

The Seal of Israel

Recently a bulla (clay seal impression) was found in Jerusalem with the words “Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah.” In ancient times, a king’s seal was used to identify that something was his, much like we would use a signature today. His seal carried his *name* (i.e., Hezekiah), his *title* (king), and the *extent of his authority* (i.e., Judah). So when Scripture speaks of God’s people being “sealed” (Revelation 7:2–3), it points to an identifying mark that would contain God’s name and would indicate their allegiance to Him.

In the heart of the Ten Commandments we find just such a sign, containing all three elements of a divine seal. The fourth commandment states:

“For in six days the Lord (name) made (title as Creator) heaven and earth (domain)”
– Exodus 20:11

The Sabbath, set apart at creation and reaffirmed at Sinai, is called a sign between God and His people: *“Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep... it is a sign between Me and you”* (Exodus 31:13) *“I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them”* (Ezekiel 20:12, 20)

The Sabbath is not merely an Old Testament ritual. It was to be a way of life for God’s people, defining their relation to others in terms of mercy, justice, and liberation (Isaiah 58). Hebrews 4 shows how it points to the spiritual rest that the Christian finds in Christ’s free gift of forgiveness: *“There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God... for he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works”* (Hebrews 4:9–10)

True Sabbath-keeping springs from faith in Jesus and love for Him (John 14:21, 1 John 5:3). The seal of Israel is thus a spiritual mark: faith in Christ, evidenced by obedience to His commandments and reverence for His Sabbath. This seal is not arbitrary; it reflects God’s own character. His law—written on the heart (Hebrews 8:10)—is a transcript of His holiness (Romans 7:12). And the Sabbath, at its center, proclaims Him as both Creator and Redeemer. In a world of counterfeit worship and shifting allegiances, the sealed of Israel follow the Lamb, not the crowd. They find their rest in the grace and power of Christ, like Peter confessing Him when all around others are bowing to idols.

The sealed of Israel are seen again in Revelation 21, inheriting the New Jerusalem—a city with twelve gates: one for each of the tribes. Here, at last, the unity of God’s faithful is complete. Just as the Sabbath was sanctified at the dawn of creation, so it will be celebrated in the new creation: *“From one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord.”* (Isaiah 66:23)

To receive God’s seal is to enter His rest, reflect His character, to confess Christ and walk in covenant with Him. This is Israel’s ultimate triumph: a kingdom founded on Christ, composed of all who belong to Him, and destined to stand for all eternity.

ANCIENT WORLDS *of the* BIBLE

Study Guide 11

by Pastor Daniel McFeeters

Israel’s Ultimate Triumph

For millennia, the Scriptures have spoken of a glorious future for Israel—of restoration, peace, and divine favor. Psalm 122 calls us to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” Jeremiah declares that Israel will never cease to be a nation before God. Prophets like Ezekiel and Zechariah envision unity, rebuilding, and an everlasting covenant. Yet even after the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Second Temple, that promised splendor remained elusive. By the time of Christ, Judea labored under Roman occupation, and by AD 70, Jerusalem lay in ruins—its people scattered across the earth.

Through centuries of exile, the Jewish people clung to the hope of return. That hope surged in 1948 with the declaration of the modern State of Israel. Many saw this as the fulfillment of prophecy—a miraculous rebirth of the nation. Yet peace has remained elusive. From 1948 to today, conflict has marked the land. Ancient prophecies are often invoked to justify modern ambitions, but has the world misunderstood what the prophets truly foresaw?

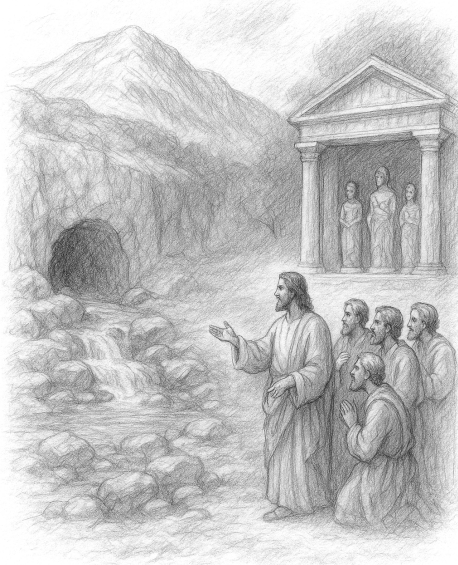
To uncover the deeper meaning, we travel north—to the shadow of Mount Hermon, where Israel borders Syria and the Golan Heights. This strategic region has long witnessed both physical and spiritual warfare. In ancient times, it served as a corridor for invading armies and was the site of Israel’s early apostasy during the Judges. But it was also here, at Caesarea Philippi—a stronghold of pagan worship—that Jesus revealed the key to Israel’s ultimate triumph.

