

GOD'S OLIVE TREE

"The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken" Jeremiah 11:16.

God chose the children of Israel in Abraham several generations before they would exist as a nation. When He said to Abraham, *"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* Genesis 22:18, He set forth His purpose for the Jewish nation which was to come, that they would be his instrument in bringing the world to know the true and living God. It was for this purpose He brought them to Mount Sinai only 50 days after He delivered them from bondage in Egypt. This was the first *"Day of Pentecost,"* where God had promised to make them His *"peculiar treasure above all people,"* His *"Kingdom of Priests,"* and His *"Holy nation,"* if they would *"obey His voice and keep His covenant"* Exodus 19:5-6. God's purpose was to write His law upon their hearts and clothe them with His Spirit, exactly as He did the hundred and twenty believers on the Day of Pentecost some fifteen hundred years later. When they refused to hear the voice of God and promised to obey Moses instead Exodus 20:19, the Law of Moses was added to them. Since they refused to receive the Ten Commandments of God in their hearts, they would be forced to obey the six hundred and thirteen commandments of Moses on the penalty of death. The Apostle Paul said, *"He that despised Moses Law died without mercy before two or three witnesses."* Israel was *"...kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed"* Galatians 3:23. Notice the language; *"...kept under the law, shut up unto the faith..."* is prison language. The Law of Moses was their punishment for refusing to believe God. Less than a year later, when they refused to enter the land of promise because of unbelief, every one over twenty years of age was "cut off" by God to perish in the wilderness where they would wander for forty years.

When God "planted Israel," He called her *"A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit."* The nation of Israel was God's beautiful olive tree, with many branches and abundance of good fruit. This was in the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the forming of the twelve tribes of Israel. After refusing to hear God at Sinai, and refusing to enter the Promised Land at Kadesh Barnea Numbers chapters 13&14, many of the branches were broken off through unbelief. The olive tree thrived under the leadership of Joshua, as well as under the godly judges that followed, but when the people desired a King, they began turning away from God. Under godly Kings, the olive tree would thrive, but under ungodly kings, branches were broken off as the land was filled with idols. The kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah, under the reign of King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. During the ministry of Isaiah, the northern kingdom of Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians and scattered into the nations of the world because of their idolatry. Certainly, the olive tree bore the scars of this division and destruction. It was during the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah that God's judgment came against the southern

kingdom of Judah, and especially the city of Jerusalem. God called for the destroying angels from Babylon to come. He sent an angel into the city to place a mark on the righteous Ezekiel 9:4, and commanded the destroying angels, *"Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house"* Ezekiel 9:5-6.

This brings us to our text, in which Jeremiah described the fate of God's olive tree, which was national Israel in the Old Testament and under the Law of Moses: *"...with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken"* Jeremiah 11:16. The city of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple were completely destroyed and burnt with fire. Those who were not slain were carried away into seventy years captivity in Babylon, while the land lay desolate.

The Mystery of Christ

"...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 3:4-6:

God had purposed from the beginning that the entire world would know Him and serve Him. Israel was chosen by God to bring that blessing to the Gentiles, hence Gods words to Abraham, *"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."* As it happened, the Jews under the Law of Moses refused to reach out to the Gentiles for fifteen hundred years before Christ came. When Christ did come, they rejected him. The Apostle John said, *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"* John 1:11-12. When the Jews rejected the gospel of Christ, the apostles turned to preach to the Gentiles. With the thousands of Jews in Jerusalem that believed, and the thousands of Gentiles who were saved, God's olive tree became very beautiful and fruitful, with both Jews and Gentiles. As the first-generation believers began to die off, the church became in large part a Gentile church. Just as Israel had boasted in their heart against the gentiles, Christians actually began to boast themselves against the Jews. The Apostle Paul had warned the Gentile churches against such as this:

"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God

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spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Romans 11:18-22

The nation of Israel suffered under the dominion of foreign nations for six centuries, beginning with Jeremiah's revelation of the burnt and broken olive tree. This was the "severity of God," which began because of their idolatry and continued because of their unbelief. When Christ came into the world, the scripture says, "He came unto His own (the Jews), and His own received Him not" John 1:11. Only days before dying on the cross, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**" Luke 13:35

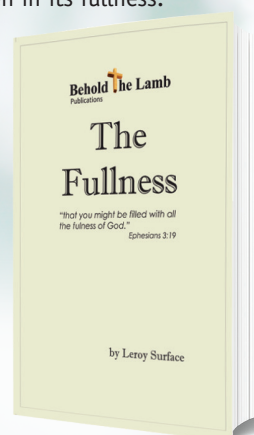
The church of Jesus Christ (the Israel of God Galatians 6:16) is made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye (the Gentiles) who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity (the Law of Moses), even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain (Jews and Gentiles) one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." Ephesians 2:13-16

During the first generation after Pentecost, many thousands of both Jews and Gentiles were grafted into God's olive tree, which is "the Israel of God" Galatians 6:16. The tree was beautiful once again in that day, and it was what God had purposed when He said to Abraham, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." As the initial outpouring of the Holy Ghost began to wane in Jerusalem, however, many of the Jews began to return to Moses and the Law. Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, seeking to stop the erosion. Within a generation the olive tree, which continues to be "the Israel of God," was made up mostly of Gentile believers. With the second generation of the church, false teachers and false prophets arose and perverted the gospel of Christ into that which is not the gospel Galatians 1:6-7. Those "believers" who believed the "perverted Gospel" were broken off by God. The Apostle Paul said to them, "Christ is made of no effect unto you..." Galatians 5:4. Jude said ungodly men had "crept in unawares...turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness..." Jude 1:4. All those "branches" who accepted the lascivious gospel were also "broken off" from the olive tree. Very few were being grafted in by the end of the first century church, and within three hundred years, the church had apostatized to the extent that the spirit of antichrist gained supremacy and placed an antichrist figure as the earthly head of the church. Consider how barren God's "green olive tree" must have been during those twelve centuries of dark ages before the reformation of the sixteenth century.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved..." Romans 11:25-26

God gave His fullness to the hundred and twenty Jewish believers on the Day of Pentecost, and they went out and "turned the world upside down" in their generation Acts 17:6. The Gentile church must receive that same fullness in these last days before the veil of darkness can be lifted from national Israel. God said through Moses, speaking of Israel in the last days, that He would "...move them to jealousy with those which are not a people" Deuteronomy 32:21. This speaks of the Gentile believers, to whom Peter said, "...ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: **Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God**" II Peter 2:9-10. Paul said of Israel, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall **salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy**" Romans 11:11. When Jesus Christ returns, He will present to Himself a "glorious church," made up of both Jew and Gentile. Before that time, however, the Gentile church must be "filled with all the fullness of God" Ephesians 3:19, with such an outpouring of the Holy Ghost that even our enemies will confess with Peter, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" Acts 2:16. The prophet Zechariah prophesied of a day in which the Gentile church (the house of David Acts 15:13-18) will be "as God, as the angel of the LORD before them (the inhabitants of Jerusalem)" Zechariah 12:8. God said, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: **and they shall look upon (toward) me whom they have pierced...**" Zechariah 12:10. Both the Jewish nation and the Gentile church will be restored and made one in the "glorious church," which Christ shall present to Himself Ephesians 5:25-27. Only then will God's olive tree be seen in its fullness.



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