

# RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

## *Lesson Four: The Lord of the Covenants (Part One)*

How shall we understand the difference between the Old and New Covenant/Testaments? The common assumption is that the death of Jesus Christ abolished the Old Covenant and made room for a new one. In that concept, the Law of God is abolished, supposedly, and the people who, through Jesus Christ, are made party to the New Covenant are freed from the demands of the Law and placed under the demands of the Spirit.

This lesson explains very clearly the demands of the Old Covenant, why it was terminated, and how it leads to the New Covenant under Jesus Christ. The concept is really very simple once you understand who the Lord God of the Old Covenant is and what He intended His “marriage” relationship with Israel to be.

Larry E. Ford

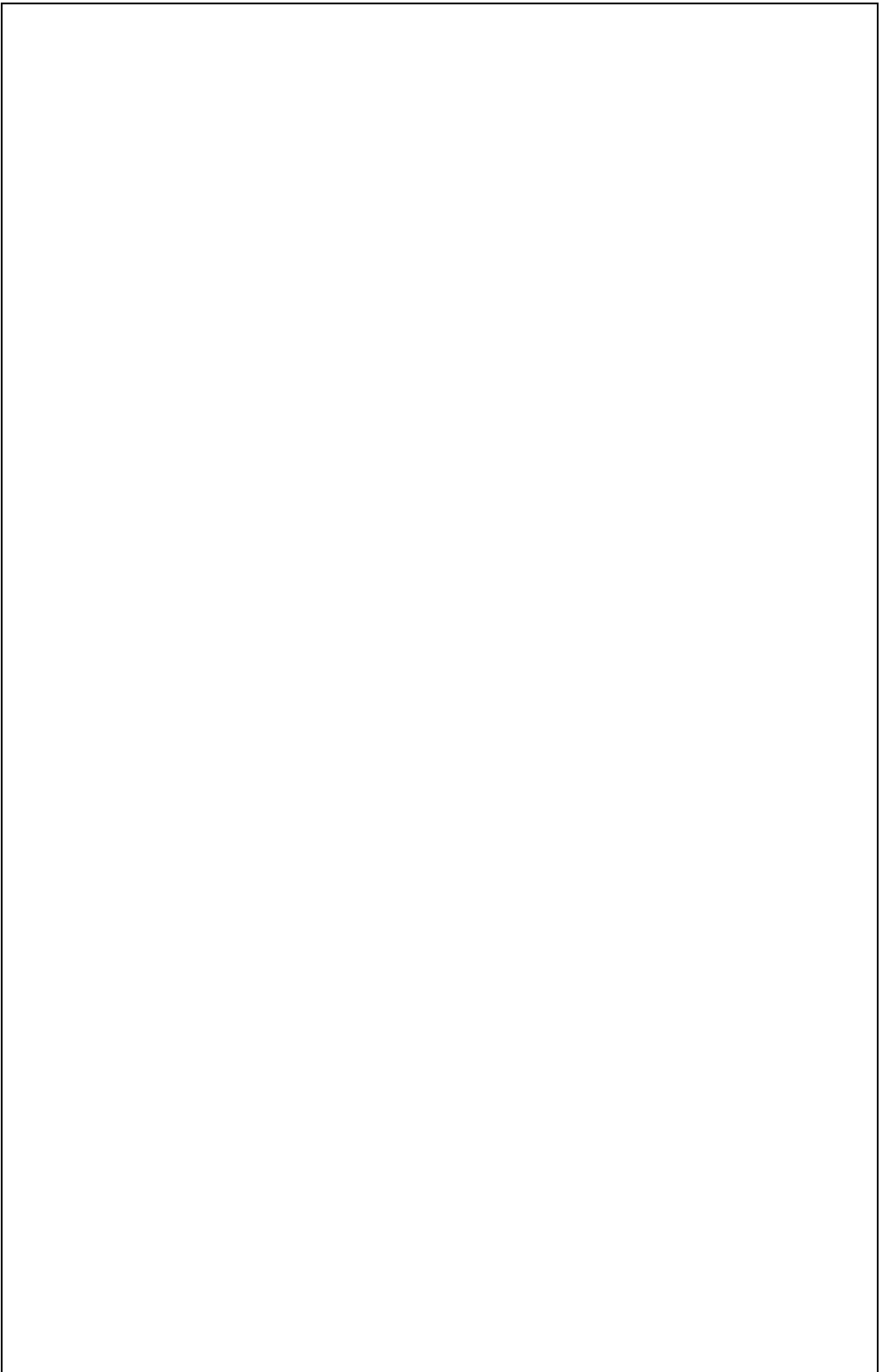




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Scriptures in this work are quoted from the *King James Version (KJV)* of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. The author changes terms like “thee,” “thou,” “thine,” and other 17th Century expressions to more modern terms.

Unless otherwise stated, all definitions for Greek terms are from the *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, 1957; abbreviated as *BAG* in text). All definitions for Hebrew terms are from the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999 – reprinted from the 1906 edition by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston; abbreviated as *BDB* in text).



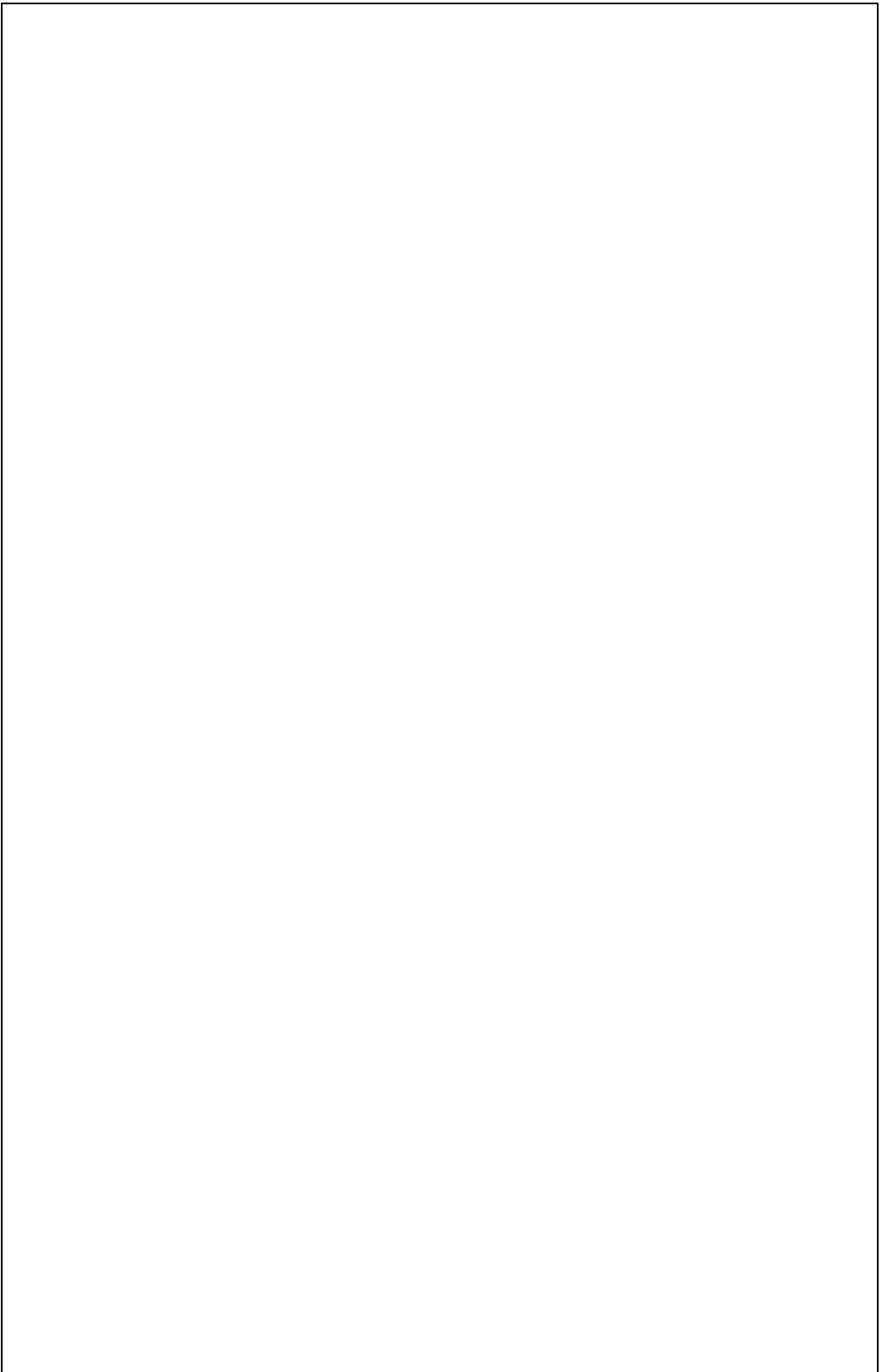
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## SCRIPTURAL ADMONITIONS

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For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [covenant]. (KJV; Hebrews 8:7)

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions, that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (KJV; Hebrews 9:15)

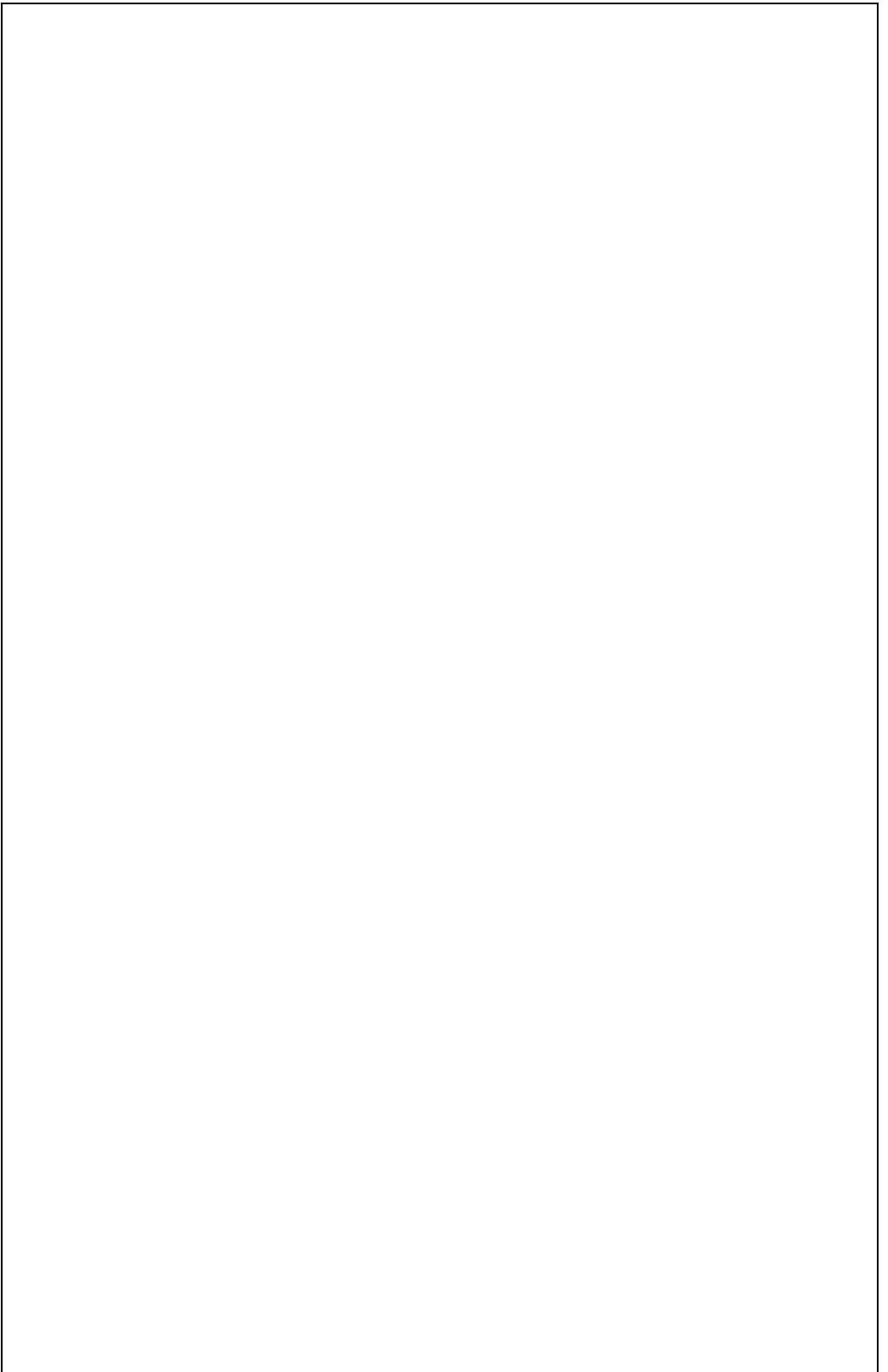


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# Introduction

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What is the significance of the terms *covenant* and *testament*? Traditional Christianity has been accused of perpetuating a *misnomer* (a wrong name or designation) by calling the first division of the Bible a *testament*, instead of *covenant*. That supposedly causes much misunderstanding about the contents of what are called the Old and New Testaments.