In that hostile setting, Jesus asked His disciples, *“Who do you say that I am?”* (Matthew 16:15). Peter answered, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Jesus responded, *“You are Peter [Petros], and on this rock [petra] I will build My church.”* The Greek makes the distinction clear: Peter (**Petros**) is a movable stone; the **petra**—the massive rock—is Christ Himself. As Peter later wrote, Jesus is *“the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God”* (1 Peter 2:4). He is the Rock of our salvation (1 Corinthians 10:4). On this rock, Christ would build his *“ekklesia,”* his assembly of disciples, using a word that connects His New Testament church to the ancient assembly of Israelites in the wilderness.

The **key** revealed at Caesarea Philippi is not about political or spiritual authority on this earth—it is the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This truth is the foundation of the church (the *ekklesia*) and the heart of God's covenant people. As Paul writes, *"They are not all Israel who are of Israel... but the children of the promise are counted as the seed"* (Romans 9:6–8). True Israel is not defined by bloodline or borders, but by allegiance to the Messiah.

The key involves more than merely knowing *who* Jesus is. As He Himself said, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me"* (John 14:21). Love for Christ is expressed through obedience—not as a means to earn salvation, but as the evidence of a heart transformed by it. *"This is the love of God,"* John writes, *"that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3).

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus redefined what it means to conquer. Triumph would not come through swords or sovereignty, but through *surrender*—through collectively building on the unshakable Rock of Christ, and living in obedience to His word. Triumph is open to *all* who receive the key—not just by confession, but by *commitment*.



Who Are Israel?

From Genesis to Revelation, the identity of Israel has always been rooted in covenant. God's promise to Abraham was not just about land or lineage—it was about a *Seed* through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Paul makes this explicit: *that Seed is Christ* (Galatians 3:16), and those who belong to Christ are Abraham's true descendants—*"heirs according to the promise"* (Galatians 3:29).

The New Covenant, sealed by Christ's blood, defines God's people not by ancestry, but by allegiance—by a heart transformed through faith and obedience. As Paul says, *"he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit"* (Romans 2:29). This definition doesn't erase Israel's role; it restores it. The faithful remnant is expanded, not replaced, forming a new body of believers united in Christ. In the New Testament, belonging to Israel means being connected to Christ, not merely to Abraham. God has not cast off His people (Romans 11:1), but national Israel no longer holds exclusive privilege; that honor belongs to all who embrace Jesus as Messiah. Even at the end of time, God still has a people who are spiritually called "Israel."

This reality comes into sharp focus in Revelation 7. John hears the number of the sealed—144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. This is a symbolic portrait of God's covenant people in the end times. Israel is once again complete, with the full number from every tribe represented. But when he looks, he sees something even greater: *"a great multitude... from every nation, tribe, people, and language"* (Revelation 7:9). These are the true Israel—those sealed by God, redeemed by the Lamb, and identified not by heritage, but by holiness.

What is their defining mark? Revelation 14 says they *"follow the Lamb wherever He goes"* and have no deceit in their mouths (verses 4–5). Their faith is not theoretical; it's practical. Obedience isn't optional—it's the *evidence* of genuine faith and love (John 14:15).

To be Israel, then, is to be *sealed* with the Spirit, *shaped* by the cross, and *submitted* to Christ. It is to walk in covenant fidelity, bearing the name of the Lamb. This is the triumph of Israel—not in reclaiming earthly power, but in becoming the people God always intended: *holy, faithful, and forever* His.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

SCRIPTURE: *"Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. ... And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed."*
(Revelation 7:2, 4)

REFLECTION: Are you an "Israelite"? What does it mean for you personally to be part of "Israel" according to the promise?

EXPERIENCE: How does understanding the biblical vision of God's people change the way you view current events related to Israel or the Middle East?

QUESTION: What is the "seal" of God? What does it take to be part of the "new" Israel, the 144,000?

RESPONSE: Do you want to be part of the 144,000 who receive God's seal and who follow the lamb wherever He goes? (Revelation 7, 14)

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