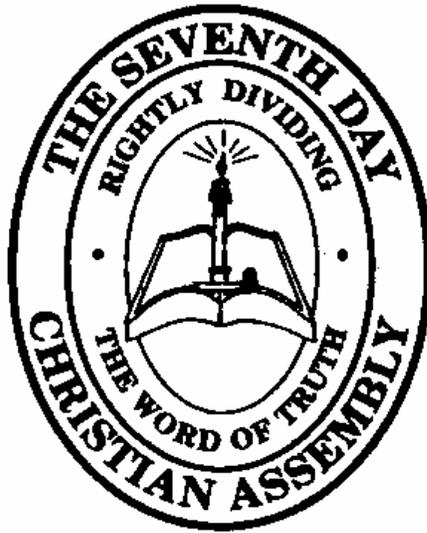


*Rightly Dividing*

THE  
WORD OF TRUTH

*Bible Study Course*

Lesson Five:  
The Lord of the Covenants (II)



*W*e have seen that he has been given a ministry of a far higher order, and to the same degree it is a better covenant of which He is the mediator, founded on better promises. If that first covenant had been without fault, there would have been no need for a second one to replace it. (Hebrews 8:6, 7: The Jerusalem Bible)

*H*e brings a new covenant, as the mediator, only so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance may actually receive what was promised: His death took place to cancel the sins that infringed the earlier covenant. (Hebrews 9:15; The Jerusalem Bible)

an open letter from

## The Pastor

In the last lesson, there is a statement that the tribe of Joseph would be made a *multitude* (v. 4; Hebrew = *melow* > “a mass; a great body of people”). Ephraim (the younger son of Joseph) and Manasseh (the older son of Joseph) were *both* to grow into an *assembled multitude* (v. 16; Hebrew = *qahal* > “a company of nations”). The Hebrew term indicates that they would be fellows, companions, associates. Ephraim was to become a *multitude of nations* (v. 19; Hebrew = *rob* > “a multitude of nations, an abundance, a great number”). Manasseh would *also* become *great* (v. 19; Hebrew = *gadal* > “strong like a twisted cord; great in importance as in being most imminent or important; to be made to grow large”), but Ephraim would become *greater*.

You should be able to see in these verses that the word translated as *multitude(s)* is not the same Hebrew word throughout and has shades of meaning to which we should pay attention. With that in mind, I find the translation of v. 19 in *The Anchor Bible* very interesting: “[Manasseh] too shall become a *tribe*, and he too shall be *great*. But his younger brother [Ephraim] shall surpass him, and his offspring shall suffice for nations.” In the notes, they say that *shall suffice for nations* means: “Literally ‘shall become a quantity of (= sufficient for) nations,’ i.e., sufficient in numbers to constitute nations...” (“Genesis,” E. A. Speiser, Doubleday & Company, Inc.; 1964; pp. 356, 358; emphasis added). You can see in Revelation 7:6 that Manasseh did, indeed, become a *tribe* in Israel, along with his brother Ephraim, represented as Joseph in v. 8. Remember Genesis 48:5, 6 where Jacob (Israel) adopted the two boys as *his own sons* – even saying that any subsequent sons born to Joseph would be counted as *Joseph’s heirs* (v. 6). Ephraim and Manasseh would be *Jacob’s [Israel’s] heirs*.

Even though Jacob’s blessing set Ephraim as though he were the firstborn (a double portion), Numbers 26:34, 37 shows that Manasseh numbered 52,700, while Ephraim numbered 32,500. So, Manasseh, at first, was the more prominent of the two, but Ephraim eventually outstripped Manasseh and became the leader of the House of Israel. Remember this idea: the *younger* eventually outstrips the *older*. This notwithstanding how they might have grown

*together* as an *assembled multitude* (v. 16; Hebrew = *qahal*). When they eventually became independent tribes, Ephraim became more prominent than Manasseh. Some contend that Ephraim became a *commonwealth of nations*, while Manasseh became a *great nation*.

Now, the *important* question: Can you tell if the Hebrew term *rob* (v. 19 – “a *multitude* of nations”) suggests a *commonwealth of nations* (like Great Britain) or a *federation of states* (like the United States)? Actually, it could very well describe either. How would you identify them in our present world (surely they still exist as independent nations if God’s will and purpose are still operating today)? Would it be based on the *older* and *younger* concept? How about the *ultimate prominence* concept? Can their individual identities be made so specifically from among our modern national entities? We are going to investigate the possibilities in this lesson.

Why should this be of any major concern for modern, “New Testament” Christians? Simply put, God made promises to the “Father of Faith” Abraham that were sealed with blood, oath, and covenants that: (a) his seed would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5); (b) he and his wife (Sarah) would be the father and mother of *kings* and *nations* (Genesis 17:4-6, 15-16); (c) the covenant would be an *everlasting* covenant, and (d) the land He swore to give him would be an *everlasting possession* (Genesis 17:7, 8). Although all other aspects of the covenants were fulfilled, *actual possession of all of the land promised has not been* (Hebrews 11:8-16 – pay close attention to v. 13).

Nevertheless, Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to write: “The promises were made to Abraham and his seed. The Lord God did not say *seeds* (plural), but *seed* (singular): ‘And to your seed,’ which is Christ....If you belong to Christ, then you [also] *are Abraham’s seed*, and *heirs according to the promise*” (Galatians 3:16, 29; author’s paraphrase; emphases added). Why does Paul change the focus of the promise from *multiplicity of seed* to *singular seed*? There is a very good reason that we will study in this lesson.

Now look at Romans 8:14-17 where Paul asserts two most important ideas: (a) if you are led by the Holy Spirit, then you are a child of God (see also v. 9); and (b) if you are a child of God, then you are a

(continued on p. 18)

# The Lord of the Covenants

What does it mean to you for God to make a *promise* – then make an *oath* that He will *absolutely* bring that promise to pass *regardless* of the intervening time between the promise and its fulfillment? Read the discussion of this in Hebrews 6:10-20. Once you have read it, ask yourself how in the world so-called “Christianity” jumped ship on God’s *promise* and *oath* and began touting a *different* eternal reward for believers. Isn’t that as bad as preaching *another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit* (2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15)? Read carefully several specific ideas in Hebrews 6:10-20: (a) v. 12: “[You should be]...followers of them...who *inherit the promises*” (emphasis added); (b) vv. 17, 18: “[God swore an oath on His promise]...to show to the heirs of promise the immutability [*unchangeable nature*] of His counsel...by *two immutable things* [promise and oath], in which *it was impossible for God to lie*...” (emphasis added); and (c) vv. 18, 19: “[So] That...*we* might have a strong consolation [comfort]...to lay hold upon the *hope set before us*...which *hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast*...” (emphases added). This is *New Testament* instruction to *New Testament* Christians! Why is it so generally *ignored*? Why jump ship and begin striving to go to *heaven immediately upon one’s death*?

The objective of this lesson is to make the connection between all of God’s covenant promises and the mission of Jesus Christ. To those who teach that so much of the Old Testament has been done away with through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, it is a riddle they would rather not discuss for fear of unraveling so many centuries of their traditional teachings and making their so-called “Church Fathers” look like idiots and liars. By the time we complete this lesson, you will be able to connect the dots between the Old and New Testaments, as well as understand Paul’s firm conviction as expressed in Galatians 3:27, 29: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ....And if you are Christ’s, *then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (emphases added). Which *promise* is that? Continue studying this closely, and you will see and understand. May God bless your understanding.

## Lesson Five

### The Lord God’s Marriage to Israel

Under the last heading in Lesson Four (“The Significance of the Lord God’s Marriage to Israel”), we visited Isaiah 54:5 where the Lord God referred to Himself as Israel’s *maker* and *husband*. In this section you will learn how this “marriage” took place, its significance to the *old covenant (testament)*, and how it leads to Jesus Christ and the *new covenant (testament)*. Understand this thoroughly: *Both covenants are inextricably tied to the establishment of God’s Kingdom on the earth*. Be prepared to change your biblical paradigm and to learn wonderful truths revealed centuries ago by God.

Let’s take up with the last paragraph under the heading “**Comment**” on p. 17 of Lesson Four: “The hope of Israel was the hope of the coming of *Messiah* and the *Kingdom of God* – laid out by God from the foundation of the world by means of covenants. But, why did Jesus Christ make belief in, the expectation of, and the desire for that *Kingdom of God* incumbent upon all true Christians?” We then looked

at Exodus 19:5, 6 and read that Israel received the distinction of being God’s *peculiar treasure above all peoples on the earth* – a *Kingdom* of priests and a *holy nation*. This indicates that God was still, at that time, intent upon *creating* His own *Kingdom* on the earth. Now, let’s continue the study from this point.

1. Would you infer from this “marriage” agreement between the Lord God and Israel that other nations were *excluded* from this peculiar distinction?

