

Chapter Two

Many Fishermen

Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, "As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt," but "As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them." For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers. / Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. (Jer 16:14–16)

1.

Those fishermen with their wasp-waist Langley spinning reels would stand, their backs to the rain and wind, their rods pressed against their left sides as they rebaited hooks, pulling off the white membranes left from the previous chunk of roe. They talked not about the weather or the fish, but about someone they knew who, after being caught in the bight of the hay-line, had his scalp sewn back down with black sewing thread and a curved upholstery needle some year during the Depression when the fellow couldn't afford a doctor visit. The story wasn't told to me, but to another fellow who then began a story about a fellow in a Five Rivers logging camp who had his belly sewn up in a similar manner with regular cotton sewing thread. But the message was for me and was clear: I should consider myself lucky that I lived then, in 1959, not a quarter of a century earlier when life was really tough in America.

I understood indirectness. Perhaps I understood because of an audio dysfunction that forces me to listen carefully to what is actually being said if a stream of sound is to be words, not merely noise; for I have to roll sound around and around until it drops into the template of a word, which then allows me to decipher other words contained within the same stream of sound.

I really didn't think about how hard Mom had it, didn't think about how much easier my life was at the end of Eisenhower's administration than hers when she was a teenager (Dad graduated from high school in 1932, Mom in 1941). Rather, my thoughts were less complicated: if I didn't want macaroni for dinner, either my younger brother Ben or I had better catch something—and Ben caught more searun cutthroats than anyone else fishing the river, but he worked at catching them probably harder than anyone else.

For decades I listened carefully to an hour and a half sermon each Sabbath, sermons that were sometimes boring, sometimes inspirational, usually educational, sometimes entertaining, but always filled with Scripture citations that I looked up, requiring me to become familiar with both the Old and New Testaments. Notes were taken. And if certain assumptions were maintained, what was being taught was logically consistent. Only after being called to reread prophecy did I realize that the assumptions were flawed: Scripture is not to be sliced thin and reassembled line upon line, precept upon precept, but rather, Scripture is to be read as a story, with the story forming the shadow and type of a spiritual reality, making Scripture itself the shadow and copy of the Book of Life in which disciples are epistles from Christ (2 Cor 3:2–3).

For Jesus to move to Capernaum to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy—"In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations" (Isa 9:1)—Jesus understood indirection and used it to conceal what could be seen and heard if hearts had not grown dull and senses diminished by disobedience. The hidden things of God were concealed by indirection: *He made glorious the way of the sea, which will also make glorious the ways of a fisherman*. And what are the ways of the sea? What are the ways of a fisherman? To trap and to deceive; to lay a seine lead, set a hook, purse the seine? To gill with cords ... are men caught the way fish are caught? They are not. When Jesus told Simon (Peter) and Andrew to follow Him and He would make them fishers of men, His implication was that men could be symbolically caught by casting nets, but that is not true for the Father must draw a person from this world. Neither Jesus nor His disciples could catch men who were not drawn by the Father. Until the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh, every person who is called as one of the firstfruits will be individually drawn from this world by the Father (John 6:44; 65). No one comes to Jesus unless the Father gives to the person a second breath of life, the earnest of His breath [πνεῦμα θεοῦ]. No person can choose to be a disciple unless the person is first drawn by the Father and called by Christ Jesus. Thus, a person being drawn by the Father through receipt of the earnest of the spirit equates to a fish following a seine lead.

Decision theology is inherently flawed: no person not drawn by the Father can come to Christ. Oh, a person not drawn can proclaim that he or she is a Christian and can attend services for a lifetime, becoming a better person and outwardly manifesting love for Jesus and neighbor, but this person will not enter into the Father's and the Son's rest or presence as one of the firstfruits. The person doesn't have eternal life, the gift of God received when the Father gives a person a second breath of life. It is the Father that raises the dead (John 5:21), with the dead including physically living human beings who have not been born of spirit. Jesus, when judgments are revealed, will or will not cause the mortal flesh of the person whom the Father has made spiritually alive to put on immortality. Thus, the disciple born of spirit is not the tent of flesh in which this son of God dwells, but is the inner new creature made alive when the Father drew the person from this world by giving to the person the earnest of His spirit. So the person who

claims to be a Christian but who has not been drawn plays “pretend,” hoping that no one notices that he or she doesn’t keep the commandments. And as long as this person fellowships with others who are also playing “pretend,” the person and the others deceive themselves into thinking they have been born of spirit ... the Apostle Paul tells a person how he or she can know if the person has been born of spirit: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot” (Rom 8:7). And the question must be asked, *Does the Christian who refuses to keep the Sabbath but attempts to enter into God’s rest on the following day as Israel attempted to do in the wilderness (Num 14:40–41) submit to God’s law?*

Jesus said that “whoever hears my word and believes the one who sent me has eternal life” (John 5:24). He also said, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Thus, to know the Father and to know Jesus is to hear and believe Jesus’ words; for Jesus only spoke the words of the Father. And what are the words of Jesus: again, “Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of the commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19). No wonder John said that by whether a person keeps the commandments a disciple can discern whether the person has been born of God or is the devil’s seed.