Here is an example of a *misnomer*. I have a friend who misuses a word with regularity. When he speaks of giving someone “an allowable margin of freedom or variation,” he calls it giving them *levity* – which means “a lack of earnestness; lightness; flippancy.” *Leeway* is the word he should use. Some would say: “Oh, we know what he means,” and they excuse it as being harmless.

Well, if he were Norm Crosby or “Malaprop Man” in the “Frank and Ernest” comic strip, one could have his chuckle and move on. But, when he uses the term *levity*, it is not meant to be a *malapropism* – a humorous misuse of a word (for example: “Doctor, I haven’t *demonstrated* in three months. Am I *stagnant*?”). My friend’s use of the term *levity* is not a case of calling “...a rose by any other name...”, as Juliet opined in Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet”! To call it *levity* when giving someone “an allowable margin of freedom or variation” is a *misnomer*. To call something by the wrong name is a *mistake*!

The argument about using *testament* instead of *covenant* is this: The accusing parties declare that the first part of the Bible should be called the *Old Covenant*. Why? Because, they reason, when it was translated into Latin shortly after Christ’s death, it was called a *testamentum*. But, when it was translated into English, the translators *incorrectly* kept the Latin term and referred to it by the

English term *testament*. What is the problem with that? The following discussion helps to explain the answer.

In *English*, they say, a *covenant* is not a *will* (Heb. 9:16); it is a formal, binding agreement – a *compact* – that does not require anyone’s *death*. A *testament*, on the other hand, is an act by which a person determines the disposition of his possessions *after his death* – in other words, it is a *will*. Although the *Latin* word *testamentum* can mean either, the assertion has been that the *English* word *testament* does not. Is that true? No.

In *English*, *testament* can mean *either* a covenant or a will. Its meaning is derived from the context in which the definition is used. The problem with calling the first division of the Bible a *testament*, the argument concludes, is that doing so causes a skewing of the meaning of the contents, which does not contain such a *will*. Therefore, it should be called the *Old Covenant*. Since we become inheritors by the *death* of Jesus Christ, it is more proper, then, to call the *second* division of the Bible the *New Testament*. The first division is based on a *covenant*; the second is based on a *will* ... so they claim. How valid is that claim?

I have come to see, however, that this conclusion is a product of flawed logic. Even though I reach about the same general conclusion *about whether or not traditional Christianity correctly understands the contents of the first division of the Bible*, this teaching is flawed in its assertion that the first division *cannot* be a *testament*. What if it can? What then? Would that invalidate traditional Christianity’s understanding?

Well, I am not so naive as to think that people, in general, really pay that much attention to the names of the two divisions of the Bible. Do they really care one way or another? I am not convinced that they do. They would probably repeat Juliet’s famous line: “What’s in a name?” So, my friend says *levity* instead of *leeway*. Is his *meaning* misunderstood? Nevertheless, I agree that misunderstanding the basic elements of something can affect your teachings – which can affect your awareness of and understanding of God’s revealed *truth*.

It is precisely traditional Christianity’s *misunderstanding* of the significance of the contents and laws in the first division of the Bible that prompts them to declare that it has been *abolished* for the Christian. This misunderstanding perpetuates grievous

theological errors that easily could be avoided! It is not merely a problem caused by not understanding the difference between the meaning of the terms *covenant* and *testament*. It is deeper than that. It is a matter of how we perceive *God's truth* (see Rom. 1:25).

We should ask ourselves the right kinds of questions in order to focus on the *truth* of the matter. Should it be called a *covenant* or *testament*? Is there an *inheritance* due to *death* contained in the *first* division of the Bible? What does Paul mean in Hebrews 8:13 when he says: "In that He [Jesus] says, a *new* covenant, He has made the *first* [covenant] old" (emphasis added)? Does this presuppose the existence of an *old* and *new* covenant?

What does Jesus Christ mean in Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, and Luke 22:20 when He calls the cup of wine that He served at His last Passover ". . .the new *testament* in my blood, which is shed for you" (*KJV*; emphasis added)? If there is a *new* testament, doesn't that automatically presuppose the existence of an *old* testament? Could it be that Jesus and Paul are speaking of the same thing? These are important questions ... especially in light of the *KJV* translation of Hebrews 9:15-18.

## Cognates

A *cognate* is a term that refers to *descent* – essentially, belonging to, or descending from, the same family. In *etymology* (the study of word history), a *cognate* is a word that is related to or descended from another. Because it is related by descent from the same ancestral language, it will bear some similarity to it in form, meaning, and spelling.

Since English is a *Germanic* language, it is not difficult to understand that the English term *help* is a cognate of the German term *helfen*. In like manner, it should not be difficult to understand that the English term *tobacco* is a cognate of the German term *tabak* and the French word *tabac*. Spanish, Italian, and French are considered cognate languages.

Consider the following: the English term *horse* is *cheval* in French, *cavallo* in Italian, and *caballo* in Spanish. Would anyone want to guess to what *chivalry* or the General Motors term *Chevrolet* refers? What relationship do you see between the

German term for *horse* (*Pferd*) and the Yiddish term (*ferd*)? None of them bears any resemblance to the Swedish term for horse: *haest*. *Pferd* is not a cognate of *haest*. One clue is in the lack of similarity between the spellings of the terms. It is evident that *haest* also is not a cognate of *cheval*, *cavallo*, and *caballo*. It bears some resemblance of the English term *horse*.

Even in the development of all languages, one should be impressed with the fact that all languages have descended from one single source (see Genesis 11:1-9). In their non-theological book, *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, Thomas Pyles and John Algeo note the degree of similarity among languages by showing various cognates of the English term *father*: *Vater* (German), *fadir* (Iceland), *vader* (Dutch), *fader* (Norway, Denmark, and Sweden), *pater* (Latin), and *padre* (Spanish and Italian) (3rd edition; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982, p. 64). We could add *foter* (Yiddish). What does this have to do with the terms *covenant* and *testament*?

The original English language consisted of about 75,000 words. Because it is a *borrowing* language, it has swelled to its present size of more than 600,000 words. Words that have been borrowed have the same meaning, in most cases, as their original language source. For example, *beautiful* is essentially a French word, but it means the same in French and English. Is it possible, then, that the terms *covenant* and *testament* mean the same – even though they are not cognates? Is it possible to incorporate a word into the English language and use only certain applications of its definition(s) – and exclude others? Just as easily as adopting *testamentum* from the Latin because one of its definitions is the same as the English term *covenant*. In this way, they can be *synonyms*: two or more words that have the same or very nearly the same meaning.

## The Objective

This lesson will explore this idea in full as you learn about Jesus Christ being The Lord of the *Covenants*. This is a challenging two-part lesson; so, pay close attention and read all the references. All of these questions will be sorted out in this first part

of the lesson. By the time you finish it, you will be conversant on the topic of *covenant -vs- testament*. You will understand the significance of the contents of both divisions of the Bible and why the true Christian should pay attention to both.

As a result of this understanding, you also will understand why Paul writes that the experiences of the Israelites were written for examples to us (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). If this is true, why would God or Jesus Christ do away with them just because of a coming *new* covenant or testament? You will be provided Review Questions at the end of each chapter to assist you in checking and reviewing your comprehension of the study material. It would be helpful to read through the questions before you begin working on the chapter's material. Having some foresight/foreknowledge is valuable.

It is clear that many do not understand either the meaning of the terms or the significance of the contents of the covenants and testaments of which Jesus Christ is Lord – and ... why they both are important to the spiritual growth and development of the Christian. But ... you will understand it by the time you finish the next two lessons ... *if you do due diligence to study through and think seriously about what is presented*. This is an important study for the developing Christian. Take good notes. Pray. Study. And ... please enjoy it! Let me know if you have questions.

In Christ's Service,

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## Chapter One

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# *Covenant or Testament?*

**C***ovenant*: The promises of God that are conditioned on certain terms required of man – such as obedience, repentance, and faith. *Testament*: A Middle English term that came from the Late Latin and Latin term *testamentum*. In the Late Latin, it means “covenant.” In the Latin, it means “last will” – which comes from the Latin term *testari* (from *testis*: “witness”): “to be a witness” and “to make a will.”

When *testamentum* was borrowed into the Middle English, it had three basic meanings: (a) “a written record of a compact,” (b) “a tangible proof or tribute: evidence, witness,” and (c) “a written declaration regarding the disposal of one’s estate and effects upon his death.” The *context* in which the English term *testament* is used determines the intended meaning: *covenant* or *will*.

It is important to remember this for at least two good reasons: (1) it establishes a working definition to use as a reference point in the study, and (2) it demonstrates that the Latin term is not simply based on the idea that *testamentum* is only a written declaration of the intent of an individual to dispose of his property in a certain manner after his death. The Greek term *diatheke* is the same way, as is the English term *testament*. Both mean “covenant” and “will.” What does this mean with regard to our study?

Simply this: the first division of the Bible, commonly called the Old *Testament*, is a written record (*testimony/witness*) of the Lord God’s promises, as well as a written record of how those

promises were to be disposed of *after the deaths of those with whom they were made*. In effect, you have both the promise and the will: *covenant* and *testament*. Just as importantly, you have the written record of two or more witnesses, complete with the evidence, ceremonies, and rituals of those days that made the promises officially binding upon the Giver and the required terms officially binding upon the recipients. That is the nature of God's *testimonies* in the Old Testament.

The objective of this lesson is, therefore, to help you understand what it really means when the Christian says that s/he is "standing on the promises of God." If the promises of God are the inheritance of the Christian, then the Christian ought to know three things: (a) what those promises are, (b) how s/he becomes an heir, and (c) how committed Jesus Christ is to "deliver the goods." This is a pivotal study in your growth and development as a True Christian. Please study this information thoroughly and prayerfully.

## Did the Old *Covenant* Require a Death?

Is it true that a *covenant* does not require the death of someone? Yes. Is it also true that a *testament* is a will – and, that a will requires the *death* of someone? Yes. If the term *testament* can also mean "a covenant," is it, then, a *misnomer* to say Old *Testament*, as opposed to Old *Covenant*? No – *covenant* is merely one of several possible definitions of the English term *testament*. *Covenant* and *testament*, in fact, can be *synonymous*.

Will calling it the Old *Testament* skew your understanding of the contents of the first division of the Bible? No. Why? When you work from a *faulty* theological paradigm – a model or pattern – your understanding is already skewed. So, in order to understand God's revealed truth about this very important piece of biblical knowledge, it would be necessary to approach it from the correct paradigm. Let's begin the process by proving from God's word whether or not the first division of the Bible should be called a *covenant* or a *testament*.

In Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, and Luke 22:20, how did Jesus refer to the wine portion of His last Passover with His disciples?