**Comment:** Understand this: while this was an *exclusive* agreement between the Lord God and Israel, God *did not exclude* other nations from receiving the salvation He offers to mankind. It was His intention that the whole nation of Israel would become His very intimate partner (in effect, His “wife”) in dealing with the nations of the world regarding that salvation and His way of life – in fact, Israel was to be *His messengers and teachers*. How do we know this to be true?

2. Genesis 22:18 – In God’s covenant with Abraham, by whom would *all the nations of the earth* be blessed? Was Abraham an *Israelite*?

**Comment:** It is explicitly stated in Galatians 3:8 that: “Scripture *foresaw that God was going to justi-*

*fy the pagans*, and proclaimed the Good News [*gospel*] long ago when Abraham was told: ‘*In you all the pagans will be blessed*’” (*The Jerusalem Bible*; bold-faced italic emphasis added). Please notice that this is called “*the gospel*” and that it was to become a reality *through the seed of Abraham*. Israelites are the seed of Abraham – but Abraham was not an Israelite because Jacob (Israel) was his grandson.

The first question in Lesson 4 (p. 17, #1) was a reference to Mark 1:14, 15: “What did Jesus preach about that is called ‘the gospel’?” This is a message to *all of humanity* that God intends for them to be included in the coming Kingdom of God. The Exodus from Egypt is a “shadow” of this very thing! How so? Exodus 12:37, 38 shows that “...*a mixed multitude...*” left Egypt with the Israelites. *The Interpreter’s Bible* says: “If the *mixed multitude* is to be understood historically it most probably consisted of *non-Israelite Semitic* [the descendants of Noah’s son Shem – see Genesis 10:21-31] elements in Egypt” (“Exodus,” vol. 1, p. 926; emphasis added). You should get the idea that none before Jacob’s children were *Israelites*. It is true that they were *Hebrews* and *Shemites*, but all Hebrews and Shemites are not Israelites – in the same way that all Georgians are Americans, but not all Americans are Georgians.

This “shadow” did not have to contain at least one person from every nation of the known earth at that time. It merely had to have a *representation* of non-Israelite people. This is most probably why God instructed Moses to apply His laws *equally* to “...the *stranger* that sojourns among you” (Exodus 12:49; emphases added). This *mixed multitude* went to the promised land with Israel – more than likely converted to Israel’s religion and possibly intermarried into the Israelite nation. In that way, *they gradually became Israelites*.

3. Genesis 26:1-5 – Did God repeat this promise when the covenant was transferred from Abraham to Isaac? Why did God do that?

**Comment:** Notice that God refers to a *multiplicity of seed* in these references. It was to be the unusual distinction of this *multiplicity of seed* that they would be a *blessing* to all other nations – sometimes because of their national character, sometimes in spite of it. God repeated this promise to Isaac *because Abraham was a faithful servant of God*.

4. Genesis 17:1-8 – What did God mean when He commanded Abraham to *walk before Him and be perfect*? Was this a *necessary* part of His covenant agreement with Abraham? Would He have expected any *less* from the nation Israel after they inherited

the covenant and its promises and blessings from their father Jacob? Why/why not?

5. Genesis 28:10-15 – Does God intend for Jacob, as the inheritor of the covenant, to follow the same path as his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac?

6. Genesis 32:24-28; 35:9-12 – To what does God change Jacob’s name?

7. Genesis 48, 49 – To whom does Israel pass on the covenant? Does this covenant now follow the *Israelites* – the *multiple seed*?

8. Deuteronomy 4:1-4 – After their Exodus from Egypt, does Moses draw a distinction between those Israelites who obeyed God’s commands and those who did not? What happened to those who obeyed (v. 4)? And, those who did not?

9. Compare vv. 5-9 to Isaiah 2:1-5 – What effect was Israel’s faithfulness *supposed* to have on other nations?

**Comment:** Isaiah 2:1-5 is a prophecy about the effects of the Kingdom of God upon *the nations of the earth* once Jesus Christ and the Saints conquer them. Notice that His government will be established in Jerusalem and exalted above all other national entities. Notice also what the nations of the earth will be taught: (a) God’s ways and laws; (b) God’s way of settling national conflicts; and (c) how to have lasting peace and prosperity among themselves. Would you say that, historically speaking, so-called “Christian” nations have been successful in that regard? Sad to say, their success has been severely limited – at best. This is important for you to understand.

10. Read Jeremiah 3 and Ezekiel 16, and pay attention to the *exclusivity* involved in the covenant between God and Israel. To what did God compare Israel’s transgressions of the “marriage” covenant He had with them?

**Comment:** Transgressing the *exclusivity* involved in this covenant, by worshiping other gods and adopting pagan religious practices, amounted to *committing adultery* – punishable by *death* (see Leviticus 20:10 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) or, at least, by being put away by divorce.

11. Matthew 19:3-12 – What did Jesus tell the Pharisees about a man being allowed to divorce his wife for “every cause”?

12. Had God, in the beginning, *allowed* for the possibility for divorce? Why/why not?

**Comment:** Jesus' answer is interesting. He said that *in the beginning* God did not allow for divorce because *no one was supposed to cause the marriage relationship to be broken apart* (see Genesis 2:21-24 and Matthew 19:4-6). It was to be undergirded by *faithfulness – fidelity*. One would assume that *death* ended the marriage, not *divorce*.

13. “Why, then, did Moses *command* them to give a bill of divorcement, and put her away?”

**Comment:** E. P. Gould defines the expression “*the hardness of your hearts*” as meaning “the rude nature which belongs to a primitive civilization” (*International Critical Commentary*, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark”; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1905; p. 184). A *primitive civilization* is one that is at its beginning stage of development – more *self-taught* than having been taught by others. This would include not having been taught by God. God, according to this idea, evidently made some adjustments in the expectations contained in His higher laws because of *human weakness* – what Paul calls “winking” at mankind’s ignorance in times past (see Acts 17:30 and Psalm 103:8-10).

14. Hebrews 8:7, 8 – Did God find fault with the *people* or with the *covenant* itself?

**Comment:** Pay close attention to the answer because it plays an important part in understanding the *new covenant* we’ll discuss later.

15. Romans 7:1-4 – Does Paul say that the *death* of the marriage partner frees one to re-marry? Does this suggest that *divorce* does not free one to marry another person?

**Comment:** When God created the marriage institution, He did not intend for there to be any such thing as divorce. Human weakness, however, prompted Him to make allowances for it under specific circumstances. Paul re-visits the question in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11 as a command from Jesus Christ (remember that this is instruction to *true Christians*): If *true Christians* divorce, they are to remain *unmarried* or *be reconciled*. Why? Otherwise, they commit *adultery* against their former marriage partner. Theirs is an *exclusive* relationship that must be honored until one of them dies.

16. Matthew 19:9 – Are there *any circumstances* in which *true Christians* are allowed to divorce and re-marry?

**Comment:** This exclusion clause centers around the meaning of the term *fornication*. In all other situations, to divorce and re-marry would be adulterous, but, if one of the marriage partners commits *fornication*, the other is free to divorce and re-marry. It is not *mandatory*, but it is *permitted*. The offended party can forgive and forget; the offender can be deeply repentant and change the behavior. The *persistent, unrepentant* attitude would be a signal that forgiveness will not be warranted. Israel was persistent and unrepentant in her adultery against the Lord God.

So, what is *fornication* that it should warrant such an exclusion? The Greek term used in this scripture and in Matthew 5:31, 32 is *porneia*. This is not speaking only of sexual relations that occur before marriage. That is merely one of the wide range of meanings that *fornication* expresses. It also includes *prostitution, unchastity, and adultery*. It is descriptive of *every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse and practice*.

*Porneia* is the word from which we get the term *pornography* – which does not merely describe pictures of women showing their bare breasts. *Pornography* is *graphic* – it consists of words and images of every kind of sexual sin imaginable among humans. The pagan religions to which Israel fell prey were based on *pornographic* concepts. Committing adultery “...with their idols...” (Ezekiel 23:37; emphasis added) can very easily mean that they used idolatrous images as sex toys.

17. 2 Kings 23 – List the various parts of the pagan religious system destroyed by King Josiah.

18. Which three types of sexual behavior were used in these pagan religions?

**Comment:** They practiced all manner of sexual perversions: *homosexual* (same gender), *heterosexual* (opposite gender – outside of marriage), and *bestial* (animal). It was based on the concept that the *orgasm* spiritually united the practitioners with Ba`al and his consort Aphrodite (*aphrodisiac* – something that excites sexual desire – comes from the same word family). The orgy – unrestrained indulgence in alcohol, drugs, and sex – was the primary medium of expressing this “worship.” It was not uncommon for incest to take place – or, for abortions and infanticide to take place because of unintended pregnancies.

19. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 – Does discovering such an “uncleanness” in one’s marriage partner constitute grounds for divorce? In such cases, are both part-

ners are free to re-marry? Is *re-marriage* an option if they have married and divorced *new* partners? Would it be *fraudulent*?