But does a person drawn by the Father immediately begin to keep the commandments, whether perfectly or imperfectly? ... There is an apparent disconnect between harvesting a fish, which means killing the fish, and harvesting a man: to fish for men does not mean to kill men. Yet baptism equates to real death (i.e., the death of the old self or old nature or old man). Judgment follows death (Heb 9:27). Peter writes that “it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (1 Pet 4:17); so if judgment is now on the household of God, then this household has “died” and only lives through being reborn or born again or born anew. Hence, the fishing process, regardless of techniques, that begins with the Father drawing the person from this world is completed when the person is baptized.

- Fishing for men as opposed to fishing for salmon under Red Bridge is a matter of “catching” those individuals who have been already “hooked” by the Father drawing the person from this world.
- As an adult angler will “hook” a fish and hand the rod to his son or daughter to play and land the fish, disciples “fish” for men as the son or daughter plays and lands a fish the adult angler hooked.

Why would there be a need to catch those who are already caught—if they are already caught?

If a person can be likened to a fish, and if the Father drawing a person from this world can be likened to a seine lead limiting potential paths of travel and thus directing the fish into the hook of the seine, then the task of evangelists and apostles is to “trap” potential disciples through teaching and explication of Scripture so that these new Christians can be pursued in the seine and brailed

aboard a tender where they are kept in iced brine until they are headed, gilled and gutted in baptism.

- Fish die by suffocation when taken from the water.
 1. Likewise, crucifixion kills by suffocation; thus, the old self that was crucified with Jesus (Rom 6:6) “died” as Jesus died and as fish die.

- In a pursed seine or when hooked on a lure, a fish flops around as it fights its mostly inevitable death.
 1. Likewise, human beings who have been born anew through receiving the earnest of the spirit but who have not yet been baptized, will run wildly here and there, cartwheel, jump, flop around before eventually tiring of fighting the pricks.
 2. Catching men begins after the Father has “hooked” them and continues until they are baptized; thus the one who fishes for men doesn’t “hook” them but “plays” them until they tire of fighting the pricks.

If the one who teaches doesn’t hook a new Christian but plays the convert until he or she tires and submits to baptism, an unusual way of expressing a reality pastors know all too well, then there are two distinct aspects to discipleship and to pastoring: the first aspect is pre-baptism instruction that will have the genuine teacher leading the covert from Babylon (i.e., the kingdom of this world) to Judea (Sabbath observance) in a spiritual journey of faith comparable to the patriarch Abraham’s geographical journey from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan. Often this journey involves running as a steelhead runs when hooked, running from one end of the hole to the other so quickly that the line doesn’t keep up.

The disciples of Christ Jesus are called to be fishers of men; they are called to lead disciples to spiritual Judea. They are not to abandon converts to wolves or false ministers or the traditions of demons, no matter how much fighting and flopping around the disciple does. Jesus said,

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. *Yours they were, and you gave them to me*, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. *I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of*

destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:6–12
emphasis added)

We are to do as Jesus did in making sure no one truly born of spirit is lost, with Jesus overseeing our actions as an elder brother oversees a task given to a younger sibling. And in devoting ourselves to making sure none are lost, we are not to pray for the world but for those whom the Father has drawn from this world ... Americans are regularly asked to pray for American troops overseas, or for women being victimized at abortion clinics, or for the healing of communities after riots or natural disasters, but Jesus, shortly before He was taken to be crucified, said He wasn't praying for the world but for His and the Father's own. And if Jesus wasn't praying for the world just before He was taken, when is the proper occasion for a disciple to pray for the world?

If a teacher of Israel will have to "play" a convert as a fisherman plays a salmon, this teacher has no time to worry about what the world does.

2.

Fighting Chinook on light line and trout-weight rods was hard work ... those fishermen with their stories of the Depression fished 16-pound test pink Scotch line on their Langley spinning reels. They didn't buy quarter pound spools of bulk monofilament, spools that sold for 89 cents on sale, the line that Ben and I could afford. They said the bulk monofilament was uneven in diameter, frayed too easy, and wasn't worth the money—but they had money to load their spools with pink Scotch line at two and three dollars a spool-full. I didn't. Rather, I was one of those who contributed to the litter of line wrapped around bushes as I stripped off frayed and stretched line every few days, leaving the line laying on the rocks under the bridge where it would be washed downstream to tangle around tree roots; for the bulk line really wasn't very good. It was only cheap.