The *King James Version* reads: “For this is my blood of the new testament...” However, other translations are different. The *RSV* reads: “...for this is my blood of the *covenant*...” A footnote says: “Many ancient authorities insert *new*.” (emphasis added). The *Moffat* translation reads: “...this means my blood, the new covenant-blood...” The *Authorized Version* reads: “...this is my blood of the covenant...” (emphasis added). Finally, *The Jerusalem Bible* reads: “...this is my blood, the blood of the covenant...” Luther’s German version uses the German term *Testament*. The *Good News for Modern Man* says: “...this is my blood, which seals God’s covenant...”

The *GNMM* translation is part of a school of thought that suggests that a variant form of Luke 22:20 can read: “This cup represents the new covenant that will be sealed with my blood.” *That suggests that Jesus Christ is going to die.* Luther and King James are consistent in translating Paul’s comment about that specific Passover in 1 Corinthians 11:25 as *testament*, while all the others are consistent in translating it as *covenant*. Does this tell you that the two terms have something in common? If so, what might that something be? Does this indicate that a death can be involved in a covenant?

Read the following definitions for the English term testament from *Webster’s Third International Dictionary*: (1a):

The written record of a compact: covenant, scripture; (1b): usu cap [usually capitalized]: either of two main divisions of the Bible; (2a): a tangible proof or tribute: evidence, witness; (2b): an expression of conviction: affirmation, credo; (3): an instrument in writing by which a person declares his intent as to the disposal of his estate and effects after his death: a will.

In one way or another, all of the definitions have to do with someone’s will – which requires one’s *death*. Remember that the *context* in which the term is used determines the definition that is intended. Therefore, you must ask yourself if the definitions of the English terms *covenant* and *testament* are shown here to be interchangeable – *synonymous*.

Now read Hebrews 8 and 9. Notice how, in the *KJV*, Paul moves from *covenant* in Hebrews 8 to *testament* in Hebrews 9. In

both cases – *covenant* and *testament* – the Greek word used is *diatheke*. This word, like the English term *testament* and the Latin term *testamentum*, has several definitions that include *covenant* (an agreement) and *testament* (a will). So, it is possible for the English term *testament* to be used in a similar fashion. Therefore, it is not a mistake if the first division of the Bible is referred to as being the Old *Testament*, instead of the Old *Covenant*. That could merely indicate that it is being described as a written record of the covenant and tangible proof (evidence or witness) of its existence and its terms (def. 2a). Wherever the terms *covenant* and *testament* are used in the book of Hebrews, Paul uses the Greek term *diatheke*.

There is a *death* situation in the Old Testament that is completely overlooked by those who claim that the Old *Testament* should more properly be called the Old *Covenant*. Their reasoning claims that there is no *death* involved the Old Covenant. You will learn how *death* is involved.

Paul's comments in Hebrews 8 begin with the idea that there are *examples* and *shadows* of "heavenly things" to which we should pay attention (v. 5). The reference point is "according to the law" (v. 4). Such things are to be understood relative to the coming *reality* involved. In his discussion, Paul's focus is on the "marriage" covenant agreement between the Lord God and the nation Israel. He says in vv. 7, 8 that a *second* (new) covenant is sought by the Lord God because the fault with the first one was with the *people* ... not with the *covenant* itself.

Paul continues in vv. 8-13 to discuss a *new covenant* with *Israel* (v. 8). In plain language, Paul is indicating that the Lord God will be true to His word and engage in a *new "marriage" agreement with Israel*. He has proposed such an idea in Romans 11:29 and 2 Corinthians 11:2. From where would Paul get such an idea? It would have to have come from the Old Testament (whatever it was called during his time) because that was the only scripture available at the time. Let's consider a couple of examples to validate the point.

Read Isaiah 1:1-9. The Lord God had suffered great dishonor at the hands of the people of Israel. He had punished them to the point that He considered it impossible to turn them around from their evil ways. So, He determined to "divorce" them and turn

them over to the consequences of their sins (see Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). But ... there is one piece of information in v. 9 to which we must pay attention: He is going to reserve to Himself “a very small remnant” in order to avoid completely destroying Israel like He did Sodom and Gomorrah. That small remnant of Israel is Paul’s focus in Romans 9-11. In those chapters, you must pay attention to how He is going to “save” Israel and take her back as His wife.

The entire book of Hosea is a prophecy about this very thing. You can get the gist of this in Hosea 1:1 through 2:13. He will cut them off from being his “people” and will thoroughly punish them for their sins. However, Hosea 2:14-23 and 14:1-9 are His *testimony* (witness) that He will clean her up, forgive her, and re-marry her. That is what Paul calls a “new covenant” in Hebrews 8. The question is this: Is there a death required/involved?

We must turn to Romans 7:1-6 in order to understand the answer to that question. Here Paul discusses the demands of the law relative to *marriage* – the legal bases of the “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and Israel. The thing that releases marriage partners from the marriage covenant is death. Although the Lord God divorced Israel, He is not free to “re-marry” (enter another “marriage” covenant) without a death. Either Israel or the Lord God had to die. Beyond dying for our sins and salvation (which the law required: 1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23), He also died *so that the demands of the law regarding His “marriage” to Israel could be obeyed*.

In this, we see that the term covenant can include a death ... because the Old *Covenant* included a “marriage” agreement with Israel. The Lord God’s future death (He is the One who became *Jesus Christ*) ultimately included the disposition of His *will* concerning inheritances by His people. Israel lost all claims to that inheritance as a result of the divorce. You must understand, however, that the inheritances now will be going to His new “marriage” partner – a purified, forgiven Christianized Israel.

Why does Paul change his terms in Hebrews 9:15-20 and speak of a “new testament” and “the first testament” (v. 15)? Paul wrote in the Greek language, so he knew what he was doing in Hebrews 8 and 9 when he used both terms under discussion. It was not a slip of the pen, so to speak. Pay close attention to what Paul is discussing in Hebrews 9:15-20. He describes the animal sacrifices

as *symbols, examples, and shadows* of some greater significance. Then he focuses laser-perfectly on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (vv. 14; 22-28).

Paul says that it was proper that the “shadows” of the animal sacrifices portrayed the *reality* of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The difference between the two is that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was once-and-for-all (see 10:14). We can see from 1 Peter 1:18-20 that His sacrifice was planned from *before the creation of the orderly universe* (see also Phil. 2:5-11). *Nothing* of the orderly universe had been created at the time.

George Wesley Buchanan summarizes this portion of Hebrews 9 by pointing out how Jesus met the qualifications for *death* according to the terms of a *will*, as well as for a cleansing blood sacrifice (a *death*) for sins. In this, He is the mediator of a new covenant (*diatheke* = will). His death cleansed all things in heaven and on earth, which makes Him the mediator of a new covenant (*The Anchor Bible: To the Hebrews*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc.; 1972; p. 153).

Even in this summary, the question still remains: If *diatheke* is used to speak of a *will*, what is to be understood by the term *diathekes kaines* (*new testament; KJV; new covenant; others*) in 9:15? In either case, how can you have a *new* testament (covenant) without having had an *old* testament (covenant)? Remember the point of the marriage/divorce/remarriage because it is descriptive of the *lost* inheritance and the *restored* inheritance.

Remember that I said above that there is a *death* in the Old Testament that is completely overlooked by those who claim that the Old Testament should more properly be called the Old Covenant. We will get to that in the following discussion.

## Review Questions

1. What does understanding the difference between the terms *covenant* and *testament* mean with regard to our study?
2. What three things should the Christian know relative to “standing on the promises of God”?

3. In what way can the terms *covenant* and *testament* be *synonymous*?

4. What is a *misnomer*?

5. Why do some say that the Old *Testament* should be called the Old *Covenant*?

6. Using several different translations of the Bible to understand Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, and Luke 22:20, how did Jesus refer to the wine portion of His last Passover with His disciples?

7. Do some translations use *testament* while others use *covenant*?

8. Do you think that such difference in translation is the result of: (a) use of a *synonym* or (b) use of a *faulty paradigm*? Explain your answer.

9. How does the dictionary definition help to clarify the issue for you?

10. How does the *context* in which the terms are used help to determine the meaning? Use the examples in Hebrews 8 and 9 to support your answer.

11. How does the Greek term *diatheke* help us to understand the difference between Hebrews 8 and 9?

12. Does the information given in this chapter convince you that the Old *Testament* should be called the Old *Covenant*? Explain your answer.

13. Are you yet convinced that the Old *Covenant* does, indeed, include a *will* and a *death*? If not, why not? If so, why so?

\*\*\* From this point forward, the discussion broadens considerably. As a result, you might want to review your answers to the previous review questions to see if you agree with them. \*\*\*



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## Chapter Two

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# The Abrahamic Covenant

All discussions about the “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and Israel must be understood relative to the covenant the Lord God made with *Abraham*. As a matter of fact, it must be understood in the context of Jesus Christ’s statement in Matthew 25:34: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the *kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (emphases added). Few realize what that *kingdom* represents. That knowledge is the key to the importance of the two covenants the Lord God will have made with *Israel*.

The term *kingdom* presupposes four things: king, subjects, territory, and laws. Let’s consider two scriptures in the New Testament that explain what God (*Elohim* = plural; see Genesis 1:1-2:3; John 1:1-3; and Phil. 2:5-11) had in mind relative to the *subjects* of the kingdom.

In John 3:3, Jesus Christ told Nicodemus that the humans who were created by the Lord God (Gen. 2:7, 20b-24) would have to be “born again” in order to become part of that kingdom. He demonstrated in vv. 5-8 that the “born again” experience will require *a change in the composition* of the human – that is: the human will have to be changed from *flesh* to *spirit*. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. He shows that there must be a change from flesh-and-blood to immortal, incorruptible *spirit*.

Paul explains this plan in Ephesians 1:4-14. He shows that God *chose mankind in Jesus Christ* before the creation of the orderly universe ... no doubt, coincidentally to creating that *kingdom*. In

that situation, you have the *king*: Jesus Christ (John 18:33-37; Rev. 11:15) and the *subjects*. Ephesians 1:4 stipulates that God's will is that mankind should be "holy and without blame before Him in love." That, therefore, establishes the framework for the *laws* of the kingdom ... pending the creation of the *territory* into which they will be placed. We have seen above Peter's witness in 1 Peter 1:18-20 that Jesus Christ was ordained *before the creation of the orderly universe* to be the redemptive sacrifice for mankind. For what purpose was He chosen for this vital office?

Read Hebrews 2:5-18. Notice in v. 10 that Jesus was charged with "bringing many sons unto *glory*." The term *glory* is translated from the Greek term *doxa*. Some use the term *glory* as though it is a *place*: that is, *heaven*. It is not; it is a *condition*. This is best understood in the context of Hebrews 1:1-4 where Paul describes the *condition* to which the human Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father.

The human Jesus Christ was, in effect, *born again* into a *condition of life* that is an exact copy of the *doxa* (brightness, splendor, radiance) of the Father. Jesus Christ went through the process that is explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. In fact, Paul says in Hebrews 2:10 that Jesus Christ is the *captain* (Greek = *archegos*) of our salvation ... which means, according to Acts 26:22, 23, that He was the *first* human to go through the *rebirth* process from flesh to spirit (see also 1 Cor. 15:20).

Notice that Hebrews 2:11 says that the one who *sanctifies* (sets apart for holy purposes by cleansing and/or separating from defiled things) and those who are set apart for holy purposes "are all of one" (*KJV*). Other translations render it "have one Father" (*MLB*) or "have one origin" (*RSV*) or "are of the same stock" (*The Jerusalem Bible*). *The Anchor Bible: To the Hebrews* posits that "all of one" probably means "from one father, namely Abraham" and concludes that this expression "constitutes a religious family, 'from one [father]'" (p. 32).