**Comment:** Our modern-day, no-fault-divorce, marriage-go-round is an absolute abomination to a holy and righteous God (see Malachi 2:16)! God's longsuffering attitude toward the nation of Israel is a testimony of how He hates divorce – yet, *He* went through one when Israel (both Houses) refused to change their adulterous ways: *porneia*. (Add the book of Malachi to your reading list.)

It is probably in this context of the *exclusivity* of “marriage” that one must understand Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 as a call for Israel to be singularly faithful to her “Husband.” The Lord God demands that there are to be no other “husbands” for her because this covenant is an *exclusive* agreement. Yet, Israel chased every kind of “relationship” possible in defiance of her “Husband” (see especially Jeremiah 3:6-11, Ezekiel 16, and Hosea 8:8-14).

Suppose a marriage partner did not know about his/her mate's sordid sexual past when s/he married him/her – and would not have married him/her had s/he known. Would there be grounds for divorce if s/he ever found out? Absolutely! An example of this would be this: if a man found out that his wife had willingly had sexual relations with her father and aborted children born to them. Another example would be: if the wife found out that her husband had sexual relations with animals before they married. The *human heart* is described in Jeremiah 17:9 as being “...*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked...*” (emphasis added). That deceitful, desperately wicked heart will keep secrets and defraud others as a result. After the experience in Eden, God made allowances based on *human weaknesses*.

It is of peculiar interest that *porneia* is used to describe Israel's activities because many of the pagan cults to which she joined herself were connected with every sort of sexual debauchery! It was *double adultery: physical and spiritual*. So, the Lord God had sufficient grounds for a divorce – with the freedom to re-marry if He so chooses. We'll study into *that* idea a bit later.

## Why the Lord God Made a Separate Covenant with Israel

1. Isaiah 42:5-7 – For what reason did the Lord God enter into this *exclusive* relationship with Israel?

**Comment:** Although the Lord God set the condition that He would be Israel's only *God* – as opposed to Israel also being free to mix and mingle

with the gods of the pagan nations – He did not intend for Israel to stand as a *barrier* against the Gentile nations having access to Him and being able to learn His thoughts and ways. *Light* in this context means “enlightenment – truth; knowledge.” The Lord God intended for Israel to be that proverbial “*light on a hill*” that would teach God's truth to the world so the world would have access to the salvation and redemption He offers, as well as access to His Kingdom as citizens (see Matthew 5:13-16). This is His *gospel* – that is, His *good news* – to *whoever* believes in the Christ.

As you have read in Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16, and Hosea 8, the House of Israel became a common whore among the nations of the world who *paid her lovers* (Ezekiel 16:33, Hosea 8:9), and the Lord God *divorced* her – and that divorce certainly later included the House of Judah. (The House of Israel and the House of Judah are two components of the *Nation of Israel*. See 1 Kings 12 for a historical perspective on how the nation became divided. Also note that the books of I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles are records of the kings who reigned over each House after the division took place.)

2. Romans 10:11-21 – In regard to the salvation that God makes available through Jesus Christ, does this scripture also make it plain that it does not pertain only to *Israel*? Make note of the term *whosoever* (refer also to John 3:14-21).

3. Did Israel *obey the gospel*? Did Israel *know the gospel*? Did Israel *believe the gospel*? Why?

4. How broadly was God's *good news* spread?

5. Verses 19-21 – Who are “...them that are no people and...a foolish nation...”? What is to be done in regard to them? What did Isaiah (65:1-7) say was wrong with Israel?

6. Romans 3:3, 4 – Does Paul indicate that God would give up on the *covenant* just because of Israel's *faithlessness*?

**Comment:** Paul's reference here is to *God's oracles*, which are a witness to all of the covenants, promises, and laws He invoked in His relationships with mankind between Adam and Abraham, as well as to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel – including covenants and promises He made to people like Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh, and David. Any disobedience that occurred disqualified the offender, but it did not cancel God's oracles.

7. Based on that concept, then, would God become a *liar* if He were to do away with the covenant He originally made with Adam? Noah? Abraham? Isaac? Jacob? Israel? Now, the “kicker”: *Who is presently responsible for the maintenance of God’s covenant?* We’ll answer that a bit later.

8. Exodus 32:7-14 – Could God have maintained His covenant agreement only through the lineage of Moses? (See v. 10.)

**Comment:** It seems that the obvious answer is “yes,” but you would have to know something that happened prior to the Mt. Sinai experience before settling for that conclusion.. If you study Genesis 49 carefully, you find Jacob allotting blessings to his sons. One in particular is given to Judah (vv. 8-12): the *scepter blessing*. The scepter blessing is that of *kingship* (see Genesis 17:6, 16). Jacob says that this will be *Judah’s blessing* “...until Shiloh comes...” (v. 10; *KJV*). The *RSV* translates it like this: “...until he comes to whom it [the scepter blessing] *belongs*...” (emphasis added). Paul calls Jesus Christ “...the seed...to whom the promise was made...” (Galatians 3:19). This is important understanding.

If that *king* was to come through *Judah*, that could not happen if the Lord God were to destroy *all the tribes* except that of *Moses*; Moses was from the tribe of *Levi*, not *Judah* (see Exodus 2:1-10 regarding the tribe from which Moses came and Hebrews 8:5-17 regarding Jesus also being our high priest). But...that is not all of the problem.

The massive *territorial inheritance* (the double-portion birthright blessing) was given by Jacob to *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, of the tribe of *Joseph*. If Paul is correct by saying that “...the gifts and calling of God are *without repentance*,” that is, God doesn’t change His mind about them (Romans 11:29), then God *must make sure* that the scepter and birthright promises are delivered to those for whom they are intended – even if some stumble through human weakness and become disqualified as apostates.

9. Verses 11, 12 – Why did Moses think that it would be improper for God to carry out His threat of fulfilling His covenant only through Moses?

10. Verse 13 – Of whom did Moses remind the Lord God? Why?

**Comment:** In Genesis 17:5, the Lord God changed Abram’s name to Abraham – which means “Father of *many* nations.” How could that prophetic name be fulfilled if He only made *Moses* “a great nation” – a *single* great nation? Of course, Moses was primarily concerned about the scorn that would be

heaped upon the Lord God for destroying His own people, but destroying His people *would also negatively affect* the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

11. On the basis of remembering Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did the Lord God *repent* – that is, change His mind – about destroying all of Israel except Moses’ tribe?

**Comment:** This problem with Israel presented itself *shortly after the covenant with Israel had actually been proposed*. Moses had been in the mountain receiving laws from the Lord God. However, Moses’ reminder about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was certainly well-timed because it saved the nation of Israel from certain destruction – what would have amounted to a *death penalty*.

So, what is the actual *significance* of this “marriage”? There are some salient ideas we must consider in order to understand the entire concept revealed from Genesis to Revelation: (a) this “marriage” constituted a *Kingdom of God* (see Exodus 19:4, 5); (b) in God’s mind, “marriage” establishes an *unbreakable unity*, or *oneness* (see Genesis 2:21-24 and Matthew 19:4-6); (c) an “unequal yoke” will not work because it works against the concept of an unbreakable unity (see 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18); (d) “marriage” presupposes that any subsequent “family” will share all property and wealth, including by *inheritance*; and (e) the only thing that changes the consequences of the law regarding “marriage” is *death* (see Romans 7:1-3) – *which allows the surviving partner to marry another partner*.

After Israel agreed to enter into this “marriage” relationship with the Lord God (Exodus 19:7-9), she did not live up to the requirements – the laws the Lord God gave to Moses – set apart by the Lord God for the proper maintenance of the relationship.

12. Ezekiel 16:15 – In what or whom did Israel place her trust? Did this give the Lord God grounds for divorce? Why/why not?

13. Galatians 3:17 – Did the Lord God *cancel* His covenant with Abraham when He entered into a “marriage” covenant with Israel?

**Comment:** The significance of the “marriage” relationship is quite simple: ***While it did put Israel into a special relationship with the Lord God, it did not alter or annul any of God’s previous covenant commitments!*** Paul explains in Galatians 3:13-17 how this works: (a) Christ redeems us from the death

penalty imposed by God's law so that we can receive the promises bound up in the covenant He made with Abraham; (b) the covenant promises were made to Abraham and his *Seed* – whom Paul identifies as being Jesus Christ (perhaps this lends fuller meaning to Colossians 1:16: “For *by Him* were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; *all things were created by Him and for Him...*”; emphases added); and (c) the “marriage” covenant God made with Israel *did not, could not*, annul God's covenant with Abraham because it was based on His *promise*, not on His laws (see also vv. 26-29).

It is important to remember this as you consider the difference between the Old and New testaments. Especially since the *new* covenant is based on better promises. How is that possible?

