

## Foundations of Faith (A Catechism for Today)

Sunday 11 – March 12

### Question 29: Did God break the covenant with Israel?

No. Though grieved and angered by the people's sin, God continued to love Israel and remained faithful to the covenant. In grace and patience, God gave kings to rule in justice, priests to offer atoning sacrifices and prophets to proclaim God's Word. The people were called to repent and to return to God.

Isa 65:1-2 I said, "Here I am, here I am," to a nation that did not call on my name, I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.

Hos 11 2-3 The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and offering incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms...I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.

Ezek 16:59-60 Yes, thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant.

Hos 14:1 Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Ezek 14:6, 18:30-32

6 "Therefore, tell the people of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent and turn away from your idols, and stop all your detestable sins.

30 "Therefore, I will judge each of you, O people of Israel, according to your actions, says the Sovereign LORD . Repent, and turn from your sins. Don't let them destroy you! 31 Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O people of Israel? 32 I don't want you to die, says the Sovereign LORD . Turn back and live!

Isa 44:22

22 I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free."

Jer 3:11-14, 21-22

11 Then the LORD said to me, "Even faithless Israel is less guilty than treacherous Judah! 12 Therefore, go and give this message to Israel. This is what the LORD says: "O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever. 13 Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the LORD your God and committed adultery against him by worshiping idols under every green tree. Confess that you refused to listen to my voice. I, the LORD, have spoken! 14 "Return home, you wayward children," says the LORD, "for I am your master. I will bring you back to the land of Israel — one from this town and two from that family— from wherever you are scattered.

21 Voices are heard high on the windswept mountains, the weeping and pleading of Israel's people. For they have chosen crooked paths and have forgotten the LORD their God. 22 "My wayward

children,” says the LORD, “come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts.” “Yes, we’re coming,” the people reply, “for you are the LORD our God.

### **Question 30: Did the people turn back to God?**

No. They continued to break the covenant and the law. The people hardened their hearts to the message of the prophets, rejected their summons and even acted violently against them. In a severe judgment, God handed them over to enemies who devastated the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and took many of the people into exile in a foreign land.

Jer 7:25-26 From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks.

2 Chr 36:15-16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord against his people became so great that there was no remedy.

Ex 33:3,5

3 Go up to this land that flows with milk and honey. But I will not travel among you, for you are a stubborn and rebellious people. If I did, I would surely destroy you along the way.” ... 5 For the LORD had told Moses to tell them, “You are a stubborn and rebellious people. If I were to travel with you for even a moment, I would destroy you. Remove your jewelry and fine clothes while I decide what to do with you.”

2 Chron 24:19

19 Yet the LORD sent prophets to bring them back to him. The prophets warned them, but still the people would not listen.

Isa 63:10

10 But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he became their enemy and fought against them.

Jer 9:7-11, 25:4-14, 44:4-6

7 Therefore, this is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says: “See, I will melt them down in a crucible and test them like metal. What else can I do with my people? 8 For their tongues shoot lies like poisoned arrows. They speak friendly words to their neighbors while scheming in their heart to kill them. 9 Should I not punish them for this?” says the LORD . “Should I not avenge myself against such a nation?” 10 I will weep for the mountains and wail for the wilderness pastures. For they are desolate and empty of life; the lowing of cattle is heard no more; the birds and wild animals have all fled. 11 “I will make Jerusalem into a heap of ruins,” says the LORD . “It will be a place haunted by jackals. The towns of Judah will be ghost towns, with no one living in them.”

4 “Again and again the LORD has sent you his servants, the prophets, but you have not listened or even paid attention. 5 Each time the message was this: ‘Turn from the evil road you are traveling and from the evil things you are doing. Only then will I let you live in this land that the LORD gave to you and your ancestors forever. 6 Do not provoke my anger by worshiping idols you made with your own hands. Then I will not harm you.’ 7 “But you would not listen to me,” says the LORD . “You made me furious by worshiping idols you made with your own hands, bringing on yourselves all the disasters you now suffer. 8 And now the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says: Because you have not listened to me,

9 I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever. 10 I will take away your happy singing and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard. Your millstones will fall silent, and the lights in your homes will go out. 11 This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. 12 “Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins,” says the LORD. “I will make the country of the Babylonians a wasteland forever. 13 I will bring upon them all the terrors I have promised in this book—all the penalties announced by Jeremiah against the nations. 14 Many nations and great kings will enslave the Babylonians, just as they enslaved my people. I will punish them in proportion to the suffering they cause my people.”

4 “Again and again I sent my servants, the prophets, to plead with them, ‘Don’t do these horrible things that I hate so much.’ 5 But my people would not listen or turn back from their wicked ways. They kept on burning incense to these gods. 6 And so my fury boiled over and fell like fire on the towns of Judah and into the streets of Jerusalem, and they are still a desolate ruin today.