In the context of Hebrews 2, it is a declaration that Jesus Christ's fundamental responsibility is to guide God's "children" through the process of actually entering the *God Family* by *rebirth*. That is the intention of Paul's use of the term "adoption" in Ephesians 1:4-6. Being "chosen in Christ" is important to the discussion. Being "made acceptable in the beloved" is important to



the discussion. Being brought to the point of “adoption” is also important. Why?

Ephesians 1:13, 14 explains why God calls us through the *Gospel of the Kingdom*. In order to guarantee that we will receive the *adoption* as children through Jesus Christ (our ultimate salvation), He seals us with a partial payment of the Holy Spirit. It is an *earnest* payment (a binding pledge in a bargain) “until the *redemption* of the purchased possession.” What does *redemption* mean here? It is safe to assume that we know what until means.

The Greek term for redemption is *apolutrosis*, which means two things: (1) freedom from the consequences of one’s sins and (2) freedom from the limitations of the flesh. Paul alludes to this in Romans 8:23 by explaining that the *adoption* is the *redemption of our bodies!* Apply the definition of *apolutrosis* here. When you are “born again,” you will have been forever forgiven of any and all of your sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ... in effect, you will have been “bought back” from eternal death and destruction (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

In addition to that, you will have been made suitable to “... put on immortality and ... incorruptibility” (1 Cor. 15:52-54). That *rebirth* will free you from the limitations of the flesh-and-blood body. You will be able to travel at the speed of thought to practically any destination you desire. In that regard, you will be *like the wind* (John 3:8). You will have been *born again* (John 3:3, 7, 8). If you are at all familiar with the New Testament accounts of Jesus Christ in His post-resurrection body, you know that He was able to leave a sealed tomb (the stone was not rolled away to let Him out; it was rolled away to let His disciples in) and to appear in houses that were locked (John 20:19; 26). He also appeared out of nowhere to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9).

This is the framework for the *covenants* and *testaments* we are discussing. Both govern the legal disposition of God’s promises relative to the behavior of the people. Fulfillment of the promises is sealed with an oath by which it is made immutable (Heb. 6:13-20), but inclusion in the covenant inheritance is conditioned upon holiness, blamelessness, and love relative to God and fellowman. It is ultimately not about simply inheriting land and living a human life in peace and prosperity. It is not about going to heaven to live in eternal bliss and splendor. *It is about becoming God’s Kingdom.*

We will now discuss the development of the Abrahamic covenant relative to Israel and the coming of that Kingdom.

## Why Did the Lord God Call Abram?

The beginning of the relationship between the Lord God and Abram is revealed in Genesis 12:1. Except for Genesis 11:27-32, there is no “back story” to explain who Abram was or what qualities he possessed that attracted the Lord God to him. The story begins with the Lord God’s command that Abram was to leave his father’s house and go to a land that the Lord God would show him.

One of the stories handed down in history (perhaps, more properly defined in that sense as a *legend*) tells us that Abram’s father, Terah, was an idol maker. Abram had come to believe in one God ... not numerous gods, as was the proclivity of the Chaldeans and others among whom Abram lived. He went into his father’s idol shop one day and became so disgusted with the display of numerous gods that he took a sturdy rod and began to destroy all but one of the idols in his father’s shop. When Terah asked who had done such a thing, Abram’s reply was: “The one true God whom I serve.” In actual fact, there is no historical source that supports such a story.

However, the renowned Jewish historian, Flavious Josephus (an Israelite from the priestly family of Levi, more accurately known as Joseph ben Matthias), says that Abram was greatly wise and very persuasive in the things that he taught others. The world was full of many “gods” and “lords” after the Great Flood ... but Abram taught otherwise. He based his “theology” on observations he had made regarding the heavenly bodies. He was skilled in astronomy.

Josephus ascribes the following quote to Abram:

If these [heavenly] bodies had power of their own, they would certainly take care of their own regular motions; but since they do not preserve such regularity, they make it plain, that in so far as they co-operate [*sic*] to our advantage, they do it not of their own abilities, but as they are subservient to Him that commands them; to whom

alone we ought justly to offer our honor and thanksgiving  
(*Josephus: Complete Works: The Antiquities of the Jews*  
[Book 1, Chapter 6, verse 5], William Whiston, translator;  
Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications; 1960; p. 32).

Such language and thought are reminiscent of Paul's observation in Romans 1:18-25. In Whiston's footnotes, he avers that Josephus used historical records available during his lifetime and before (Ibid.). From such information, it would be understandable that the Lord God could have been attracted to such a person.

The Apostle Paul was killed by the Romans about AD 68. Josephus, who also was a Pharisee, was born in AD 37; so, it is not impossible that Paul could have known of him. He never acknowledges having known him. However, Paul writes in Romans 4:3 that God was pleased enough with Abraham's beliefs that He credited him with *righteousness*. One has only to remember that Josephus all but declares that Abram was a "voice in the wilderness" during his own time. He was a "theological" minority. That, in and of itself, would be reason enough for the Lord God to believe that He could enter a relationship with him and succeed in making that relationship permanent. Beyond that, there is little said about why the Lord God called Abram to be a partner in a covenant relationship.

We can see from Genesis 4:25 to Genesis 12:1 that there was a lineage from Seth to Abraham, before and after the Great Flood, that included several "ministers of righteousness" (including Noah). It was not until Genesis 11:10-14 that we discover the progenitor of the Hebrew race: Eber. His descendants, the Hebrews, became famous for their belief in one God. Although it is not written in the scriptural record, it is not impossible that Abraham was a continuing link in that line of "ministers of righteousness" who believed in the existence of the one God who controlled the earth, moon, stars, and affairs of humans. Considering that Paul says that His existence is *self-evident* in the things He has made (Rom. 1:20), it is not unreasonable to believe that Abram was not alone in the universe ... even though he was a veritable "voice in the wilderness" where he lived.

Beyond all of that discussion, we cannot discount the fact that the Lord God made His own decision about whom to call into a covenant relationship with Himself. Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Paul asserts that God is not interested in the wisdom of the world system in which we live. Apparently, nothing about it recommends itself to God. It would be easy to think that the rich, noble, educated, and worldly-wise could be able to construct a foundation for relationships with God and fellowman. Ask yourself how that has worked through the millennia with human governments.

The conclusion we can reach is that the Lord God found in Abram a man with whom He could make a covenant offer and be assured that he would keep it. We have to remember, however, that Abram, as a human being, was flawed and, as much as any other human being, needed the Lord God's grace and mercy to become the "Father of the Faith." It is in that vein that Paul writes in Romans 4:1-9 that God *imputed* righteousness to Abram because of his faith. That means that the Lord God exercised *grace* (something that cannot be earned, bought, or paid back) toward Abram and, thereby, *considered* him to be morally right and justifiable in his thoughts and ways (see Isa. 55:8, 9) ... despite whatever human weaknesses he otherwise might have had.

## The Fundamental Principle of the Abrahamic Covenant

Considering the above discussion, we have to understand what the Lord God planned to achieve with a covenant relationship with Abram. That is the topic of Genesis 12. Let's sort through the information to discover the answer. Verses 1-3 give us a starting point. Four things are outstanding: (1) showing him a land, (2) making of (or, *from*) him a great nation, (3) blessing him greatly, and (4) blessing all other nations through him.

Verse 5 reveals that the land the Lord God had in mind was *Canaan*. Verse 7 is the first time that scripture mentions the Lord God *appearing* to Abram. It seems that He did so specifically to show Abram the land and tell him face-to-face that He will give the land to his "seed." The Hebrew term for "seed" is *zara* and refers to Abram's posterity/descendants. This is the Lord God's

promise. You can see it repeated and expanded in Genesis 13:15, 16; 17:8; and 22:18.

Pay close attention to the slight, but highly significant, change in the Lord God's message to Abram in Genesis 13:15, 16: *The Lord God promises to give Abram the land forever*. In v.16, He promises to bless Abram with a staggering number of descendants: "If a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered." You must understand that this staggering number of descendants will accrue through numerous generations over time.

It is here that you need to understand the lesson of Isaiah 55:10, 11. The Lord God demonstrates how the rain and snow benefit the earth by watering it to make things grow. It is a continuous cycle of evaporation to form clouds that dispense the water over and over again in due seasons. For the most part, that was how this cycle of nature was designed to operate. It was created by the *word* of God (compare Gen. 1:6-8 to John 1:1-3). The "waters" were separated between the earth and the upper atmosphere in order to provide a "watering" system for the plant and animal life on earth.

By comparison, the Lord God says that His word serves the purpose for which He utters it and sends it abroad. There are two *unfailing* aspects of His word: (1) It is not uttered for vain and empty purposes (He does not talk just to hear Himself talk), and (2) It will accomplish the purpose for which He sends it. Your trust in His word is the wellspring of faith. We will see this in Genesis 15:6.

Genesis 15 is a most important account of the formation of this covenant relationship between the Lord God and Abram. Why? It is because of two integral pieces of the covenant: *territory* and *descendants*. According to Genesis 12:4, Abram was 75 years old when this relationship began. His wife Sarai was 65 years old (see Gen. 17:17 to see the age difference between them: 10 years). She was barren; so, Abram had no children whom he could designate as his heirs. From where was he going to get the "seed" as numerous as the dust of the earth? At this point, his faith was being put on trial. By what means would the Lord God's *word* (promise) make it possible for Abram to have descendants and heirs?

Abram tested the Lord God by explaining that conundrum to Him. Abram suggested that he should be allowed to adopt his house steward (a trusted servant who managed the affairs of Abram's household) and make him his heir (vv. 1-3). The Lord God rejected that plan and explained to Abram that He intended for Abram to be the sperm-donor – the actual father of his own descendant. Then He took Abram outside to show him the stars of the universe. He told Abram: “So shall your seed be.” I recently viewed a documentary that explained that the grains of sand on the seashores of earth are roughly equal to the number of stars in the ever-increasing universe. Again, this is a staggering promise!

That's when we see the faith of Abram on display in v. 6: “He *believed in the Lord*; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” I think *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* makes a pregnant comment about this verse:

The variable translation of Hebrew *he'emin* as “believed” does not always do justice to the original. The base [the simplest] sense of the form is “to affirm, recognize as valid.” In other words, the result is not so much a matter of objective faith as of absolute fact. Our “Amen” [“Let it be done as it has been said”] derives from the same Hebrew root (E.A. Speiser, Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1964; p. 113; emphases added).

In order to better understand the difference between “objective faith” and “absolute fact,” we need to consult two New Testament scriptures: Romans 4:13-17 and Hebrews 11:1.

*Objective faith* does not focus so much on the *literal, absolute fact* of a matter. A suitable example would be the inclination and strong preference of mainstream Christianity to allegorize the promises of the Lord God to Abram and conclude that He is not promising Abram the actual territory described in Genesis 15:18-20. They believe that the Lord God is promising Abram a place in heaven.

The sense presented by Speiser in *The Anchor Bible* is simple: *Abram accepted the Lord God's promise as an actual fact. He actually believed that his descendants will be as numerous as the*

grains of sand on the seashores of the earth and the stars in the sky. He *actually* believed that the land that the Lord God promised him (Gen 15:18-20) was as good as received. The allegorized concept would tacitly imply that Abram was an ill-informed fool for believing the Lord god's promise as an *absolute fact*. Remember Isaiah 55:11. Now, let's consider Romans 4:17 and Hebrews 11:1.

Romans 4:13-17 reveals several factors that were "baked into" Abram's faith: (1) There was no *law* that forced the Lord God to make His promises ... that kind of arrangement could have created a means by which the promise could have been voided (vv. 13, 14); (2) because of Abram's *faith* and the Lord God's *grace*, the promise also was secured to all of Abram's descendants (v. 16); (3) Abram believed that the Lord God will raise the dead to life (see Heb. 11:17-19) – which implies that Abram believed that the fulfillment of the Lord God's promise could come long after he was dead and buried ... and returned to his dust (Matt. 22:23-33); and (4) Abram believed that the Lord God calls things that do not presently exist as though they already exist – which implies that Abram believed that the Lord God's promises were as good as done ... even if He had to raise Abram from the dead in order to fulfill His promises to him. The remainder of Romans 4 explains the depth and unshakable nature of Abram's faith in *absolute fact*.