### Marriage is a “Type” or “Shadow” of a “Good Thing to Come”

If we are to be God's people, then we have our own Exodus to make from spiritual “Egypt” – and we need to be familiar with the historical account of Israel's example *so that we do not make the same mistakes they made*. This is made explicit in Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 10: 6-28 as he begins by saying that these things were “...*our figures* [*tupos* – “shadows”] to the intent that *we should not lust after evil things after which they* [Israel] *lusted*. These things happened to them for *our types* [*tupos* – “shadows”]; and were written for *our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come*” (vv. 6, 11; emphases added). It is a *testimony* or a *witness* to us of how God thinks and acts – His behavioral requirements for our deliverance and the certainty of His judgment against trespassers. If He divorced Israel for her unfaithfulness, He most certainly will exclude anyone else who proves to be so incessantly and repeatedly unfaithful and unrepentant (see Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26). *That* is quite significant! But, how does it relate to the mission of Jesus Christ? Let's see and understand.

1. Colossians 2:16, 17 – What do God's instructions about foods, drinks, and days of worship and celebration represent?

**Comment:** The Colossian heresy that Paul addressed in this letter had nothing to do with doing away with *God's laws* about food, drink, and holy days. Verses 20-23 make it plain that he is addressing “...commandments and doctrines *of men...*” that

are part of “...a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body...” All of this is a product of *this world's human reasoning*, not God's! *God's laws* are a “shadow.” What does that mean?

2. Hebrews 10:1 – Is God's law a “...*shadow* of good things to come...”? Does faithfully obeying those laws make a person *perfect* (Greek = *teleios*: “spiritually complete/finished”)?

**Comment:** A *shadow* is more properly called a *foreshadow* – which is something that gives a *hint* about something that is to come. For example, the animals the Lord God sacrificed in Genesis 3:21 were *foreshadows* of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – as were the sacrifices offered by Abel (Genesis 4:3, 4; Hebrews 11:4) and the Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 10:1-8).

More generally, as we have seen already, the entire “law” (Genesis through Deuteronomy) is our *tupos* or *example* – and...that can be expanded from Genesis to Malachi. Little wonder, then, that Jesus Christ said that He did not come to do away with the *law* and the *prophets* (Matthew 5:17-20)! Why? Because they are so instrumental in giving us a *hint*, or *foretaste*, of the *good things to come*, as well as how we should conduct ourselves in the midst of any kind of adversity and/or tribulation!

One should not assume that obeying God's law will make them *perfect*. Even in true Christianity, Paul says that we presently “...know in part, and...prophesy in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9). Remember: the “shadow” is *not* the reality. It *points* to it.

3. Ephesians 5:22-33 – Of what is the marriage of a man and woman a “shadow”?

4. What are the responsibilities of the “husband”?

5. What are the responsibilities of the “wife”?

6. What are the *benefits* of true faithfulness?

7. Read Acts 6 and 7 to understand the story of Stephen – considered the first Christian martyr. While doing so, focus on Acts 7:38. To whom does Stephen refer as “...the *church* in the wilderness...”? Does Stephen accuse it of *adultery*? Would *that church*, in its covenant “marriage” to the Lord God, suggest a *foreshadow* of the *Church* to whom Jesus Christ will be “married”? Are you getting the “picture” yet?

**Comment:** Consider Paul's remarks in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, in which he warns against trying to

mix the spiritual with the unspiritual. Israel, as God's "Church in the wilderness," was a carnal church. How well would that carnality have mixed with a *holy* God? In order to accomplish what He wants to accomplish, the Lord God (Jesus Christ) would have to have a *spiritual* partner – "...a help-mate *suitable* for [Him]..." (Genesis 2:20).

8. 1 Peter 1:15-2:10 – Does the Apostle Peter make a claim that the Church of Jesus Christ has a special "exclusive nation" *proposal*? How does he describe that relationship?

9. 2 Corinthians 11:2 – What does Paul mean when he says: "...I have *espoused* you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"? Does this indicate that Christ and His Church are presently "married"?

10. Verses 4, 13-15 – What would following *another Jesus*, *another spirit*, and *another gospel* constitute if this espoused, chaste virgin were to go after *them* instead of the *True* Jesus Christ, the *true* spirit, and the *true* gospel? Would spiritual *porneia* be involved?

11. Matthew 1:18-25 – Is Mary an example of what *could have happened* if she were, indeed, pregnant by another man, instead of by a miracle from God, *before* she actually married Joseph?

**Comment:** Notice that Joseph did not choose to make a public example of Mary – which could have resulted in her death. He chose instead to make it a private matter (v. 19) – until God's angel explained the prophesied significance of the situation (vv. 20-23). Realizing the great significance, Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus. Matthew 13:55, 56 shows that Joseph and Mary had four sons and at least two daughters after the birth of Jesus. Two of them, James and Judas (Jude), wrote letters that became books in the New Testament.

Paul did not want the Church to be summarily dismissed by Jesus Christ for breaking the terms of her *espousal* to Him for a future "marriage."

12. Revelation 19:9 – Does this indicate that the "marriage" of Jesus Christ and His Church is a future event? Check the context and list a couple of reasons for your answer.

13. Can you now list two reasons by which the Lord God – the member of Elohim who became Jesus Christ – is permitted to "marry" the Church after

having *divorced* Israel? Think of the reasons for being permitted to divorce and re-marry (Deuteronomy 24 and Matthew 19), and well as a marriage ended by *death* (Romans 7). Also, how does this affect God's covenant with Abraham?

**Comment:** It is important to think clearly about your answers. These two reasons provide the Lord God – Jesus Christ – with two essential witnesses for His divorce and re-marriage. Also, this Church will not be a *carnal Israel*, but will be a *spiritual Israel* – part of a *better covenant*.

## Why is the "New" Covenant a "Better" Covenant?

1. Hebrews 8:6-13 – Who has the better ministry – Moses or Jesus? Why?

2. What is the result of Jesus' higher order ministry?

3. Why is the "new" covenant a "better" covenant?

**Comment:** The problem with the first covenant was two-fold: (a) the *people* were the problem because they *abandoned* the covenant, and (b) they did not have the laws of God *in their hearts and minds* – that is, they did not have the Holy Spirit to guide them. Does this "new" covenant mean that the *better* promises move the focal point of the eternal reward from *earth* to *heaven*? No! That covenant with Israel *did not alter God's covenant with Abraham! The "new" covenant that Jesus Christ will enter into with Israel is the same covenant Christ has created for Christians – based on His blood and not the blood of bulls and goats* (Hebrews 10:1-10; emphases added). *It will give them access to the reality (an eternal kingdom) as opposed to the shadow (a temporary kingdom)*. How do we know this is true?

4. Hebrews 9:15 – List two reasons why Jesus brings a "new" covenant.

**Comment:** Read this very carefully: "He [Jesus Christ] brings a *new covenant*, as the mediator, *only so that the people who were called to an eternal inheritance may actually receive what was promised: HIS DEATH TOOK PLACE TO CANCEL THE SINS THAT INFRINGED THE EARLIER COVENANT*" (*The Jerusalem Bible*; emphases added). This relates exactly to John 3:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-53. First, flesh and blood, which is *temporary*, could never live long enough to inherit an *eternal kingdom*! Jesus Christ, as a *life-giving spirit*,

will cause a change in composition - a *new birth* – to take place for those who belong to Him so they can actually inherit what was promised. Second, it was necessary for Him to deal with the sins – the disqualifying acts – so that the inheritance could actually be received. That’s odd! So many Christian groups assume that God’s promises to Abraham were merely temporary *earthly* promises that were *replaced* by this “new” covenant brought by Christ. They say so every time they claim that the Law and Prophets were done away with!

5. *If Jesus Christ is the inheritor of the Abrahamic covenant, what should be the content of any “Christian gospel”:* (a) *inheriting the earth with Abraham and Jesus, or...*(b) *going to heaven as a reward for your faith in Jesus Christ?*

**Comment:** Notice what Paul says about this question: (a) In Romans 8:9, 14-17, he says that we are God’s children if we are led by God’s holy spirit, and *if children, then we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ*; and (b) in Galatians 3:26-29, he says that we are God’s children through faith in Jesus Christ – and if we are Christ’s, *then we are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise*. Notice how the *multiple seeds* are tied in with the *singular Seed*. But, also ask yourself: Heirs of what?

6. Romans 4:13 – Now, let the Bible interpret the Bible: *What was the promise?*

**Comment:** Paul says: “For the promise, *that he* [Abraham] *should be the heir of the world*, was ...through the righteousness of faith” (emphases added). The Greek word for “world” [*kosmos*], in this instance, means “[generally speaking] the earth, the planet upon which we live.” This is totally in keeping with God’s promise to Abraham that in him “...all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). How is that possible? By *salvation* and by *inheritance!*

7. Hebrews 6:13-19 – What does it mean that God made His promise *unchangeable* by swearing an oath (see Genesis 15)? Why did He do that?

8. How does that *unchangeable* nature of God’s promise and oath affect our lives?

**Comment:** This is the *gospel* (“good news”) that Israel and others have refused to believe! Since the Lord God promised Abraham a section of land on the planet earth (read Genesis 15), it is illogical to think that He had intended for His people to die and go to *heaven* as an eternal reward (see Romans 4:13

where the covenant was expanded to include the entire planet!).