Because Ben and I fished with cheap 10 or 12 pound test line, we had to take it easy whenever we hooked a Chinook weighing more than fifteen pounds. We couldn't put enough pressure on a hen sulking in deep water to keep her moving so we had to throw rocks at her to make her run so she would tire herself. Oh, we knew about tapping the rod and snapping the line, but those things don't really work when a big hen truly wants to rest. But a rock near her does work—

In late October 1959, Ben hooked a big hen Chinook when we were about out of eggs for bait. We wanted the fish, thought we needed the fish, but in her thrashing around, she threw the hook. But as luck would have it, the hook caught Ben's line and lassoed the hen around her middle ... he lost leverage as well as control of her head, but he still had hold of her and we still had a chance to land her.

Ben's rod was soft. It was made from a seven foot trout blank added (via a metal ferrule) to the butt section of a broken rod, making for a long mushy rod too soft to cast a four-ounce pyramid weight which he once tried to do while fishing flounder at Pacific City. Today, Ben's pole would be considered a noodle rod—and anyone who has tried to land a 43 pound Chinook with a steelhead

noodle rod will understand the problems Ben faced before the hook was thrown, resulting in the hen being lassoed.

I'm sixteen months older than Ben and was two years ahead of him in school. When he hooked this hen, I was still twelve, Ben eleven. While I was large for my size (I was already six feet tall and 205 pounds), Ben hadn't yet started to grow tall or fill out; so his rod seemed disproportionately long and the Chinook seemed almost as big as he was ... she was more fish than he could handle, but for the first hour he wasn't willing to hand off his rod.

Ben hooked the hen after school: we both rode the bus and didn't get home much before dark—it was dark before he was ready to hand off his rod.

Someone pulled across the bridge and jockeyed his car to where its headlights partially shone under the bridge.

Finally, Ben asked, "Do you want to fight her for a while?"

Mike O'Malley, on his way home, saw the headlights and joined us under the bridge; so while I kept pressure on the hen, Ben and Mike scrounged fist-sized and bigger stones to throw to keep the hen moving.

After a second hour, the hen tired. Mom got worried about us and came down to see where we were and why we weren't home. She got one glimpse of the hen and said she would be back if we were not home in another hour. And I was careful with the hen for after two hours, I didn't want her to break off from putting too much pressure on her ... I think Ben was worried about the same thing, for he asked to take back over. And Mike and I threw ever larger stones as the hen tired and didn't want to move, with some of the stones larger than a basketball, these stones dropped from the deck of the bridge into the darkness.

If the pastor who teaches doesn't hook a new Christian but plays the convert as we were playing the hen, what's to be done when the convert sulks in deep water, or simply doesn't want to be part of any Christian fellowship? The pastor cannot stone the convert.

The Apostle Paul writes,

Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it [election] depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ... You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory? (Rom 9:14–16, 19–23)

The new convert is of the same lump of clay as every other convert, but one newly born son of God is sculpted into a vessel for honored usage, and another

newly born son of God is sculpted into a vessel of wrath to be endured for a season so that all of Scripture will be fulfilled as Judas Iscariot was called to be the son of destruction that Scripture might be fulfilled (John 17:12). Yes, that is what Jesus said shortly before He was taken: Judas Iscariot was given to Him by the Father so that Scripture might be fulfilled, which now necessitates that some converts are called to fall away, betray one another, hate one another, be false prophets, or have their love wax cold (Matt 24:10–12) ... can that be right? God is love. How is it love to draw a person from this world and make the person into a spiritual vessel intended for dishonorable use? Or is it that the son of God on his day of salvation chooses death when life or death is placed before the infant son of God as life or death were placed before the children of Israel on the plains of Moab (Deut chap 29–32, specifically 30:15–20)?

Most Christians couldn't find the second covenant in their Bibles if they looked for a school year.

Jesus told Jews seeking to kill Him, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. *But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?*” (John 5:45–47 emphasis added).

Where is Moses Israel's accuser?

When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, “Take this Book of the Law [Deuteronomy] and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord. How much more after my death!” (Deut 31:24–27)

The Book of Deuteronomy stands as the accuser of Israel, whom Moses said was rebellious against the Lord ... is that not accusing Israel of rebellion?