Notice the definition of *faith* given in Hebrews 11:1: It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." How does that fit into the above discussion? Focus on the following terms: *substance* and *evidence*.

I am partial to Adam Clarke's explanation of this verse. He refers to the Greek term *hypostasis* (substance) to demonstrate that faith is the *foundation* upon which other things stand. If that foundation is weak or non-existent, then anything that is built upon such a foundation has a precarious existence (read Matt. 7:21-27).

His explanation of *evidence*, which is translated from the Greek term *elenchos*, is remarkable:

*Elenchos* (*evidence*) signifies such a "conviction" as is produced in the mind by the "demonstration" [to show by reasoning and proof] of a problem, after which demonstration *no doubt can remain*, because we see from it that *the thing is, that it cannot but be, and that it cannot*



*be otherwise than as it is and is proved to be* (Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Ralph Earle, Ed.). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967; p. 1275; emphases added).

Thus, we can see how and why Abram accepted the Lord God's promise as *absolute fact*. *We can see in this explanation the fundamental principle that undergirds the Abrahamic Covenant.* As a demonstration of this, Paul explains in Hebrews 6:13-20 how this faith in *absolute fact* works. As you read Paul's explanation, please be aware that he wrote this to *Christians*. This is important because millions of "Christians" sing very lustily the old hymn "Standing on the Promises of God" with the fervent belief that such promises include *going to heaven* as an eternal reward. Read this carefully and follow Paul's reasoning.

Paul's reference point in this discussion is Genesis 15. In the Lord God's discussion with Abram, He *promised* Abram a multitude of descendants and a parcel of land between the Nile and Euphrates rivers. There was a ritual performed whereby some animals served as the basis of an *oath* that would certify the integrity of the *promise*. That ritual was undergirded with a *caveat*: a warning against unfair practices. In this case, the oath binds the covenant parties against breaking the terms of the covenant. Any party doing so will be committed to a *death* not unlike that which the sacrificial animals suffered. It is extraordinarily interesting that the Lord God committed Himself to such an oath.

Paul begins in v. 13 to show the depth of the Lord God's oath: There was no greater name than His own upon which He could make such an oath (Phil. 2:9-11). In v. 15, Paul shows that Abram did, in fact, receive the *promise* from the Lord God. His comment there does not mean that Abram *actually* assumed possession of the land itself. He means that Abram came into possession of a *secured promise* that will be made real by the Lord God at His appointed time. All of that is made clear in Genesis 15:13-21. Verse 18 says that it has been given to Abram and his descendants ... but Genesis 15:13-16 show that those descendants did not presently exist at the time of the promise and that Abram would die "in a good old age" (v. 15). So, Abram got a *secured promise*, but



he did not take possession of the parcel of land that was promised (read Heb. 11:8-16).

In Hebrews 6:16-18, Paul explains the oath process and its implications. The oath was sworn by the greater name: The Lord God's. The idea of the oath was to establish the immutability of the promise. In v. 17, Paul calls it "the immutability of his counsel" (KJV), which means *the unchangeable nature of His resolve to do such a thing as He promised*. Paul further explains that the promise was made immutable by the immutable oath. Because of the nature of the oath (death to the offending partner), it made it impossible for the Lord God to lie. Such an oath did not include Abram because he was asleep while the Lord God walked among the dead carcasses (vv. 12, 17). What this means is that the Lord God took upon Himself the sole responsibility to make sure that the promise would be fulfilled as made. Abram was not included in the ritual to secure the promise. Why did the Lord God do such a thing?

In the last part of v. 18 through v. 20, Paul points out that this is for Christians to know and understand because they are the "seed" of Abraham through Jesus Christ (see Gal. 3:26-29). At the proper time in God's plan for mankind, this promise and oath will bring forth the reality that the Lord God intended ... and He has planned resurrections from the dead to make sure that no one from any age of man from Adam forward will be left out if they become Abraham's children through Jesus Christ. Paul calls it a "strong consolation," a "refuge," and a "sure and steadfast anchor of our hearts and minds."

The Greek term psuche (*soul*; KJV), in this case, refers to the seat and center of the inner life of man in its many and varied aspects – especially man's spirituality. Most translations assume that Paul is referring to the immortal soul – a concept that is foreign to scriptural revelation. Paul completes this explanation by showing that Jesus Christ (who was the Lord God who entered this covenant with Abram) has made it eternally secure within the true Holy of Holies in the Temple of Heaven. *That is the fundamental principle that undergirds the covenant the Lord God made with Abram.*

## Review Questions

1. Why are the “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and Israel and the “Kingdom of God” important to our discussion?
2. What four things are needed to comprise a *kingdom*?
3. Explain John 3:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:50 relative to being *born again*. Is this merely indicative of a *spiritual conversion* like Paul discusses in Romans 12:2? Explain.
4. What is meant by the expression in Hebrews 2:10 about Christ “bringing many sons to glory”?
5. Why is “glory” not a *place*?
6. How does the Greek term *archegos* help us to understand both the “born again” expression and the question about “glory” being a “place” or “condition”?
7. How does Hebrews 2:11 help to clarify the situation?
8. In what way does the term “adoption” in Ephesians 1:4-6 help?
9. Why are the following important to the discussion: (1) being “chosen in Christ”; (2) being “made acceptable in the beloved”; and (3) being brought to the point of “adoption”?
10. In Ephesians 1:13, 14, what is significant about being *sealed* with the Holy Spirit?
11. Explain the term *redemption* as it is used in Ephesians 1:14 and Romans 8:23. How does it relate to being “born again”?
12. Why is this considered to be part of the *framework* for the *covenants* and *testaments* we are discussing? (Hint: Define *framework*.)

13. Is it absolutely true that Abram's father was an idol maker? Explain your answer.

14. For what reason did the Lord God choose to make a covenant with Abram?

15. Going back to Adam, from whose lineage is Abram determined? How was Abram made to be a *Semite* and a *Hebrew*?

16. What four outstanding elements are included in the Lord God's covenant with Abram?

17. What is the importance of the Lord God's promise to Abram in Genesis 13:15, 16 with relationship to Isaiah 55:10, 11? What would be the possibility of the Lord God changing His mind about this promise? Does He *really* mean "forever"?

18. What would you have to be able to do in order to count Abram's promised descendants?

19. Why is Genesis 15 a most important account of the formation of this covenant relationship between the Lord God and Abram? How did the Lord God test Abram in this account? What was significant about the Lord God's statement that Abram's heir would be *his* "seed"?

20. What is the difference between *objective faith* and *absolute fact*?

21. According to Romans 4:13-17, what four factors were "baked into" Abram's faith?

22. With regard to the definition of *faith*, explain the terms *substance* and *evidence* used in Hebrews 11:1 (KJV).

23. In Genesis 15:8-11, 17, 18, what is the significance of the ritual the Lord God performed? How does Paul explain it in Hebrews 6:13-20? In what way does this apply to Christians?

24. Why is all of this information the *fundamental principle* that undergirds the covenant the Lord God made with Abram? Write down a simple statement based on *promise* and *oath* that explains this covenant.

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## Chapter Three

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# Inheriting the Covenant

**H**ow was the Abrahamic covenant passed from Abraham to his descendants? It is important to understand this information because it enables you to understand the relationship that developed between the Lord God and *Israel*. It helps you to understand exactly what the “promises of God” actually were. If you completely understand these things, then it will be more difficult for you to be deceived by those who teach *another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit* (2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15).

With that in mind, the objective of this study is to demonstrate the ideas involved in the opening considerations of: the definitions of *covenant* and *testament*, the *death* that is involved, who ultimately became the caretaker of the covenant, and the proper understanding that true Christians should have concerning it.

### The “Seed” Concept

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden under the temptation of the Serpent, the Lord God made judgments relative to the “seed” of the Serpent and the “seed” of Eve (Gen. 3:14-16). Because Adam and Eve had been created to perpetuate mankind as the “God-kind” (Gen. 1:26-28), it was vitally necessary for them to take upon themselves the character of God: holiness, blamelessness, and lovingkindness (see Eph. 1:4; 1 John 4:8). This would be more easily accomplished if they could avoid the mixture

of the knowledge of good and evil (2:15-17). The penalty for not doing so would be a death from which they would not be recovered (Gen. 3:19). That death, if it had been *immediately* effected, would have ended the quest to reproduce the “God-kind” (see Rom. 6:23). Instead, the Lord God followed the plan that had been constructed before the creation of the orderly universe. We find that plan most succinctly expressed in 1 Peter 1:18-20. I will use this Scripture in concert with Ephesians 1:4-14 and Philippians 2:5-11.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:20 that Jesus Christ was foreordained *before the creation of the orderly universe* to be the redemptive sacrifice for mankind’s sins. This tells us that *Elohim* (the Father and the Word; John 1:1-3) *anticipated, before* the creation of the orderly universe, that man could fail to measure up to their standards of holiness, blamelessness, and lovingkindness. In fact, the human would need to be *rescued* from the sentence of death for their failure to become holy as God is holy (see Lev. 19:2). That *redemptive sacrifice* expresses God’s *grace* even before mankind was created.

The term *redeemed* in 1 Peter 1:18 is from the Greek term *lutroo* (pronounced *loo-truh-oh*), which means that it would be a *ransom that is paid to free prisoners*. If you become the slave of sin (Rom. 6:16), then you are the prisoner/slave of sin ... as opposed to being on the path to becoming God’s very own child. Peter makes it plain that Jesus Christ became that ransom *before anything* in the orderly universe had even been created. He would be, in fact, the *atonement sacrifice* (*both* goats in Lev. 16). How was that decided?

Philippians 2:5-11 gives us the clues we need in order to understand how this actually happened. Please be aware that Paul is discussing the same point in time (before the creation of the orderly universe) when he writes this. In this, it is apparent that he strikes a difference between God and the Word God (John 1:1-3).

He shows that the two were *equals* (v. 6). Neither was in charge above the other. The Word, however, “made himself of no reputation.” In other words, the Word made the personal choice to become *subject* to His divine partner. For what reason? Verses 7, 8 show that it was for the purpose of becoming the “seed” of *mankind*. He maintained His nature of being “God,” but He volunteered to give up His *spirit composition* to become a human

(see Matt. 1:20-23; John 1:1-3, 14). Hebrews 2:16 tells us two very important things about His decision: (1) He chose to become a human as opposed to becoming an angel, and (2) He chose to become the “seed” of Abraham (KJV).

It is safe to say that decision #1 was made *before* the creation of the orderly universe. It would appear that decision #2 was not a choice before the sin of Adam and Eve ... maybe some time after that. I will explain that comment in more detail as this discussion develops below.

In other words, the Word chose to be the redeeming sacrifice so that man would not be summarily wiped out and end the creation of the “God-kind.” When this choice was made, the divine partner became the “God” and “Father” of the Word (Eph. 1:3). You might be able to understand this better by reading Exodus 4:16 and 7:1. In those cases, the term *elohiym* means that someone becomes a *divine appointee* who has divine authority over someone else. When the Word subordinated Himself (divested Himself of His divine equality) to His divine partner, His divine partner assumed a level of divine authority over Him.

The Father then did something that few today understand (vv. 9-11): He elevated the Word God to the highest position over all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. In other words, the Word thereupon became the Chief Executive Officer of the plan He and His divine partner had created for reproducing their own kind through the creation of humans. Paul reiterates this idea in Colossians 1:19 when he says that Jesus Christ was given *the full power of the Godhead* – as Jesus Christ expressed it in Matthew 28:18: “All power is given to me in heaven and on earth.” He was in charge of the creation and enforcing the plan and the redemption of sinful mankind ... even being the redeeming sacrifice. That is the impact of 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, where Paul explains in no uncertain terms that we are not our own because we have been bought with a price: the redeeming death of Jesus Christ – who was, in fact, *the Lord God of the Old Testament*.