## Linking the Old Covenant with the New Covenant

The significance of God’s covenant with Abraham looms large throughout scripture. We have already tied it in with His covenant with Isaac, Jacob/Israel, the nation of Israel – including the “Jews” – and Jesus Christ and His Church, as well as having shown the consistency of God’s plan from Adam to Abraham to Jesus Christ, to have His *Kingdom* established on the earth.

Far too many “Christians” are totally *ignorant* of the truth of God’s plan – and are in need of hearing a “voice in the wilderness” who will lay out God’s truth “...precept upon precept...line upon line...here a little, there a little...” God has provided those kinds of voices for a truth-starved people – if they will only have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to believe and obey.

The most obvious question precedent to setting off to any given destination is this: “How do we get there from here?” Many believe that Jesus Christ came to do away with the Old Covenant. If that covenant was made with *Abraham*, how can Jesus Christ simply summarily terminate it and begin another covenant from scratch? Does He, indeed, do that, or does He maintain *that* covenant and change aspects of it that need to be dealt with? Or...does the “old” covenant refer only to the “marriage” covenant He made with Israel? It is clear that our understanding will be well served if we can better understand the link between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

There is the persistent notion in what is called “Dispensational Theology” that God has two plans of salvation: one for the “Jews” and one for the “Christians.” But...“Dispensational Theology” *ignores* the plain record of scripture and *perverts* God’s word of truth to support that ignorance. The long and short of the matter is simple: this concept teaches that God made *earthly* promises to the “Jews” and *heavenly* promises to the “Christians.” So, they say, the fulfillment of a scripture like Jeremiah 31:31-33 will be realized when the “Jews” are rewarded with *an earthly kingdom*, but the “Christians,” according to John 14:1-3, will be rewarded with *mansions on streets of gold in heaven, which Jesus is presently preparing for them*. In this way, God can reconcile the truth about not being a respecter of persons and not going back on His word with

the dispensational concepts of an *old* covenant being set aside for a *new* covenant. Since, as they teach, He is a single God who plays three roles, it is important for Him to keep up with all of the promises made by each of His three identities!

What is *God's truth* about this matter? It is important to see where *men* have diminished from or added to God's word and perverted it.

1. Galatians 3:17 – Did the “marriage” covenant God made with Israel *cancel* or *annul* the covenant He made *in Christ* (v. 16) with Abraham?

2. Verse 18 – Was the covenant made with Abraham based on *promise* (faith) or *law*? Why does that make a difference?

3. Can you yet understand the *difference* between the two covenants – that is, between the covenant with Abraham and the covenant with Israel?

**Comment:** The “marriage” to Israel was a *shadow* that gives us a picture of something to come. It was the same kind of *shadow* that was served by things like the sacrificial system (Hebrews 10:1 and Colossians 2:17). It was a *copy* of the *reality* just as the Temple, priesthood, and Temple furnishings were (Hebrews 8:1-5).

Notice John Bright's comment about this: “Before there could have been the hope for a Prince of David's line [see Luke 1:26-33], there had to be—David. Before the hope of a messianic Kingdom there had to be—the Kingdom of Israel. In short, before Israel's hope of the Kingdom of God could assume such a form, *she had first to build a kingdom on this earth*” (*The Kingdom of God*, Abingdon Press, 1953, p. 19; emphasis added). This is *precisely* the point you should understand in order to understand the further explanation to come: the *shadow* had to come *first*.

4. Romans 9:1-9 – According to Paul, did God count any and all of Abraham's offspring as the *covenant seed* (for example: Ishmael, whom he had with Hagar [Genesis 16] and six sons with Keturah, whom he married after Sarah's death [Genesis 25:1, 2])? Pay close attention to v. 8.

5. Verses 10-16 – Was Jacob's *twin brother* Esau counted as *covenant seed*? Do you sense that there was a specific design of God in *narrowing* His choice of the inheritor?

**Comment:** Remember that the *Abrahamic* covenant went to Jacob/Israel by *God's choice*. It is *apparent that this covenant was to be maintained by*

*Israelites – not just one tribe like the Jews (Judah)*. Remember, too, that the majority of the nation was eventually *divorced* because of their persistent, unrepentant spiritual adultery. *So, while the covenant with Abraham is still in effect today, the “marriage” covenant with Israel is not!*

6. Verses 25-29 – Did God allow a *remnant* (that is, a seed) in Israel to be *preserved for salvation*? Would Jesus' disciples qualify as part of that *remnant*? What about the 144,000 specifically named in Revelation 7:1-8? Is *Judah* [the Jews] among them?

7. Verses 22-26 – Is it apparent that God has brought in the *Gentiles* to also be counted as Abraham's *multiple seeds*? (You should read the entire book of Hosea to understand what God is doing in this regard.)

8. Galatians 3:6-9, 13, 14, 26-29 – What does Paul say in these verses about the position of the *Gentiles* in regard to the *Abrahamic* covenant?

9. Romans 11– Read the entire chapter very carefully because it is a very plain explanation of what God is up to regarding Israel, the *Gentiles*, and the *Abrahamic* covenant. Now, in vv. 7-10, what does Paul say happened to *Israel* because of their sins? Does v. 17 suggest that God left Himself a “stump” or “root” of *true believers* among *Israel*?

**Comment:** Paul speaks of the *election* in v. 7. What does this mean? It simply reflects the fact that the majority of Israel were disobedient and insensitive to God's calling to be a *holy nation*. Even though the nation itself had been divorced, these *elect* maintained their position in the inheritance of the *Abrahamic* covenant because they had remained faithful to God. The sins of the majority disqualified them. Notice that the majority of Israel was *blinded by God*. This was a deliberate act on God's part – and for a very good reason: *by blinding them, they would be counted as deceived and spiritually ignorant. He could, therefore, later re-visit His relationship with them in the second resurrection just as He would the rest of the deceived and sinful people of the world – thus giving them an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ*. Ezekiel 37 is a tremendous prophetic statement of God's intent for the majority of Israel in that regard.

However, you should pay very close, special attention to vv. 16-29. Notice the comment in v. 16 about the existence of a *holy root*. That *holy root* is the *remnant of Israel which God reserved according to the election of grace* for the continuation of His plan (see vv. 1-5). That *holy root* is *Israel* (re-

member Revelation 7:1-9). The *Gentile* converts are *grafted* into that *holy root* – so, they become spiritual *Israelites* (which Paul discussed in Romans 9 – especially vv. 6-8).

10. Verses 11, 12, 15 – What would be the result of Israel’s fall?

11. What would the *inclusion* of the Gentiles cause regarding Israel?

12. How will God *receive Israel again* (v. 15b)?

13. What does Paul mean by the expression “...life from the dead...”?

**Comment:** While it is true that the majority of Israel, except the *holy root*, were given a *spirit of stupor*, God intends to deal with the majority during both the 1,000-year Kingdom and in the second resurrection – which we will study in upcoming lessons.

14. Verse 16 – What is the spiritual condition of the *root*, the *lump*, and the *branches*? Are they *holy*?

15. Verse 17 – How do the Gentiles get attached to the *root/lump*?

16. Verses 18-22 – What happens to the Gentiles if they become *boastful* and *fall into sin* like Israel had done?

**Comment:** Read Ezekiel 18:19-24 and Hebrews 6:4-8 in order to understand God’s mind regarding what Paul says.

17. Verses 23, 25 – What will happen if Israel repents and turns back to God?

**Comment:** Let’s grasp the concept Paul is revealing here. God will receive again the part of Israel that was broken off the *holy root* by resurrecting them from the dead (Ezekiel 37). Once that is accomplished, they will be given the opportunity to learn God’s truth regarding the Christ and the forgiveness of their sins. *When they repent, they will be included in the new covenant that Jesus Christ instituted at the Last Supper and be eligible to receive salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ* (see Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Being grafted back into the *root/lump* restores their ability to inherit the promises with Abraham and Jesus Christ.

*This is the undeniable link between the “old” covenant and the “new” covenant. At the same*

*time, God is creating a “spiritual Israel” – the Church whom Christ will “marry” – made up of converted Israelites (read Matthew 10:1-7) and converted Gentiles who are grafted into the holy root.* That which is grafted into the original stock becomes part of the original stock.

Understand this clearly: the *firstfruits*, those who are in the *first* resurrection, will be the “bride” of Jesus Christ and become the holy nation to whom He is “married” (see 2 Corinthians 11:2, 1 Peter 1:1; 2:1-10, and Revelation 19:5-9). They will be the priests, judges, and kings who will reign with Jesus Christ as the rulers of the Kingdom of God (see Revelation 20:4-6). Apparently, *no other group subsequently added to the God-family* will have this honor – even though they, too, will have duties and responsibilities to carry out as the children of God.

Although Jesus Christ – the Lord God (Yahweh Elohim) of the Old Testament – was “married” to physical Israel, He satisfied the demands of the Law for re-marriage as follows: (a) He divorced an unrepentant “wife” for persistent *porneia*, and (b) He died. By satisfying those two demands, either of which would have been sufficient, He provided two witnesses for being “married” to the Church. In similarity with His “marriage” to physical Israel, this “marriage” to the Church (who will be “spiritual Israel”) will not constitute an abrogation of the Abrahamic covenant. It will be a fulfillment of the original intent of Genesis 1:26-28.