The question now must be asked, *Who is Israel?* And the Apostle Paul answers this question:

For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. *For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.* His praise is not from man but from God. (Rom 2:25–29 emphasis added)

Moses is Israel's accuser, and Israel is now a nation circumcised of heart; Israel is the Christian Church. And Moses stands as every Christian's accuser ...

but Christians are not under the law but under grace, or so Paul says in Romans 6:14. The Christian needs to continue reading. Paul adds, “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (*vv.* 15–16).

If a Christian sins, the Christian makes him or herself a slave to sin, thereby again giving sin dominion over the Christian and placing the person under the law even if the person had not been under the law before. So yes, indeed, Moses is the accuser of Israel, and by extension the accuser of every Christian. And on the testimony of two witnesses a person stands condemned. Moses is one witness and the person is the other witness, for the person knows what he or she has done—as does Christ Jesus. But Jesus will not have to accuse anyone of wrongdoing, for Moses and the person will do this accusing for Him.

Some of those rocks Mike and I dropped into the river seemed to explode when they hit the water. Even at a depth of twenty feet, the hen had to move to get out of the way. But even before the hen tired, she didn’t move as fast as lawless Christian pastors move to reassure parishioners they don’t have to keep the law, that the law has been abolished despite Jesus saying, “Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets” (Matt 5:17).

What did Jesus mean when He said not to think that He came to abolish the Law?

All of this goes back to the second covenant, as opposed to the new covenant (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:8–12), which, if you would have been looking up Scripture citations, you would have read by now.

Moses, Israel’s accuser, records, “These are the words of the covenant that the Lord [*YHWH*] commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb [*Sinai*]” (Deut 29:1) ... if this covenant is in addition to the covenant made at Mount Sinai, is this not a second covenant made with the children of Israel who were mixed, circumcised and uncircumcised? (The children born in the wilderness were not circumcised until after they crossed the Jordan and entered into God’s rest — Josh 5:2–7 — and the land of Canaan is called “God’s rest” by the Psalmist in 95:10–11.)

The Apostle Paul calls the Moab covenant “the righteousness based on faith” (Rom 10:6), and he goes on to cite this second covenant as the passages were understood from the Septuagint (*cf.* Rom 10:6–8; Deut 30:11–14).

- The Israelite who, when in a far land, returned to the Lord (Deut 30:1–2) did so in an act of faith analogous to a Gentile, a dweller of far lands, turning to the Lord;
- Thus, implementation of the covenant made in the land of Moab is dependent upon an act of faith undertaken by the Israelite.

The person who grew up in a household that did not keep the commandments—regardless of whether this household identifies itself as Christian, Muslim, or of no faith at all—spiritually dwells in a mental landscape

far from heavenly Jerusalem ... Sir Philip Sidney observed that the person who enters a theater and sees a sign above the stage identifying the location as Thebes doesn't really believe he (or she) has entered Thebes, but suspends disbelief and goes along with the ruse, and pretends that the stage is in Thebes. The *Christian* who attends church on Sunday is as Sir Philip's theatergoer, only he or she really believes that the *Christian* comes before God, a nonsensical notion considering what Paul, Peter, John, and Jesus said about keeping the commandments, with the one who keeps the commandments and teaches others to do likewise being called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Again, the Psalmist identifies the land of Canaan as God's rest for the physical children of Israel. The nation of Israel that left Egypt, with the exception of Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh (of Esau), could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief (Heb 3:19). Moses entered into God's rest when he was atop Mount Sinai (Ex 33:14); so entering into God's rest is a euphemism for entering into His presence. And the males of Israel numbered in the census of the second year, with two exceptions, did not enter into God's rest or His presence because of unbelief that manifested itself as rebellion in the wilderness of Paran (Num chap 14).

The Rock that Christendom dropped is Christ Jesus, for the two exceptions (the two who entered God's presence) were Joshua, born as Hoshea (Num 13:8), his name changed by Moses, and Caleb, a proselyte who had a different spirit about him (Num 14:24). ... For those disciples trapped in the Sacred Names heresy, listen up! When the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she had found favor with God, that she would bear a son, Gabriel also told her that she "shall call his name Jesus [Ἰησοῦς]" (Luke 1:31), the direct Greek translation of the Hebrew יְהוֹשֻׁעַ or Joshua [see Acts 7:45], about whom Peter said that in no name other than Jesus Christ the Nazarene [Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου] could men be saved (Acts 4:10–12). For Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders of Israel. He is the stone dropped from Christian fellowships, for where is the Christian pastor who teaches his or her parishioners to walk as Jesus, an observant Jew, walked (1 John 2:6)?