Jesus Christ covers this idea in John 10:30 when He declares that He and the Father are “one” – that is, they are in spiritual unity relative to the divine purpose they had planned before the creation of the orderly universe (see also John 17:5). In John 14:28, He admits that: “the Father is greater than I.” Paul makes an

astonishing claim in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 that verifies all of this very succinctly by showing that Jesus Christ actually has the authority over all things *except the Father* (v. 27). Paul also shows that when Jesus Christ has completed His mission, He will subject Himself to the Father and return all of that great power to Him (v. 29).

That said, let's consider Genesis 3:15 regarding the woman's "seed." Many biblical interpreters (exegetes, or exegetists) recognize that the "seed" to which the Lord God refers is *Jesus Christ*. It is here prophetically revealed that a *human being* will be the sacrifice for the sin committed by Adam and Eve ... a sin by which all humans became guilty before God (Gal. 3:22; Isa. 53:6). It is revealed there that this "Seed" would execute judgment upon the serpent and all of those who become the serpent's "seed" through sin and rebellion against God. Read John 8:33-47 and note how Jesus Christ shows that those who rejected Him might originally have come through the lineage of Abraham, but they had abandoned the faith and works of Abraham and become the "seed" of Satan the Devil. Therefore, Genesis 3:15 provides the backdrop against which this "Seed" concept must be understood.

When we get to Genesis 4, we find Eve wrongly applying the prophecy of 3:15 to the birth of Cain. Eve's experiences with the temptation and the prophecy about her "Seed" coming to deal with the sin she and Adam fell into made a great impression upon her. You must remember that Eve had been "tainted" by the temptation experience. She now had knowledge of good and evil. She now had experienced moral independence from God. She would never be pure and innocent again. She would operate with the influence of a carnal mind, even if she subsequently acquired any measure of God's spirit.

The carnal mind, as Paul explains in Romans 8:6, 7, is set on the things of the flesh and is in opposition to God's ways and laws. Anything she came to understand after the temptation experience was likewise "tainted." This would include her understanding of the male "Seed" that was to be born of her. This would include the birth of her firstborn son Cain.

A strange thing happened in Genesis 4. For whatever reason, it appears that Eve *misinterpreted* the Lord God's prophecy about the coming "Redeeming Seed." But, the translation of the text was



*changed*, which, in effect, hides Eve’s mistake. Many who have attempted to justify the change in translation – and it appears to have been a conscious decision to change it – did so because they felt that the idea expressed in the original Hebrew was too sophisticated for Eve’s theological knowledge and concepts so soon after her creation.

Adam Clarke probably expressed it best when he commented about Eve’s reaction to Cain’s birth:

[The verse reads:] “*I have gotten a man from the Lord.*” “Cain” signifies “acquisition”; hence Eve says *kanithi*, “I have gotten or acquired a man, *eth Jehovah*, the Lord.” ...*Most expositors think that Eve imagined Cain to be the promised “seed” that should bruise the head of the serpent*” (Ibid; p. 24; emphases added).

In other words, Clarke demonstrated that the original Hebrew text should have been translated: “I have acquired a man, [even] the Lord.” The literal translation would be something like: “***I have given birth to Jehovah.***” But ... notice the turn Clarke made in his thinking.

He postulated two ideas, but he took the idea that would most closely conform to the *common translation*. The first idea is in this statement:

Unless she had been *under divine inspiration* she could not have called her son (even supposing him to be the promised “seed”) *Jehovah*; and that she was not under such an influence *her mistake* sufficiently proves, for Cain, so far from being the Messiah, was of the wicked one; 1 John iii.12. ***We may therefore suppose that eth Jehovah, “the Lord,” is an elliptical form of expression for meeth Jehovah, “from the Lord,” or “through divine blessing*” (Ibid; emphases added).**

An “elliptical form of expression” is one in which one or more words have been left out that, perhaps, are *meant but not stated*. An example of this is: “Spare the rod, spoil the child” What is *meant but not stated* is: “*If you spare the rod, you will spoil the*

child.” Another example is: “Feed a cold, starve a fever.” What is *meant but not stated* is: “*If you feed a cold, you will have to starve a fever.*” (The *ellipsis* in that saying is the point ... not whether or not the saying is true. There are several variations of that saying.) One faulty assumption that Clarke makes is that we can “suppose,” or assume for argument’s sake, that the *elliptical* expression is the *truth* of the matter.

Clarke *assumed* that Eve was not under *divine inspiration* to claim that Cain was *Jehovah*; therefore, she must have *meant* for her statement to indicate that she gave birth to a male *as a blessing from God, or with the help of God*. Some expositors that I have read conclude that Eve meant that *God* was the actual father of the child, not Adam. *Mary* was that kind of woman (Matt. 1:18).

Why did Clarke make such a statement? Why did he come to such a conclusion? The answer to those questions is found in Clarke’s second idea: “*This exposition really seems too refined for that period*” (Ibid.)

Is it unreasonable to assume that Eve could not have made a simple *mistake* about this promised “Seed”? Is it too far-fetched to assume that Eve would have made a connection between the prophecy about the “Seed” that would bruise the serpent’s head and the birth of a firstborn male child? Did Eve *have* to be under divine inspiration to equate this male child with *Jehovah* – the name that many commentators equate with the *Savior* God? Are we under any obligation, therefore, to assume that Eve left something out of her statement or that she meant *from* the Lord instead of *even* the Lord? To all of those questions the answer is “No.”

Eve’s misinterpretation of the Lord God’s prophecy was a product of a carnal assessment of the Lord God’s prophecy about the “Seed.” It was a product of eyes that see but do not perceive and ears that hear but do not understand (Isaiah 6:9). Remember that the influence of the serpent and the knowledge of good and evil did not end when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden.

Think logically about this for a moment. Was there any reason for Eve to believe that 4,000+ years would pass before the Lord God would fulfill the prophecy? She was told that *her* seed would bruise the serpent’s head (see Gen. 3:20). Was there any reason for her to believe that it would be fulfilled in the life of any one of

millions of *seeds* from multiple generations of her female descendants? Why would she be led to believe that *she* would perish and return to the dust of the earth *before* the “Seed” would come? The logical conclusion is that Eve believed that the birth of Cain fulfilled the Lord God’s prophecy about the Messiah – the one who would deliver mankind from the effects of her sin! Did not the expression regarding *her* “seed” imply that the “Redeeming Seed” would be a *human*? All of this is, of course, very difficult to *prove*. Who is to say what was “...too refined for that period”?

We can say that Eve was not creating some complicated theological treatise; she was simply making a connection between a prophecy and a birth. It doesn’t take much “refinement” to perform that operation. She was ecstatic at the idea that the Lord God had so soon given mankind the “Seed” who could remedy the breach caused by her and Adam’s sin. She said, in effect: “I have gotten a man, *the Messiah Himself*.”

There is the principle, or law (axiom, maxim), that says: “for every *cause* there is an *effect*.” An example of this is basically bound up in the admonition from God that He will punish the children for the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generations *of those who hate Him*, but show love to a thousand generations *of those who love Him and keep His commandments* (Exodus 20:5). Even though He told Ezekiel that “The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20), it is, nonetheless, a *cause-effect* principle that succeeding generations will be affected by the actions of their parents – sins and righteousness alike.

It should not surprise us, therefore, to find that Eve’s *misinterpretation* of the Lord God’s prophecy had an effect on Cain. How would that have played itself out? Follow the logic carefully here. If Eve believed Cain to have been the *prophesied* “Seed,” that is, the *Savior*, then it would stand to reason that she orientated *him* to that idea. There is no way to tell how much time she spent putting that idea into his head – how much special attention she paid to him because she believed him to be very special.

Did she tell him about the *bruise* he would suffer *on his heel* as a result of dealing the crushing blow to the serpent? Did she tell him about the lesson in blood that she and Adam learned from the Lord God (Gen. 3:21)? Remember that both Adam and Eve had

been affected by the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil ... as have been all humans born after that event occurred. The Lord God did not override the effects of that experience. *The written record is silent about how Eve reacted with Cain about the event.*

Another point of interest comes in Genesis 3:20, where scripture says that "...Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living." Clarke questioned the relationship between the name *Eve* and the definition *the mother of all living*. He pointed out that the original Hebrew should be translated "And Adam called his wife's name *Life*, because she was [to be] the mother of all *living*." Clarke concluded:

Adam called his wife's name "Life," because she was to be the mother of all human beings, and because she was to be the mother of *Him* who was to give life to a world dead in trespasses, and dead in sins (Ibid.).

It is evident – due to the effect of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil – that Eve was a victim of eyes that see but do not perceive and ears that hear but do not understand (Isaiah 6:9). This is a common problem, and there is reason to believe that Eve *thought* she understood what the Lord God had said to her and related it to what had happened; but ... she missed it by a mile!

We must consider also the effect of the Lord God's disdain of Cain's sacrifices and Cain's subsequent murder of Abel. With the death of Abel and the subsequent curse that the Lord God put on Cain, there was no "Seed" that *qualified* to be the Messiah! Did Eve transfer this hope to *Seth* (Gen. 4:25)? When Seth did not set things straight, like a *Savior* would do, did Eve give up the idea that any such "Seed" would be born to *her*? Did other women begin to wonder if *they*, therefore, might be the woman through whom the "Seed" would come? Did other men begin to wonder if *they*, therefore, might be the "Seed of the woman"?

Whatever the answers to those questions might be, it is important to note the concept of the "seed" that leads to the "Redeeming Seed." We have already seen that the Word became Jesus Christ through divine intervention. We have seen that, in His pre-creation position, He was made the Chief Executive Officer of the Elohim plan to reproduce themselves through the adoption of

humans through Christ ... that “Redeeming Seed” (Eph. 1:4-7). Part of those plans involves the Word’s decision to become part of the lineage of Abraham. Finally, we have seen the original prophecy in Genesis 3:15 that suggests that such a “Seed” would, in fact, arise among *humans*. What we need to see now is how that connection is made from Seth to the lineage of Abraham.

### The “Seed” Concept through Seth’s Lineage

One of the most interesting revelations in Scripture occurs in Genesis 4:26 after the birth of Seth’s son, Enos. In v. 25, it is revealed that Eve believed that Seth was born to replace Abel ... whom his brother Cain had slain. That heinous act had resulted in Cain being sent into exile (Gen. 4:8-24). For obvious reasons, any consideration that either Cain or Abel could have been the “Redeeming Seed” disappeared very quickly after that act.

The repetitive sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel, before this incident occurred, seemed to have put Abel into a closer relationship to the Lord God than what Cain enjoyed (see also Hebrews 11:4). The anger that Cain must have felt about being *rejected* time after time by the Lord God drove him to this despicable act. In the bargain, both Cain and Abel were out of consideration for being the “Seed.” With that in mind, it is easier to understand that someone else must be the “Seed.” That leads us to Genesis 4:26.

Moses writes under the direction of the Lord God that it was after Enos was born that “men began to call upon the name of the Lord.” There are several variants to this translation. *The Living Bible* renders it: “call themselves ‘the Lord’s people’.” Moffat renders it: “he [Enos] was the first to worship the Eternal by name [Yahweh].” *The Jerusalem Bible* says in a footnote that others posit that He was not known by that name until He revealed it to Moses in Exodus 3:13, 14. That could be true since Moses wrote the Genesis account centuries after it occurred and called Him *Yahweh* in Genesis 2:4 (Lord God = *Yahweh Elohim*). Some render *Yahweh* as *Jehovah*.