## The True Reward of the “Saved”

During His visit with Zacchaeus (Luke 19), Jesus attempted to set straight a prophetic misconception held by the people present. When He told Zacchaeus, “This day *salvation* is come to this house...” (v. 9), the people concluded that the *Kingdom of God* was going to *immediately* appear. This was not unlike present-day misconceptions held by many well-meaning people who misinterpret God’s word.

There are two important points made by Jesus Christ in straightening out this misconception that are often overlooked by those who believe that the reward of the saved is to go to heaven and that the Kingdom of God is set up in men’s hearts. These two points also help to clear up the misconception many have that Jesus Christ *has already been* crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Make no mistake about it, the reward of the “saved” is directly related to God’s covenant with Abraham.

To head off the consequences of their unwarranted conclusion, Jesus told them a parable in

which a young nobleman goes to a far country to receive a kingdom before *returning to judge* his servants and *rule* them (Luke 19:12-27). Based on what Jesus intended to teach those with eyes to see and ears to hear, we can understand: (a) the true reward of the saved, (b) the coronation of Jesus Christ, and (c) the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth.

The most immediate problem to solve about this parable is the identity of the nobleman. Who is he? This is a nobleman who: (a) places *trust* in his servants to mind his business during his absence, (b) uses that trust as a *test* by which he can determine who are worthy of higher *reward* for their faithfulness and diligence, and (c) *does not remain* in the far country in which he receives his kingdom. In connection to that, we will understand what is the far country to which he goes and what is represented by the interval of time that passes between his departure and his return.

The parameters we have to work within are simple: this parable is part of a group of parables about the Kingdom of God. One would rightly assume, then, that the young nobleman would be someone who had the qualifications to go away, receive a kingdom, and come back to his servants to judge, reward, and rule them. Notice, as well, that the people made a connection between *salvation* and *the appearance of God's Kingdom*.

1. Luke 22:28-30 – Did God appoint to Jesus a *kingdom*? Can we know at this time where it is?
2. Did Jesus subsequently appoint *kingdoms* to His disciples? Where will they be?
3. John 5:22, 27 – To whom did God the Father commit all judgment?
4. John 9:39 – For what reason was Jesus appointed to be judge? Read John 12:37-40 to understand the problem involved. Also, read Isaiah 6:8-12. Connect this to Romans 11:7-15.
5. John 12:31 – What will be the result of the judgment of the world? Who is the *prince of this world*? (See also 2 Corinthians 4:4.)

**Comment:** This authority to judge also includes the power to raise man out the grave in order to judge him (read again John 5:22-31). The result of that judgment can be eternal life or eternal death. He will make His judgment by comparing what He hears to the will of God the Father.

6. John 14:1-4 – Why was Jesus going away? Once He has completed His mission, what will happen?

**Comment:** Some interpret this to mean that there are *mansions in heaven* in which the saved will spend eternity, while others translate this to say: “In my Father’s *house* and *family* there are many *positions* and *offices*...” (Fred Coulter, *A Harmony of the Gospels in Modern English*, 1974; p. 201). Indeed, the Greek word for *place* (*topos*) means that there is space available for occupancy, and the Greek word for *mansion* (*mone*) means that there is an abode that can be occupied. But, does Jesus intend to tell His disciples that their *abode available for occupancy* is in *heaven* – and that they will go there to inhabit it? Before we jump to any unwarranted conclusions, we must remember that God’s word will not contradict itself. With that in mind, we must look at other scriptures in order to *understand the real issue, get the whole picture, and let the Bible interpret the Bible*.

Clarke’s paraphrase is especially interesting: “If your *places* were not prepared in the *kingdom of God*, I would not have permitted you to have indulged a vain hope concerning future blessedness” (Ralph Earle, ed., *Adam Clarke’s Commentary*, 1967; p. 938; emphases mine). Commentators and translators alike realize that “*mansions*” does not refer to palatial estates – nevertheless, they treat Christ’s statement as though it is a promise to take the saved back to heaven when He returns. Is that what Jesus is saying to us? Although Clarke refers to the disciples’ being disheartened that an earthly kingdom was not established, that does not change the fact that the intention of Jesus Christ was to assure them of their “places” in the Kingdom of God.

7. Luke 19:11-27 – Why did Jesus tell this parable?

8. When the nobleman returned, did he take his servants *away to that far place* where he had received his crown?

**Comment:** The only instructions the servants had from the nobleman were: “Take care of this *until I come back*” (Luke 19:13; emphasis added). There was no word that he would, indeed, return at a certain time. There is nothing that suggests that his servants even inquired about the time of his return. In effect, no one knew the day or the hour when he would return. Does that sound familiar? Isn’t that the same kind of quandary faced by the saints, that is, having to take care of our Lord’s business until He returns? It should not surprise us, then, that the interval of time between the nobleman’s departure and his return represents the Church Age, during

which the saints should take care to wisely and profitably use the “talents” we have been given while we wait for the Lord to return.

9. Did he reward them in the place where he had left them and judge the inhabitants of that area according to their works (see also Matthew 25:14-46)? With what did he reward them – (a) mansions on streets of gold or (b) rulership positions of various degrees?

**Comment:** Christ is, no doubt, preparing “places” for us in the kingdom that He is going to bring with Him. We will, no doubt, be where He is when He establishes His kingdom, and we will receive rewards for how well we have handled His affairs during His absence. Those rewards will be offices of service under Jesus Christ as priest, kings, and judges (see Revelation 5:10 and 20:4-6 in the *KJV*). However, when He returns, His enemies will become His “footstool” (see Hebrews 1:13), which means, basically, that they will become His *inheritance* (see Isaiah 19:23-25).

10. Daniel 7:13, 14 – What happens in this prophecy? Who is this one “...like unto the Son of man...”?

11. What will happen once Jesus assumes this position? What is meant by the expression “...people, nations, and languages...”?

12. Verses 15-21 – Is this fourth beast a kingdom *on the earth* – or *in heaven*? Where were the kingdoms it succeeded located – *earth* or *heaven*?

**Comment:** Refer back to vv. 1-8 and compare them to Daniel 2:26-45. Both situations involve a succession of kingdoms *on the earth* that represent, in order of history, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian, and Roman kingdoms. Pay very close attention to Daniel 2:44, 45.

13. Verses 22-27 – Who *returns* to confront the fourth beast? Where?

14. Who ultimately possesses the kingdom? What is meant by the expression “...*under* the whole heaven...”?

15. Verses 22, 26 – What authority is given to the saints of the Most High?

**Comment:** W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann conclude: “It is against all the OT evidence, or any evidence elsewhere in the ancient world, to think of a kingdom *in which its heir is not judge over his own dominion*” (*The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, 1971; p.

307; emphases added). Based on all of this, then, it should not be difficult to understand that Jesus is the nobleman in the parable. The far country in Matthew 25 and Luke 19 represents heaven. Jesus Christ was to go to heaven to receive a kingdom and then return to judge and reward His servants in the kingdom to which He is heir. Has He gone to heaven simply to prepare a place where we can live for eternity before He comes back to get us and take us to *heaven*? *Let the Bible reveal God’s answer!*

16. Daniel 2:36-43 – Are the different parts of the statue described as kingdoms *on the earth*?

17. Verses 44, 45 – What happens to the entire statue? What kind of *kingdom* replaces them? Where? Who/what is the “...stone...cut out of the mountain without hands...”?

18. Zechariah 14:1-4 – In this description of the “day of the Lord,” to what city and mountain does He return? Is it on the *earth* or in *heaven*? For what purpose does He return??

19. Verse 5 (last part) – Whom does He bring with Him to assist Him?

20. Verse 9 – Over what shall the Lord be King once He and the saints have secured the victory? Does this make the expression “...people, nations, and languages...” significant?

21. Matthew 25:31-34 – On what shall Jesus Christ sit when He returns? What does He begin to do with the human population that survives the climactic battle on the “day of the Lord”?

22. Verse 34 – How long has the *Kingdom* been prepared for God’s saints? Is it an *inheritance*?

23. Revelation 11:15 – What major event occurs at the return of Jesus Christ? How long shall He reign over the “...*kingdoms of this world*...”?

24. Revelation 5:10 – What has God made of the saints? Where will they rule? Does this sound like they will live forever in *heaven* in mansions on streets of gold?

25. Revelation 20:4-6 – What is being described here concerning the role of God’s saints in the Kingdom of God? With whom do they reign? Where?

