Where the Roads Split, Part Two — The Short Version

Paper 12 in a 12 Part Series

by Escape the Mustard Tree

A plain-language companion to Paper 12, Part Two. Everything here is worked out at length there, with the Scripture, the objections, and the sources.

Closer to home

Part One looked at groups whose roads split at the foundations: who God is, who decides what the Bible means, and whose name "Christ" is. Part Two looks at roads that leave from much closer to home. Nearly everyone here confesses the same God, the same Christ, and the same Bible this series does. Some of them sit in the next pew.

That makes these roads harder to see. Several of these movements use this series' own words: **overcomers, sons of God, reward, reigning with Christ, Israel's promises, "age-lasting."** Same vocabulary, different dictionaries. The difference this time is mostly about **when** and **who**:

- **When the kingdom comes**
- **Who Israel is**
- **How the ages end**

As in Part One, every group is described from its own teaching first, and the judgment is about teaching, not about anyone's standing before God (2 Tim. 2:19).

Split four: when the kingdom comes

Jesus is seated now at the Father's right hand, "waiting till His enemies are made His footstool" (Heb. 10:13). The kingdom comes when He comes, and so do the rewards: "then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). The movements in this section agree with most of that on paper. In practice, each one moves a piece of the coming age into this one.

Classical Pentecostals (the Assemblies of God and churches like them) stand with this series on the foundations, and they look for Christ's return to reign for a thousand years. The disagreement is between people on the same road. Pentecostals teach that tongues, healing, and prophecy are for the Church today, and their worship shows it: tongues and interpretation, laying on of hands for the sick, altar services for the baptism in the Spirit.

This series reads the sign gifts as tied to the offer of the kingdom to Israel. Moses' signs were given so Israel would believe (Exod. 4:5). Jesus sent the Twelve with power to heal only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). Hebrews calls the signs "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5), a foretaste of the kingdom. When Israel turned the offer down for the last time (Acts 28:28), the signs had done their work. In Paul's later letters he leaves a coworker sick (2 Tim. 4:20) and tells Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). God still heals and answers prayer as He wills. The sign gifts themselves belonged to that offer.

The Word of Faith movement teaches that spoken faith brings what it confesses, and that health and wealth already belong to the Christian by right. This series agrees that God rewards faith (Heb. 11:6). The split is about the calendar:

> "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day." (2 Tim. 4:8)

The crown is waiting, and it's given on that Day. The Corinthians acted as if they'd already been paid, and Paul answered, "You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us" (1 Cor. 4:8), while he himself went hungry (1 Cor. 4:11). Jesus warned that a reward collected now is the whole of it: "they have their reward" (Matt. 6:2). **Claim the reward in this life, and you've traded the crown for pocket change.**

The New Apostolic Reformation uses more of this series' words than anyone: overcomers, the revealing of the sons of God, a company who rule with Christ. It grew from a 1948 revival and a teaching called the Manifest Sons of God, which held that perfected overcomers would be revealed and would take the earth for Christ before He returns. Today it recognizes living apostles and prophets and calls Christians to take control of seven "mountains" of culture.

The split is first about timing. Read on four verses from the movement's favorite text:

> "We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." (Rom. 8:23)

The sons are revealed when bodies are redeemed, and that's at His coming (Col. 3:4). The promise to rule says the same: "hold fast what you have till I come... to him I will give power over the nations" (Rev. 2:25-26).

The split is also about who takes the kingdom. Daniel saw it come as "a stone... cut out without hands" (Dan. 2:34). God sets it up; men don't build it sphere by sphere. Think of David. He was anointed king while Saul still reigned, and twice he could have killed Saul. He refused and waited for God to act (1 Sam. 24:6). Jesus is waiting the same way (Heb. 10:13). **A Church that grabs the throne before the King takes it is doing what David refused to do.**

Split five: who Israel is

This series teaches that Israel and the Church are two peoples with two callings. Israel keeps the earthly promises God swore to her fathers (Rom. 11:29). The Church has been offered a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Replacement theology erases the line by making the Church into Israel. The groups in this section erase it from the other side, by making Gentile Christians into Israel.

- **Hebrew Roots** teaches that Gentile Christians must keep the Sabbath, Israel's feasts, and the food laws.
- **The Two-House teaching** says many Gentiles drawn to the Law are secretly descended from the "lost" ten tribes.
- **British Israelism**, an older form, said Britain and America are those lost tribes.

They're right to take Israel seriously, and right that the Bible's Jewish setting matters. But Paul keeps Gentiles Gentile. In his picture of the olive tree, the Gentile is a wild branch grafted in

"contrary to nature" (Rom. 11:24), and he stays a wild branch. Then Paul lists the two groups separately in one sentence:

> "Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved." (Rom. 11:25-26)

If the Gentiles were secretly Israel, that sentence wouldn't make sense. And the tribes were never lost. Anna was "of the tribe of Asher" (Luke 2:36), and Paul spoke of "our twelve tribes" (Acts 26:7). The apostles also refused to put Gentile Christians under the Law (Acts 15:10, 28-29), and Paul told them, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free" (Gal. 5:1).

Messianic Jews, Jewish believers who keep their own customs, aren't part of this split. Paul lived as a Jew among Jews (1 Cor. 9:20). The road splits only when Gentiles are told the Law binds them, or that they're Israel in disguise.

Split six: how the ages end

This last road runs right beside this series for a long way. **Christian universalism** reads *aionios* as "age-lasting," as this series does. It reads the punishment of Matthew 25:46 as corrective, as this series does. And it doesn't treat the lake of fire as a literal place of flames. Then it reaches a conclusion this series doesn't: in the end, every person who ever lived will be brought to God.

Here's where the roads part. In this series' reading, Matthew 25 is about living people at the start of the kingdom. It isn't about the unsaved dead at all. Those dead stand before God after the thousand years, and "anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). That's the second death.

When the ages end, death itself is destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). If the second death were a kind of dying, it would end then too. It doesn't. John says it goes on "forever and ever [unto the ages of the ages]" (Rev. 20:10). **The second death is separation from God, and separation is a state a person stays in.**

The turning point is in this life:

> "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27)

God truly wants all people saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and Christ's provision covers the whole world (1 John 2:2). But a gift is received by believing, and the one who never believes never came to salvation in the first place.

What this is not

This is not saying these groups are outside the faith. Most of the people in Part Two confess the same God and the same Christ. The paper weighs teaching about timing, Israel, and the end, and God knows His own.

This is not saying the shared words are wrong. Overcomers, sons, rewards, reigning, Israel's promises, "age-lasting": this series uses every one of them on purpose. The question is when Scripture places each thing and who it gives it to.

This is not a reason to stop expecting God to act. He still heals, answers prayer, and works in power. The series only asks what He promised for now and what He promised for later.

Why this matters

Every road in Part Two turns by moving something out of its place. The reward gets moved from that Day into this life. The reign gets moved from the King's coming into the Church's hands. Israel's earthly promises get handed to Gentiles. And the turning point of a person's life gets moved past death.

These are exactly the places a reader of this series could be confused, because they're the places these movements borrow its words. Knowing the words won't tell them apart. Knowing **when** and **to whom** Scripture gives each thing will.

Same words. Check the dictionary.

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.