At any rate, with the birth of Enos something new happened among the earth’s people of that area about 235+ years after Adam

was created (add Gen. 5:3 and Gen. 5:6 to get the sum of 235 years). What was it? In the marginal reference of my *KJV*, there is an alternate translation that reads: “then began men *to call themselves by the name of the Lord*” (emphases added). The reference gives no source for that translation. However, you can find information in *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, and *Matthew Henry Commentary*. All of their commentary notwithstanding, we must consider the possibility that some men began to claim that *they* were the “Redeeming Seed.” Why?

It is not unreasonable to conclude that this might very well be a point at which false “Christs” began to appear. Why else would John the Baptist’s father, Zacharias, prophesy that “*since the world began*” there were prophets whom the Lord God raised up to tell of the salvation to come through “a horn of *salvation*” (Luke 1:67-71; emphasis added)? It is evident in the context of Genesis 6:1, 2 that there was a religious schism between those known as “sons of God” and others known as “sons of man.” Why would these early prophets speak of a coming “Redeeming Seed” during those years? Was it merely for informational purposes? Or, could it have been that some among the two groups were claiming to have been that “Seed” – that “horn of salvation”? The possibility looms large if there were some men who called themselves *Yahweh* – the *redemptive* name of deity.

Now go to Genesis 5 and read the lineage from Adam to Noah. What do you see in this relative to Seth? Can you see that it is also *Seth's* lineage after his birth to Adam and Eve? Instead of discussing Noah and the universal flood at this point, I want to continue this lineage to find out where it leads.

Genesis 10 is the lineage of Noah through his three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (v. 1). You will need to do some back-tracking from Genesis 11:26 to figure out how to follow that lineage from Noah to Abram (Abraham). Genesis 11:10 begins by saying: “These are the generations of Shem.” So, *Shem* is the connection between Noah and Abraham. Shem is the one through whom the *Shemites* (Semites) come. In 11:14, you see the birth of *Eber*. He is the father of the *Hebrews*. Hebrews are Shemites.

Abram would have been a Shemite Hebrew. So, Seth's lineage goes through Noah to Shem to Abram.

What is the significance of that? Simply this: This is the lineage through which the "Redeeming Seed" was to be born. If you doubt this, read the lineage of Jesus Christ through Mary in Luke 3:23-38. Verse 23 should read: "...Joseph, which was the son-in-law of Heli [Mary's father]" (*Clarke*; p. 861). You can see in Matthew 1:16 that Joseph's father was Jacob. You also can see the Seth-Noah-Shem-Eber-Abram connection in Luke 3:34-38. What is the point of this discussion?

You should be able to see that salvation from sin was preached from the foundation of this present age ... from Adam forward to Jesus Christ. You should be able to see that expositors have it right when they show that *Yahweh Elohim* is the Savior name in the Godhead. One of those expositors is Dr. C. I. Scofield in his work in *The Scofield Reference Edition of the King James Version of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909; footnotes #2 and #3 to Genesis 2:4):

It is significant that the first appearance of the name Jehovah in Scripture follows the creation of man. It was God (*Elohim*) who said, "Let us make man in our own image" (Gen. 1. 26); but when man, as in the second chapter of Genesis, is to fill the scene and become dominant over creation, it is the Lord God (*Jehovah*) who acts...

Jehovah is distinctly the redemption name of Deity. When sin entered and redemption became necessary, it was Jehovah Elohim who sought the sinning ones (Gen. 3. 9-13) and clothed them with "coats of skins" (Gen. 3. 21), a beautiful type of a righteousness provided by the Lord God through sacrifice (Rom. 3. 21, 22; emphases added).

The "coats of skins" in Genesis 3:21 were prophetic symbols of the death that the "Redeeming Seed" would suffer as a result of having been foreordained to that office before the creation of the orderly universe (1 Pet. 1:18-20). Paul reveals in Philippians 2:5-8 that this *Yahweh Elohim* (the Lord God) is the one who became



Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14). All of this explains how Yahweh Elohim “took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). John 1:1-3 explains the plurality of the Hebrew term *Elohim*: Yahweh Elohim was one of *two* divine beings who, before the creation of the orderly universe, conceived of creating humans to be in their image (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; 3:22; John 17:5; Phil. 2:5-8) and of providing the necessary redemption for sin (Eph. 1:3, 4).

## Nimrod: A Mighty Hunter in Opposition to God

Genesis 10 gives us a short history of one of Noah’s great-grandsons through his son Ham and grandson Cush. You can see from vv. 6-20 that the sons of Ham gave birth to generations of Gentiles who were nothing less than continual plagues to the lineage of Abraham: Philistines, Canaanites, Sidonians, Sodom, and Gomorrah ... to name a few. The one who has had the longest lasting effect upon all of mankind was *Nimrod* – described in 10:8, 9 as: “a mighty one in the earth. ... the mighty hunter before the Lord.” You can begin to understand why I say that when you read that the beginning of his kingdom was *Babel*. You can understand even more fully when you read Genesis 11:1-9. Let me explain something of interest and importance to you relative to Nimrod.

Two years after the flood, Shem was 100 years old. He lived an additional 500 years from that time (Gen. 11:10, 11). Based on Ussher’s reckoning of the creation date (4004 BC – a date with which I disagree), the universal flood would have taken place about 2348 BC. Let me add a note of caution: *I present this only as a model, not for confirmed historical dates.*

According to Genesis 11:10, 11, Shem was 100 years old two years after the flood. According to this demonstration model, that would have been 2346 BC. From that, you can calculate that Shem was born in 2446 BC. The same verses say that he lived an additional 500 years after the birth of his first son Arphaxad. From that, you can see that he would have died in 1846 BC (2446 – 600 = 1846 BC). My focus is on this 600-year lifespan, not on the accuracy of the dates in the model.

The following information represents the lifespan overlap from Shem to Jacob. I use the Ussher dating merely as a means by



which to demonstrate the point I am making about whom Shem might have known and with whom he might have been personally acquainted.

Genesis 11:10-26 shows that there were 290 years between Arphaxad's birth and Abram's birth. Add vv. 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 26 to get the total. Shem would have been 390 years old (100 years old two years after the flood + 290 = 390) when Abram was born (2056 BC). Genesis 21:15 says that Abram lived 175 years; so, he died in 1881 BC. He was 100 years old when Isaac was born (2056 BC – 100 = 1956 BC). Shem was 490 years old when Isaac was born (2446 BC – 1956 BC = 490 years).

Isaac lived 180 years and died in 1776 BC (1956 BC – 180 = 1776 BC). He was 60 years old when Esau and Jacob were born (1956 BC – 60 = 1896 BC). Subtract 1896 BC from 2446 BC and it equals 550 years. Shem was 550 years old when Jacob was born. Jacob lived 147 years (1896 BC – 1749 BC = 147 years). Jacob was born in 1896 BC, and Shem died 1846 BC. Thus, Shem could have known Jacob for 50 years. But ... scripture is silent on the subject about whether or not Shem was acquainted with any of his great-grandsons: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being three of them.

One thing we definitely know: Shem knew Nimrod – his grand-nephew in his brother Ham's line (Gen. 10:6-8). This is important in our discussion for one simple reason: We have to understand that the concept of the "Redeeming Seed" had not been forgotten for well over 1,600 years from the Garden of Eden. Nimrod played an important part in the perpetuation of that prophecy. It is from his life that we can understand the serious threat to God's truth that is embedded in the life of the world's first *tyrant* (*Moffatt*: "Nimrod, *the first man on earth to be a despot*"; Gen. 10:8, 9; emphasis added). He lived for 129 years between 2182 BC and 2053 BC. His wife, Semiramus lived 42 years longer (2011 BC).

Nimrod was committed to a life of "hunting." He probably began his road to greatness as a hunter of the wild animals (the population of which had exploded) that plagued people after the flood. However, he was influenced by his father, Cush, to become part of an apostate movement to lead men away from the worship of the True God. He invented weapons of war, enlisted men to be soldiers of war, and set about with a design to conquer for himself a sizeable kingdom over which to rule. He subdued all the peoples

of the East. He also persecuted others and deceived them into believing that he was a great power who could protect them and bless them – or curse them if they resisted him. He built great cities with high walls and watchtowers so people could live in them free from concern about the ravages of the animals and the enemies Nimrod made as a result of his exploits.

In every sense of the word, Nimrod was a great hunter in rebellion against God. And ... he taught others to totally disdain the True God as an enemy and to trust in their own power to get whatever they wanted. Most important of all, even though he was a mere human, Nimrod ascended to the rank of “god.” People revered him as “god,” and he immortalized himself in myth and legend. Hislop concurred by saying:

The amazing extent of the worship of this man indicates something very extraordinary in his character; and there is ample reason to believe, that in his own day he was an object of high popularity ... he was held by many to have conferred benefits upon them, that amply indemnified them for the loss of their liberties, and covered him with glory and renown ((Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1916 [first edition]; pp. 94, 95).

Nimrod became a tyrant in order to force his will upon the inhabitants of the earth. While he considered himself a Priest of the Sun while he was alive, it is clear that he had designs on something greater than a priesthood. The process used to ingratiate the people to himself led to his deification after his death. If the truth were known, he probably accepted quite a bit of worship as a god before he died – especially if he considered himself to be a carnal representation of the Sun.

Nimrod led the people to rebel against God and vowed revenge upon Him if He interfered. To prove his own personal strength, he invented the means by which he could perform miracles through the use of magic and sorcery. That magic included the use of shaking buildings, shaking grounds, lightning, thunder, and various types of healing – including bringing people back from the dead through necromancy. It is probable that he learned his magic

through the interposition of a familiar spirit. Once he learned it, he taught his “priests” how they could possess the same skills in concert with him and the religion he perpetrated.

Part of his religious program included the use of idolatry, by which he elevated the creature above the Creator. The use of such like symbolism also led to the creation of the religious mythology that served as a “mystery” for those who were initiated into it. Only they could understand the true meaning of the mythology. To the outsider, it appeared to be a harmless story that entertained them. However, to the “initiated,” it appeared that he had extraordinary power and spiritual insight. Why? From Where?

The driving force behind all of this was the *Serpent* – that figure that played such a prominent role in the Garden of Eden. God revealed in Isaiah 14 the relationship between the guardian cherub Lucifer and Nimrod. The Babylonian Kingdom was a physical manifestation of the work and legacy of Nimrod the Tyrant. The Apostle Paul described Lucifer as the “god of this world” who has “blinded the minds of unbelievers” (II Corinthians 4:4). The Apostle John described him as “that old serpent,” the “deceiver of the entire world” and the “accuser of the brethren” (Revelation 12:9, 10). That relationship between Nimrod and Satan the Devil proved to be one of such strength that it threatened the destruction of mankind on a grander scale than anything that had come before God since the creation of mankind (even the universal flood). It would be more than a *physical* destruction; it would call for *eternal destruction* from which there would be no recovery.

## Nimrod’s Religious Challenge to Shem

There is much here that should concern the thoughtful person when pondering the question about why God should concern Himself with Babylon at the second coming of Jesus Christ [Rev. 16:19]. There is much here to concern the thoughtful person when pondering Paul’s questions in II Corinthians 6:14-18, especially the part where he said, “Come out from among them and be separate.” The Apostle John reiterated those concerns in Revelation 18:4-8.

Is it any wonder that God warns His people not to partake of the sins of Babylon lest they receive the same double payment as she will receive? Is it any wonder that God says that He will destroy Babylon by *fire* (v. 8). Why have I brought this to your attention? Simply this: *Nimrod passed himself off as being the “Redeeming Seed.”* This is not specifically stated in Scripture, but it is born out in history that Nimrod presented Shem with a religious challenge that resulted in serious consequences to Nimrod ... and serious religious consequences to mankind suffering more and more from the effects of the knowledge of good and evil. The proof of this is found in ancient religion, philosophy, and mythology ... all of which point to a bogus “Savior Seed” among paganism.