**Comment:** He will set about, with the saints, to judge the people of the earth and separate them as a

shepherd does the sheep from the goats (see Matthew 25:31-33). That will occur among those human beings left alive after His coming; it will occur on the earth (Revelation 5:10; Zechariah 14:9, 16). Those who end up on the Lord's right hand will serve with Him on His throne, just as He presently serves the Father on His throne. As Matthew puts it: "Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, *inherit* the Kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world...'" (Matthew 25:34; emphases added). *This is the true reward of the "saved"!*

## Is Jesus Christ Presently the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples after His resurrection, during which time He gave them many infallible proofs and spoke of things pertaining to the Kingdom (Acts 1:3). After giving them some final instructions, a cloud *transported* Him out of their sight. The NIV translates Acts 1:9 as saying "a cloud *hid* him from their sight," but there was something at work there that goes far beyond the idea that Jesus simply disappeared into the clouds as He ascended. This event is in harmony with many other references to a mode of transportation used by the "one like a son of man" (Daniel 7:13; Revelation 14:14).

Indeed, many translations of the text show what happened on the day Jesus ascended into heaven. The King James Version translates the Greek term *hupolambano* to mean "received," which avoids the true meaning in this context: *to take up*. As a matter of fact, the RSV, Moffat, Luther, and Jerusalem texts translate v. 9 to read *to take up*: "...he was lifted *up* while they looked on, and a cloud *took* him from their sight." The Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* translates it: "...*a cloud took him up, out of their sight*" (1957; p. 853; emphases added). In short, Jesus was *transported away by, or on, a cloud*. He did not simply disappear from sight by being enveloped in cloud cover. Where did He go?

Jesus declared that He would go and sit at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69). Note carefully the following references: (a) Mark wrote: "So then after the Lord had spoken to [His disciples before His ascension], He was received up into heaven, and *sat at the right hand of God*" (Mark 16:19); (b) Paul addressed this subject in his letter to the Hebrews: "...when he had by him-

self purged our sins, [He] *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*" (Hebrews 1:3); "...*is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*" (8:1); "...this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, *sat down on the right hand of God*" (10:12); and "...[who] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is *set down at the right hand of the throne of God*" (12:2); finally, (c) the Apostle Peter put it together by saying: "...*Jesus Christ...is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God*" (1 Peter 3:22; all emphases added)

It should be no surprise to us, then, that Jesus is in heaven seated at the right hand of God the Father (Acts 2:32, 33; 7:55; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 3:1). Many other references draw the same conclusion. However, shall we draw the conclusion that Jesus is *presently* the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? If not, what is His present job at the right hand of the Father?

1. 1 John 2:1– Does John say that Jesus is our *advocate*? What does that term mean?
2. Revelation 12:10 – Why would we need an *advocate*?
3. Hebrews 8:1 – What other position does He presently have? For what purpose?
4. Hebrews 7:25 – What is He able to achieve for us as an advocate/intercessor?
5. Hebrews 12:2 – Does Christ presently serve at His own throne? If not, at whose throne does He serve?
6. Hebrews 1:13 – How long will He serve at the Father's throne?
7. What will happen when His time of service is finished? (Refer back to Daniel 7:13, 14.)

**Comment:** God the Father will, at the appointed time, give Christ the Kingdom and send Him back to be its King, Lord, and Judge. Has that occurred yet? No.

Jesus Christ concluded the great prophecies in Matthew 24:1-41, by saying: "Watch therefore: for you do not know what hour your Lord will return.... Therefore you should be ready: for in such an hour as you do not expect Him, the Son of Man will come....Blessed is that servant who is found doing what he is supposed to do when his Lord comes. I tell you truthfully, He will make that servant a ruler over all of His goods" (vv. 42, 44, 46, 47). The interesting thing about this matter is that even Jesus

Christ Himself does not know when the Father will send Him back to set up the Kingdom (v. 36). Until then, He will serve as our High Priest and Holy Advocate.

When the Father declares that it is time for Christ to return, Christ will set into motion angelic messengers who will blow “trumpets” (Revelation 8:1 through 11:15). The Seventh Trumpet will be the signal for the return of Christ (see also Revelation 14:14-20 and compare it to Zechariah 14:1-9). That is when He will be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Not until then. Now you know.

## How God’s Covenant with Abraham is in Effect Today

Let’s re-visit the question in the introductory remarks: “What does it mean to *you* for God to make a *promise* – then make an oath that He will *absolutely* bring that promise to pass *regardless* of the intervening time between the promise and its fulfillment?” When it is put into the context of the growth and development of nations, where would you expect to find the fulfillment of Genesis 17:5, 6, 15, 16: “...Your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations, and kings shall come out of you....Sarah shall be your wife’s name. And I will bless her, and you two shall have a son together, and she will be a mother of nations; kings of people shall come from her”? If this is a covenant between God and Abraham and his seed “...*in their generations for an everlasting covenant...*”, should not there be *nations* and *kings* who are today enjoying the fruits of God’s promises *in their generations*? And...if there are, would you expect to find nations descended from *Isaac* – who was specifically named by God in this covenant promise as the name of the people through whom this covenant will be fulfilled (Genesis 17:19-21; 26:3, 4; Romans 9:7)? To understand this more fully, you have to go back to Genesis 48 and 49 to understand the blessings Israel (Isaac’s son) bestowed upon two of his sons: Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh).

First, Israel adopted Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh as his own (Genesis 48:5, 6). This, in effect, increased the tribes of Israel to 14. In the adoption process (vv. 8-22), Israel placed his name and the names of Abraham and Isaac upon them (v. 16) – adding that any subsequent children Joseph might have would be counted as Joseph’s and would be below their brothers in the inheritance tree (v. 6). He also *set* Ephraim, the younger of the two, *in the*

*place of the firstborn*, instead of Manasseh, who was the firstborn (vv. 17-20).

Another interesting thing happened during this adoption process: Joseph, who was Israel’s firstborn with his wife Rachel, was placed as the *firstborn of all of the tribes* because Israel’s true firstborn, Reuben (whose mother was Israel’s other wife Leah), had sexual relations with one of Israel’s concubines, Bilhah (see Genesis 35:22, 49:3, 4, and 1 Chronicles 5:1). This means that Joseph – and, thereby, Ephraim (the newly designated firstborn of Joseph) – became the *recipient* of a *double portion* of the Abrahamic covenant. This is called *the birthright promise*. This inheritance involves two things: (a) the *human right* for the son of the heritage-holder to succeed his father as the lawful possessor of the inheritance and (b) God’s *divine right* to choose from among the legal posterity of the heritage-holder who will succeed him. Thus, the covenant inheritance becomes a matter of *grace* and *promise*, not *law* (see Romans 4:13-17 and Galatians 3:18).

Remember the genealogies in Genesis 5 in which the inheriting son (usually the firstborn) was named – even though unnamed siblings were born to each patriarch? Did this necessarily exclude the other siblings from partaking of the covenant blessings? No, the *firstborn* simply became the head of the family in his father’s place – and the respect of that position was passed on to him. The double portion was to compensate him for caring for his younger siblings – including unmarried females and his mother, if she were still alive. However, because of the nature of the blessing by Israel in Genesis 48:15-20, Ephraim and Manasseh appear to have been named *co-recipients*, but Ephraim was still considered to be the *firstborn in charge of the birthright* (see Jeremiah 31:9). Let’s understand what is involved in this term that applies to this situation.

1. Gen. 49:10 – What two things were given to Judah (the father of the Jews)? How long will this be in effect? Would you assume, therefore, that *Shiloh* will be of *Jewish* descent?

2. Galatians 3:16, 17 – Would you conclude that Jesus Christ is *Shiloh* (“He who will receive what is his”)? Was Jesus a *Jew*?

**Comment:** This is called the *scepter promise*. The ultimate recipient, called *Shiloh*, will be the ultimate ruler of the Kingdom of God. As part of His identifying characteristics, Genesis 49:10 says two things: (a) He will be a *lawgiver* and (b) “To the end that tribute be brought to him, and to him go the people’s homage” (*The Anchor Bible*, p. 362). The

geographical spot named *Shiloh* is not intended here; it was a shrine area belonging to Ephraim. Read Revelation 11:15 and Isaiah 2:1-5 to see how this will reach ultimate fulfillment. Now...if this is such a *certain* fact of scripture, why would the *birthright promise* be any less a *certain* fact of scripture?

3. 1 Chronicles 5:2 – How does scripture separate the *scepter promise* from the *birthright promise*? Who gets what?

4. Galatians 3:17 – How long after God’s covenant with Abraham did His “marriage” to Israel take place?

5. Did that “marriage” *annul* the covenant with Abraham?

6. Did Jacob bless Judah and Ephraim *before* or *after* the “marriage” took place? If *before* the “marriage,” would that indicate that it is independent of that “marriage” – that is, still in effect even though the “marriage” was ended?

7. Could the holders of the *scepter* and *birthright* promises enjoy their benefits, even though God had “divorced” Israel? Wherever they might have subsequently migrated in the world?

**Comment:** To better understand this, you must understand that God’s covenant with Abraham was *unconditional*, but His “marriage” to the nation of Israel was *conditional*. Although Abraham’s seed would be punished for their sins, God would stand by His covenant with *Abraham*. The seed would enjoy the blessings of rulership and territory. The increase in *seed* would ultimately demand an increase in territory.

