tabernacle and temple, fashioned with human hands, as a *shadow* of the true tabernacle and temple in the heavenly places, fashioned by the hands of God.

Of particular significance in the tabernacle and the temple was the Holy of Holies, the area in which God chose to dwell in those days. The glory of God rested upon that place. Only the high priest could enter that room once a year. The Holy of Holies was prefiguring the heavenly tabernacle or abiding place of God. Jesus entered into the heavenly abiding place of God (**Hebrews 9:24**) and appeared before God "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (**Hebrews 9:26**). Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we now have the right or privilege, through Jesus, to enter into the Holy of Holies in the heavenly places. The earthly tabernacle made with hands was the *shadow*, but the heavenly tabernacle or abiding place of God was the real thing. Through Jesus, we can now experience the real thing. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near" (**Hebrews 10:19, 22**).

Understanding our position in the heavenly places is important because, later in the book of Revelation a multitude of people is seen before the throne of God, singing and praising Him. This worship is not just in the future. It is present as well as future, a worship by the saints of all time in the very presence of God in the Holy Spirit. Through

that Spirit, we are continually in the heavenly places if we are in Christ Jesus. Paul indicates that truth in **Ephesians 2:6**.

We indeed can worship God in the heavenly places now. We do not have to wait. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, “**God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth**” (**John 4:24**). God cannot be worshiped in any other way. There is no need to interpret the worship scenes of Revelation as representing Christians worshiping God in the future in heaven when they can do so now in spirit and in truth. Much of the book of Revelation reveals that. It is not showing a rekindled spark of the Old Covenant, with the Hebrew Israelites getting special treatment. It is showing spiritual Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ, the household of faith in God’s presence that developed out of the original Hebrew family, “**under the shadow of the Almighty**” (**Psalms 91:1**). To understand the book of Revelation any other way causes frustration in justifying all the physical elements of the events that are related. God moved in the midst of the Israel of the Old Covenant for a season. That reality *prefigured* spiritual Israel with God moving in her midst forever.

Many in Christendom still view the contemporary nation of Israel as the peculiar people to whom God shows favor. The nation of Israel and its people are exalted as ‘the holy land’ and ‘God’s chosen people.’ In reality, it is the *true* Jews whom God chose, favors, and considers holy. Old Covenant Israelites (Hebrews) prefigured spiritual Jews of the New Covenant, namely all saints of God who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Paul points this out, “**For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God**” (**Romans 2:28-29**). Two things are revealed as prefigured – the real Jew and the sign of his authenticity: circumcision. Initially only the Jew of the flesh existed. The sign of his commitment to God was circumcision on the eighth day. Both he and his sign were shadows or types of the real thing.

The New Testament reveals that he is a Jew who is one internally (inwardly), born of the Spirit and not of the flesh. Circumcision was prefiguring the sign of a saint’s commitment to God through circumcision of the heart or, on other words, a spiritual change that would take place within. That is the real circumcision that counts in God’s sight, and it relates to the Jew who is one inwardly. Anyone who has experienced spiritual circumcision is a Jew, is chosen, and walks in the anointing and blessing of God.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, reiterates this theme when he says, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (**Colossians 2:8-13; Philippians 3:3**).

It could be that those who place their emphasis on the ancient Hebrew family or on the nation of Israel today are moving in the areas of “philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (**Colossians 2:8**). We are complete in Him, having received “the circumcision of the Christ” which changed our hearts, causing us to be made alive or “quickened together with him.” The first circumcision, that of the flesh, prefigured that of the heart by Christ Himself, through “the operation of God.”

One last area of prefiguring that we should understand is that of the city of Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Scripture lavishes praises upon Jerusalem, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: . . . pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” (**Psalms 122:1-3, 6**). And another – “the Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel” (**Psalms 147:2**).

Jerusalem, the city located in the Middle East, was initially chosen by God to be His city under the Old Covenant. After the wilderness journey of the Israelites when God dwelt in the portable tabernacle, God allowed David and Solomon to conceive and build a somewhat more permanent dwelling, a temple constructed in the city of Jerusalem. There, God took up His habitation for a season. He chose to dwell there, and it became ‘holy’ because of His presence.