Moses only gets Israel to the plains of Moab, where the second covenant is placed before the mixed nation of outwardly circumcised and uncircumcised Israelites, with the Lord telling Israel to choose life (Deut 30:19–20) and to follow Joshua/Jesus into God's rest; for of the entire nation that left Egypt, analogous to sin, only those who walk as Jesus walked and who have about them a different spirit as Caleb had about him will enter into God's presence.

The Lord has called heaven and earth to witness against Israel (again, Deut 30:19), and He has made the Book of Deuteronomy, Paul's *righteousness based on faith* or *law of faith* (Rom 3:27), a witness against Israel (Deut 31:26) thus making Moses Israel's accuser (John 5:45) — and Paul has declared that since the giving of the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples (John 20:22), thereby bestowing on disciples the power to forgive sin or withhold forgiveness, "Israel" is no longer the natural nation, but the nation that has descended from the son of promise (Rom 9:7; Gal 3:29) and is therefore spiritual

Isaac (Gal 4:21–31). Therefore, the Christian Church has “replaced” [yes, so-called *Replacement Theory* has a sound Scriptural basis] the natural nation of Israel as the *Israel* of Scripture, with the natural nation still loved by the Lord for the sake of their ancestors (Rom 11:28).

If the Christian Church is the Israel of endtime prophecies—and it is—then it is about the Church that the prophet Jeremiah records,

Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, “As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,” but “As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.” For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers. (16:14–15)

And,

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.” / Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when they shall no longer say, “As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,” but “As the Lord lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.” Then they shall dwell in their own land. (23:5–8)

Which days are coming first, the Lord raising up for David a righteous branch who will reign as king over Israel, or recovering Israel from the North Country?

The Righteous Branch is Christ Jesus, but this Righteous Branch cannot effectively rule over natural Israel until this house of Israel is saved from physical danger and Israel dwells securely (Isa 14:1–3); thus, the offspring of Israel must be led out of the North Country before the Righteous Branch that is the glorified Jesus rules over the natural nation. However, Paul says that Israel is now a spiritual nation (i.e., a nation circumcised of heart), and if Israel is a spiritual nation, then salvation is from death, with Assyria representing *death*. And the Lord already rules over Israel.

The prophet Jeremiah records more of what the Lord says (the citation beginning the chapter):

Behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them [the people of Israel]. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes. But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses

of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations. (16:16–18)

Before the Lord sends for fishermen to catch the people of Israel, the Lord will doubly repay Israel for its lawlessness ... what does it mean to “doubly repay” Israel if the wages for sin is death (Rom 6:23)? Is this a reference to Israel being condemned to a second death, known in Scripture as the lake of fire? Or is this a reference to both the spiritual nation of Israel and the physical nation being condemned to death for their lawlessness?

Doubly repaying Israel the death penalty for sin would seem to be condemning Israel to the second death, meaning that Israel must first receive a second birth or a second breath of life. One death is enough to end one life. The second death takes away the second breath of life [i.e., πνεῦμα θεοῦ] that a person receives when born again. Thus, Jeremiah’s prophecy only pertains to the Israel that has been born of spirit; Jeremiah’s prophecy only pertains to the Church. And the Lord will send for fishers to catch newly born sons of God who have been drawn from this world as Ben was attempting to draw the hen Chinook from the deep waters under Red Bridge.

Another forty minutes passed before Ben, to a gathering crowd on the bridge, brought the hen close enough to the surface that one of the men under the bridge with us could gaff her. The fellow grabbed Ben’s hook, popped the line as if it were cotton thread, and threw his hook into the water before anyone could see that the hen had been lassoed. I suspect the fellow, in the shadowy darkness, thought that the hen had been snagged so he got rid of the evidence before the hook was seen by others in case an undercover officer was present. But the hen had been initially fair-hooked ... it should have been released, but I don’t think anyone expected a kid Ben’s age to release a salmon he had fought for nearly three hours.

But the time Ben and I climbed the embankment and reached the road, Mom had returned. She gave us a ride home. She seemed proud of Ben for having stayed with the fight for as long as he had ...

How long should a teacher of Israel stay with a newly drawn disciple, shepherding this convert through the wilderness of sin until the infant son of God enters into Sabbath observance, the outward sign of spiritually having entered into God’s presence? How many questions should be answered? Or should the teacher of Israel do as the splintered slivers of the former Worldwide Church of God do, set before the infant son of God a series of hoops through which the convert must jump before the convert can attend Sabbath services ... I have never had that kind of control of either a steelhead or a salmon. Even a watermarked humpy runs where it wants for a few moments. However, I have seen Kodiak cannery workers, using rod and reels appropriate for halibut, jerk 10-pound silvers from of the mouth of the Pasagsak River as if the salmon were planted trout.

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