7. Genesis 17:1-8, 15-22 – Again, what two things would result from Abraham and Sarah? With whom would this covenant be established after Abraham and Sarah died?

8. Genesis 26:1-5 – What did God tell Isaac about His covenant with Abraham?

9. Genesis 25:5 – What did Isaac, in fact, receive from Abraham after his death?

10. Genesis 28:1-4 – What blessing did Isaac bestow upon Jacob? Did it involve *multiplicity of seed* and *territory*?

**Comment:** Jacob’s blessing of Judah and Ephraim, therefore, are a continuation of this covenant

with Abraham – *renewing it over and over*. Can you imagine what the number of descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Israel must be today? As surely as God promised them, they *must be in existence today occupying territory on this earth* as a great blessing from God Himself!

The crucial test of the faithfulness of God – as well as the integrity of His Holy Word – is that Joseph, through Ephraim and Manasseh, must, of necessity, become the *father of many nations* as God had promised Abraham his *seed* would be. The *birthright promise* is, in fact, the blessing of becoming *the father of many nations*: Ephraim a great company of nations, and Manasseh a great nation. This does not preclude the other sons of Jacob from also becoming national entities.

11. Jeremiah 3 (read all of it) – Did God scatter *Israel* to the north when He divorced her?

12. Jeremiah 23:1-4 – Does it appear that Israel’s *religious leaders* have caused part of their problem? Has Israel been scattered to numerous countries? Will God ultimately retrieve them from those other countries?

13. Read Jeremiah 30 and 31 – Make note that God addresses both Houses of Israel: Judah and Israel (Ephraim). Has God ceased to love them? Does He intend to gather them from the four corners of the earth where they have been scattered? Is Ephraim specifically addressed? What does God ultimately intend to do with them (read 31:31-34)?

**Comment:** If God has scattered both Judah and Israel to the four corners of the earth – and He intends to gather them back to the land of promise in the future – wouldn’t they have to *presently* exist as *nations* on the earth? Yes...if God is always true to His word. If the *scepter promise* to Judah came to fulfillment through the birth of Jesus Christ, then there is no reason to think that the *birthright promise* has not been fulfilled in history with Ephraim and Manasseh. God said in Amos 9:8, 9: “...I will command, and I *will sift the House of Israel among all nations*, like corn is sifted in a sieve, *yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth*” (emphasis added). Thus, God *commands* that these people *in their generations* will *continually exist*. Not only will they exist *within* other national entities, *they* will exist *as* national entities.

The nation called *Israel* today was established May 14, 1948. It is a *Jewish* state. Those who are ethnic Jews are actually a basic amalgamation of three tribes of the nation of Israel: Judah, Levi, and

Benjamin (read Romans 11:1 where Paul, generally considered as being a *Jew*, states categorically that he is a *Benjamite*). The House of Israel (Ephraim and Manasseh + nine other tribes) was taken captive by the Assyrians in 721-718 B.C. and transported completely out of Israel's territory – never to return to this very day. The Assyrian king placed foreigners in Samaria (Israel's territory). Read the entire account in 2 Kings 17 (also refer to John 4 to see that the foreigners were still there during Jesus' ministry between A. D. 27-31 – they were called *Samaritans*). What happened to the House of Israel as a result of their captivity?

While generally scattered to the four corners of the world, they have become such nations as Ireland, Scotland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Holland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States, and Britain. Wherever you find peoples like the Celts, Angli, Gauls, Brits, and Saxons, you find the House of Israel scattered.

Numerous works have been produced over the past one and one-half centuries tracing the migrations of the House of Israel to their present dwelling places. One individual, J. C. Stephens, compiled a "Genealogical Chart," which author J. H. Allen described as: "...Showing the connection between the House of David [Judah] and the Royal Family of Britain" (*Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright*, 1901, p. 370). That genealogy demonstrates that Britain's present queen, Elizabeth, is descended from King David of Judah.

Allen and others demonstrate that the prophet Jeremiah brought the royal seed, Princess Tea Tephî, to Ireland to marry Prince Herremon, known as a prince of the "Tuatha de Daanans" – the tribe of Dan. Allen says of the account in the Irish *Milesian Records*: "If that prince was a prince of the tribe of Dan [Israelite] – and authentic history declares he was – then he was a prince of the family of Judah, for there can be no *Prince of Dan* other than a prince of the *royal family of HIS RACE*, and that family has but one fountain head, i.e., Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, to whom pertains the sceptre [sic] blessing" (Ibid., pp. 268, 269). That lineage is traced from Ireland to Scotland to Britain – all of whom are *Israelite nations*. As Allen points out, the *royalty* among them were descended from *Judah* – and *Britain* and *the United States* represent *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* respectively.

14. Jeremiah 33 (read the entire chapter) – Who was to go into captivity (v. 7)? For what purpose (v. 8)? In spite of their being scattered in captivity, does

God intend to ultimately bring them back to the land of promise and bless them together (vv. 10-14; read also Ezekiel 37)?

15. Verse 17 – Will David ever lack a person to sit upon his throne – over the House of Israel?

**Comment:** The word *man* in this statement is translated from the Hebrew word *ish* (*iysh*), which means "a man, a person, a certain one, and anyone." It could, in fact, include a *female*.

16. Verse 18 – Will there always be a *Levite* who could perform the cultic sacrificial rituals if there were a Temple?

**Comment:** In the Jewish religion, they know who the *Levites* are – and who could become high priest were they ever to be able to resume Temple services in Jerusalem. Those with names like Kohn, Caan, Kuhn, Kane, and Cohen are the most likely candidates because their names are derived from the Hebrew term for *priest*: *kohen* (also written as *ko-hane* and *kahen*). We often joke about someone being the "big Kahunnah." The Hebrew term *kehunnah* means *priesthood*.

17. Verses 19-26 – What would it take for God's covenant with King David and the Levites to be broken?

**Comment:** The term *son* in v. 22 is from the Hebrew term *Ben* – "son, man, builder of the family name." In v. 26, the term *seed* comes from the Hebrew term *Zara*. It can also be spelled *Zero*, *Zaru*, *Zeru*, *Zoro*, and other combinations. Think of the great tenor *Zero Mostel*, who had his own version of *Fiddler on the Roof*. It means "a man, a person, a child, a nephew, a grandchild, or a relative" – which, presumably, could include a *female*.

18. How long do you think God intends for there to be day and night?

**Comment:** If the word *forever* comes to mind, then remember this: There are no stronger words in the Hebrew language than those that are translated *forever*, *evermore*, and *everlasting*. This is why Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Covenants. He has the power and authority to maintain the integrity of the promises and covenants of God *forever* – to make sure that we actually receive what was promised. We are most fortunate if we understand and sincerely believe that God will be true to His promises, even if all men prove themselves to be liars (Romans 3:3, 4).

Rest assured that the death of Jesus Christ did nothing to cancel, annul, or do away with God's

covenants with Abraham and Israel. He *improved* on the “marriage” covenant so that He can have a “wife” – a *spiritual* Israel – who is capable of ruling at His side forever (see Jeremiah 31:31-37, Hebrews 8:6-13, Romans 11, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-33, Revelation 19:5-9, and Matthew 22:1-14).

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an open letter from (continued from p. 2)

## The Pastor

*joint-heir* with Jesus Christ. Joint-heir to *what?* The *land* the Lord God *promised* Abraham and his *Seed!* Not only the land between the Nile and Euphrates rivers specified in Genesis 15:18-21, but the *entire earth* as specified in the original agreement made with Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-28!

This, of course, is born out in prophecies galore. For example, read Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14, 19-27; Zechariah 14:1-9; Luke 1:26-33 (note especially references in vv. 32, 33 to *throne of David* and *House of Jacob*); Revelation 5:8-10; 11:15; 19:11-21; and 20:1-10 reveal that Jesus Christ is going to conquer the governments of this world-system and set up an everlasting kingdom over which He and the firstfruit saints will rule. When He and His saints take possession of their *inheritance*, ***then*** shall all of the promises to Abraham be fulfilled.

In the meantime, can we identify, with any certainty, those *physical seeds* known as *Israel*, *Joseph*, and his sons *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*? Just as surely as the promises were made, the *seeds* of these people must exist today in order to be the continual recipients of the land and physical blessings until Christ comes!

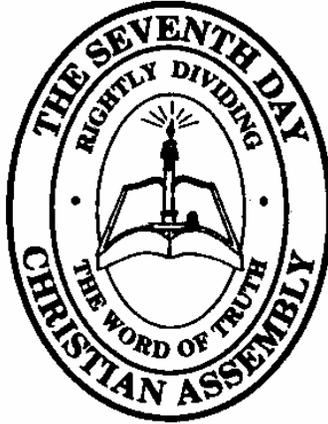
The objective of this lesson is to continue the exposition of Jesus Christ being the “Lord of the Covenants” and how His covenant with Abraham has been renewed again and again. Please read all the scriptures cited and make notes of the points being made about them.

In Christ’s Service,

Larry E. Ford

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## Straight Talk . . . Plain Truth

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