#### Ezek 20:8-21

8 “But they rebelled against me and would not listen. They did not get rid of the vile images they were obsessed with, or forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I threatened to pour out my fury on them to satisfy my anger while they were still in Egypt. 9 But I didn’t do it, for I acted to protect the honor of my name. I would not allow shame to be brought on my name among the surrounding nations who saw me reveal myself by bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. 10 So I brought them out of Egypt and led them into the wilderness. 11 There I gave them my decrees and regulations so they could find life by keeping them. 12 And I gave them my Sabbath days of rest as a sign between them and me. It was to remind them that I am the LORD, who had set them apart to be holy. 13 “But the people of Israel rebelled against me, and they refused to obey my decrees there in the wilderness. They wouldn’t obey my regulations even though obedience would have given them life. They also violated my Sabbath days. So I threatened to pour out my fury on them, and I made plans to utterly consume them in the wilderness. 14 But again I held back in order to protect the honor of my name before the nations who had seen my power in bringing Israel out of Egypt. 15 But I took a solemn oath against them in the wilderness. I swore I would not bring them into the land I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful place on earth. 16 For they had rejected my regulations, refused to follow my decrees, and violated my Sabbath days. Their hearts were given to their idols. 17 Nevertheless, I took pity on them and held back from destroying them in the wilderness. 18 “Then I warned their children not to follow in their parents’ footsteps, defiling themselves with their idols. 19 ‘I am the LORD your God,’ I told them. ‘Follow my decrees, pay attention to my regulations, 20 and keep my Sabbath days holy, for they are a sign to remind you that I am the LORD your God.’ 21 “But their children, too, rebelled against me. They refused to keep my decrees and follow my regulations, even though obedience would have given them life. And they also violated my Sabbath days. So again I threatened to pour out my fury on them in the wilderness.

#### Acts 7:51-53

51 “You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and so do you! 52 Name one prophet your ancestors didn’t persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. 53 You deliberately disobeyed God’s law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.”

### Question 31: How then did God keep covenant with Israel?

God sent prophets to them announcing a message of comfort and hope, a promise of return and reconciliation. Jeremiah proclaimed the hope of a new covenant where the law would be written on people's hearts. Isaiah spoke of a Servant of the Lord who would free the captives and suffer for their sins. Ezekiel prophesied that Israel would be resettled on its own soil; God's Spirit would dwell in their hearts and they would know that God is God.

Isa 40:1-2 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Jer 31:31-33 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant...this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days. ...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

Isa 42:1-2, 49:1-6, 52:13-53:12, 65:17-25, 66:12-13

1 "Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or raise his voice in public.

1 Listen to me, all you in distant lands! Pay attention, you who are far away! The LORD called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name. 2 He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword. He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand. I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver. 3 He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory." 4 I replied, "But my work seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose. Yet I leave it all in the LORD's hand; I will trust God for my reward." 5 And now the LORD speaks—the one who formed me in my mother's womb to be his servant, who commissioned me to bring Israel back to him. The LORD has honored me, and my God has given me strength. 6 He says, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

13 See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. 14 But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. 15 And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about....

1 Who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm? 2 My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. 3 He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. 4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! 5 But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. 6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all. 7 He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. 8 Unjustly

condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. 9 He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave. 10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands. 11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. 12 I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

17 "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. 18 Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. 20 "No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young! 21 In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. 22 Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. 23 They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the LORD, and their children, too, will be blessed. 24 I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! 25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

12 This is what the LORD says: "I will give Jerusalem a river of peace and prosperity. The wealth of the nations will flow to her. Her children will be nursed at her breasts, carried in her arms, and held on her lap. 13 I will comfort you there in Jerusalem as a mother comforts her child."

Ezek 36:8-11, 24-27, 37:1-14

8 "But the mountains of Israel will produce heavy crops of fruit for my people—for they will be coming home again soon! 9 See, I care about you, and I will pay attention to you. Your ground will be plowed and your crops planted. 10 I will greatly increase the population of Israel, and the ruined cities will be rebuilt and filled with people. 11 I will increase not only the people, but also your animals. O mountains of Israel, I will bring people to live on you once again. I will make you even more prosperous than you were before. Then you will know that I am the LORD ... 24 For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.

1 The LORD took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the LORD to a valley filled with bones. 2 He led me all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. 3 Then he asked me, "Son of man, can these bones become living people again?" "O Sovereign LORD," I replied, "you alone know the answer to that." 4 Then he said to me, "Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the LORD ! 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! 6 I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with

skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD .”

7 So I spoke this message, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons. 8 Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, “Speak a prophetic message to the winds, son of man. Speak a prophetic message and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.’” 10 So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army. 11 Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, ‘We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone. Our nation is finished.’ 12 Therefore, prophesy to them and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the LORD . 14 I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the LORD has spoken!’”