The time came, however, when the physical city of Jerusalem, like all the other prefigured objects, was replaced by a spiritual counterpart, the New Jerusalem. Several times, Jerusalem of old was sieged and destroyed. Finally in 70 AD, Jerusalem, along with the physical temple of God, was completely destroyed. Though the city has again

revived in our day, the temple has never been rebuilt to house the presence of God because He now dwells in us, the new temple of God

(1 Peter 2:5).

Jerusalem of old was favored by God because of His presence. When followers of Jesus, the Church, became the dwelling place of God, His temple, the New Jerusalem, God's favor expanded to include all who love Him, and can now be called the household of faith through Jesus Christ. All Scripture that lauds or praises Jerusalem, whether past, present, or future speaks of New Jerusalem that was prefigured by the earthly city of Jerusalem.

When John received his vision on the isle of Patmos, he saw and heard about a new heaven and earth. In **Revelation 21**, the holy city, New Jerusalem, is seen coming down out of heaven from God. Though described in elaborate detail in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 (precious jewels, streets of gold, gates of pearls), it is not the city that we might envision, nor is it made with human hands. This New Jerusalem has been misunderstood and wrongly interpreted as heaven since John recorded his vision. Rather than being shown heaven, he was seeing something else.

In the vision, an angel appeared to John and said, **"Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:9-10)**. Reference to that *bride* throughout the New Testament is repeated often and clearly understood. She is the **Church** and Jesus is the Bridegroom. What John was shown in all her glory was the Church, the wife of Jesus, **"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29)**.

The vision in **Revelation 21:10** continues, **"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain."** Notice first that in order to see the Church, John had to be **"in the spirit."** It was not a reality he could perceive with his natural eyes. He had to see it with spiritual eyes. Notice secondly that the Church was on a **"great and high mountain."** This where Mount Zion comes into focus. In Scripture, Jerusalem and Mount Zion are frequently referenced interchangeably. To speak of one is to speak of the other.

In the *natural*, Mount Zion is one of the mountains or hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built and happens to be the approximate location of the upper room where the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost, the beginning of a Spirit-empowered Church. In a *spiritual* sense, New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, is Mount Zion. **Hebrews 12:18-22** says it this way, **"You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm . . . (the physical**

Mount Zion the Hebrew people encountered after they left Egypt) . . . but you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God” (the *bride* John was shown in his vision recorded in Revelation) (**emphases added**). The passage in Hebrews continues by explaining what this Mount Zion really is, and it has a surprising composition – “you have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the bride of Christ of past, present, and future, was seen by John and described in all its glory. He was seeing the future, completed, spotless bride of Jesus Christ in the heavenly places, along with an angelic throng worshipping the God of the universe. If we are in Christ Jesus, we are already part of the New Jerusalem, seated in the heavenly places on Mount Zion. It may not yet be finished. There are others being added daily and more finishing work is being done by the Holy Spirit. And we can be part of it in Jesus Christ.

The Bible is replete with prefiguring, examples and shadows of spiritual things that were to come and are now reality.

The Real Israel

The real Israel is more than the original Hebrew family. The real Israel is not an earthly nation. Jesus said, “my kingdom is not of this world” (**John 18:36**). The New Testament reveals what it really is.

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (**1 Peter 2:9-10**).

Everyone outside of the original Hebrew family, referenced in the Bible as Gentiles, has been given the opportunity to be part of the household of faith, the family of God comprised of any willing follower of Jesus Christ. “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are **one** in Christ Jesus” (**Galatians 3:26-28**). Jesus, speaking about being the good shepherd of all his sheep, told his disciples this was going to happen, “I have other

sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be **one flock and one shepherd**" (John 10:16).

"Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth . . . were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you have once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ . . . his purpose was to create in himself **one** new man out the two (Jew and Gentile), thus making peace, and in this **one body** to reconcile both of them to God through the cross . . . consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Ephesians 2:11-22, selected, (**emphases**) added).

If you are not sure whether you are a member of God's family, the household of faith, surrender your life to Jesus today. To find out how, go to [Getting Started](#).