In 1629, Maimonides published his work *More Nevochim* (p. 426), in which he gave an account of Nimrod’s religious challenge to Shem. The reader must realize that Nimrod was given many different names, some because of national language and some because of mythological “mystery.” Two of those names, *Tammuz* and *Osiris*, had as much to do with one factor as the other. Hislop wrote the following:

The following is the account of *Tammuz*, given by the celebrated Maimonides, deeply read in all the learning of the Chaldeans: “When the false prophet named Thammuz preached to *a certain king* that *he* should worship the seven stars [each star represented the name of a pagan god] and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, *that king ordered him to be put to a terrible death*. On the night of his death all the images assembled from the ends of the earth into the temple of Babylon, to the great golden image of the Sun. ... The images wept and lamented all night long, and then in the morning they flew away, each to his own temple again, to the ends of the earth. And hence arose the custom every year, on the first day of the month Thammuz, to mourn and to weep for Thammuz” (Ibid; p. 62; emphases added).

Take note of this scenario in order to understand what was going on with this challenge. Generations of his descendants held

Noah in high regard after the Flood. He was, after all, chosen by the True God to preserve humanity from certain extinction. The general custom of comparing the *head* of a family to the *sun* (see Genesis 37:9-11 and Revelation 12:1) was one by which the head of the family was shown to be held in great regard. The symbolism would be interpreted to show a person who brought great *light*, or understanding, to others.

Since Noah was a preacher of righteousness, no doubt he brought the great light of God's truth to the post-Flood world before he died in 1998 B.C. After the death of Noah, as Nimrod turned so many to apostasy, Nimrod apparently began to claim for himself that symbol of the titular "Sun" of the family – he was, after all, the great grandson of Noah ... *in opposition to his grand uncle Shem*, whose name means "the appointed one."

Plutarch recorded that the Egyptians claimed that mice produced light from darkness in the *fifth generation* at the *new moon*. Counting as follows would explain the *mystery* of the "fifth generation" part of the puzzle: pre-flood Noah + post-flood Noah + Ham + Cush + Nimrod = 5 generations. The Chaldean word for *mouse* is "Aakbar," which is a cognate of "Gheber." Hislop's conclusion was this:

The whole statement of Plutarch ... just amounts to this, that light was produced by the Guebres, or fire-worshippers, *when Nimrod was set up in opposition to Shem* [who, as a lesser light compared to Noah, was a "new moon"], as the representative of Noah, and the great enlightener of the world (Ibid., 316, 317; emphases added).

One could certainly infer that an adversarial relationship between Nimrod and Shem quickly developed after the death of Noah.

Wilkinson (*Egyptians*, vol. v, p. 17) wrote that the Egyptian Hercules, whom he identified as being *Shem*, fought by the power of the gods and overcame the Giants [*Titans*]. Elohim, who was the God of Shem, has already been shown to be a plurality – that is: The Father and the Son. Somehow, in mythology's flip-flop nature, the title and character of the *original* Hercules was given to *Nimrod*, and Shem and his supporters were called the "Mighty

ones” and the “Titans.” All that notwithstanding, one of the names of the *original* Hercules was “Sem.” That being the case, it appears that Shem, through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, put down this rising star of the Babylonian apostasy (Ibid; p. 63).

Wilkinson (vol. iv, pp. 330-332) added some information about the death of the Egyptian god *Osiris* that is pertinent to this situation. The Egyptians complained that an adversary (probably, *Shem*) conspired with 72 leading men of Egypt to get rid of Osiris. They tried him in court, sentenced him to death, and cut his body into pieces and sent them to as many cities as they had body parts. Seventy-two (72) judges, civil and ecclesiastical, were required to condemn and decide the punishment of someone accused of this crime of apostasy.

According to Diodorus (*Bibliotheca*, lib. i. p. 48), these judges were divided into two tribunals: (a) 30 judges decided guilt or innocence and life or death, and (b) 40+ judges decided the manner of death and whether or not burial would take place. Wilkinson (vol. v, p. 75) and Bunsen (*Egypt*, vol. i, p. 27) specified that the second tribunal (40+) consisted of the same number of judges in the infernal regions, i.e., 42. Cutting the body into pieces demonstrated that the crime had been great and that those who might follow the same practice had much to fear (Ibid; pp. 63, 64).

This was the same kind of message given by the Lord God to Abram when He had Abram cut up a heifer, a she goat, and a ram as part of the covenant He made to give Abram’s seed the land from the Nile to the Euphrates (Genesis 15). Speiser wrote:

The contracting parties – so at least in an agreement between equals; otherwise perhaps only the weaker of the two – passed between the sections of the dismembered animals (cf. Jer xxxiv 19 ff) and thus left themselves open, by extension, to the fate of the sacrificed victims in the event of a future violation (E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964; p. 112).

In Jeremiah 34:17-22, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem passed between the pieces. The interesting thing about Genesis 15 lies in the impression given that only the Lord God passed among

the pieces. Understanding the significance of that ritual should certainly add to one's understanding of Hebrews 6:13, 17-20, where Paul wrote of God *swearing by Himself* and showing to the heirs of the promise the *immutability of His counsel* that the sure anchor of our lives in Christ lies in the fact that His promise and oath make it *impossible* for Him to lie. Such was the seriousness of the message sent by Shem to the apostates who received the pieces of Nimrod's body.

The net effect of this challenge and subsequent trial and execution was that Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, and his followers eventually immortalized him as the "Redeeming Seed." How so? Semiramis elevated Nimrod to the eternal status of the Sun-god, *Baal*, when he was killed by Shem. By some feigned "miracle," Semiramis conceived a child ... supposedly, without having had sexual relations with a man. She proclaimed that a single ray of sunlight from the immortalized Nimrod had impregnated her and the male child born to her was the *reincarnation of Nimrod* – in effect, *Nimrod Redivivus* (that is: *Nimrod Reborn*).

He had returned to avenge his own death upon his murderers, as well as to be the promised "seed" that would bring salvation to mankind. He was born on the night of December 24<sup>th</sup> – thereafter celebrated with a decorated tree (originally a palm; later changed by the Romans to an evergreen) representative of the reborn Nimrod and the eternal god Nimrod, a burned log that represented both his change from matter to spirit and his rebirth from the ashes as the "Branch of God." The *life-giving serpent* was given credit for making the reincarnation possible and insuring that he would never be cut off again.

Many idolatrous applications were made in the symbology of the Babylonian Religion, and many nations used the symbology to fashion their own versions. Even though names were changed and the mythologies were subject to some local variations, the message was essentially the same: Horus (the "miraculous" son) was the long-expected Savior and was to be worshiped as such. Many of the practices and forms of worship have come down to us today and have been mixed and mingled into Traditional Christian beliefs after they have been "sanitized" and "Christianized." The evidence of this is indisputable. All we have to do is observe how such things as Christmas and Easter, Valentines' Day and



Hallowe'en, and other similar observances have been mixed and mingled into the "fabric" of our social and religious observances.

The lesson in this is that God has warned us about this well in advance of our day and time. Through His prophet Jeremiah, He admonished us not to learn the way of the heathen and not to be fearful of their zodiacs and magic charms based on it (Jer. 10:1-5; Deut. 12:29-32). Their idolatry is nothing more than a scarecrow in a cucumber patch – it is vain and lacks knowledge of the truth. How much better can this be seen than in the image of Nimrod and Semiramis standing to each side of the "Cross" – a huge tree that had been stripped of all of its branches and cut almost to the ground? Horus was truly Nimrod Incarnate ... according to the way Semiramis spread it abroad. In effect, Horus became another Jesus by another spirit ... and the religion spread about him was another gospel (see Matt. 24:4, 5 and 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15).

I realize that this is the "short" history of Nimrod's challenge to Shem. The overarching question is this: How was this problem handled by the Lord God (Yahweh Elohim)? It would be self-evident that He knew who the "Redeeming Seed" would be because that lot had fallen to Him before the creation of the orderly universe (1 Pet. 1:18-20). There is no reason to doubt that Shem and his descendants continued to fight against this false religious concept. It was Abram (the 10<sup>th</sup> descendant from Noah) with whom the Lord God chose to enter into *the perpetual, eternal covenant* that consisted of: (1) the multiplication of "seed," (2) the land grant of Canaan (the reason is given in Gen. 9:20-27), and (3) the blessing of all other nations through Abram's "seed." The process from this point on involves those who inherit the covenant from Abram. But ... Baalism has been a constant plague to God's truth.

### Abraham's Inheritors

You must understand that the Lord God told Abram two most important things in Genesis 15:4, 15: (1) He would be the natural father of his inheriting "seed" and (2) he would die before the inheritance went from that "seed" to the "seed's" descendants. We can infer that Abraham, no doubt, could have known Jacob for about 15 years and ... that Jacob would inherit the covenant from



Isaac (do the math from Gen. 25:7; 21:5; 25:26; 35:28; and 47:28. But, Abraham was not alive when Jacob and his family went down to Egypt in order to fulfill the Lord God's prophecy in Genesis 15:16.

I am not going to give a drawn-out, detailed explanation about how the covenant went from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to the nation of Israel. I will explain the "highlights" of it ... you can sift through the details as you study more deeply into the matter. You will have the scriptural framework at your disposal for doing so. It is important to follow that framework very carefully so that you do not get confused by the process. It is not that it is difficult to follow; it is that the details are important for understanding how we get from Abraham to the nation of Israel.

I do not agree with some that the Lord God made two covenants with this man. I see in the scriptural record that the covenant was revised/upgraded to fit changing situations. The original covenant was made with Abram (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-6, 18; 17:1, 2). It involved a multiplicity of "seeds" and the territory needed for their habitation. The Lord God later changed Abram's name to Abraham ("Father of many nations"; vv. 3-8) to fit changing situations in the future. This is not a second covenant; it is a continued unfolding of the contents and benefits of the original covenant.

*This original covenant would be the seminal stage for the creation of the Kingdom of God which, by the language used, is an unconditional covenant that is perpetual, generation after generation, forever (vv. 7, 8). It also stipulates a large plurality of "seed." In other words, the Lord God did not envision this covenant belonging to a small, narrow group of people on a small, narrow strip of land in the Middle East. Its size – whatever that might eventually become – will ultimately include "all nations."*

You should note that the change of Abram's name involves a royal line and an everlasting ownership of territory. These are rightly referred to as being the Scepter and Birthright promises – both of which are totally unconditional. I do not agree with some who say that the royal line and territory were promised irrespective of the moral or spiritual character of the people themselves. It is reasonable that the Lord God promises to increase the posterity of the Abrahamic lineage with the aim that they should become all

that the covenant promises that they will become. That upgrading of the covenant was sealed with the requirement that all males will be circumcised on the eighth day after birth (vv. 9-14).

We also see two important things in Genesis 17:1, 2, 15-17: (1) the Lord God tells Abram in v. 1, 2: “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply your seed exceedingly”; and (2) the Lord God changed Sarai’s name to Sarah (“Mother of nations” through whom kings would be born). This event signals that Abraham and Sarah are to be the parents of *the inheriting seed*. It also reveals the expectation that Abram would conduct his life according to *holy, righteous, and moral* expectations. The *Brown-Driver-Briggs* definition of the Hebrew word *tamiym* involves truth, integrity, without blemish or spot, and undefiled (p. 1071).

This expectation is similar to that which the Lord God gave to Moses in Leviticus 19:2 about being holy as God is holy. Jesus Christ had the same expectation of His disciples in Matthew 5:48: “Therefore, be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Also, Paul showed in Ephesians 1:4 that God had the expectation that those who would become His adopted children also must be holy, blameless, and loving. It is reasonable to conclude that this is the basis for the Lord God’s comment to Isaac in Genesis 26:5 regarding a charge given to Abraham by the Lord God. Note what that charge included: commandments, statutes, and laws.

Any children Abraham might have fathered with any other women (Hagar; Gen. 16; and Keturah; Gen. 25:1-4) would not be the inheritors of the covenant promises. Abraham asked that Ishmael (his firstborn son with Hagar) should be his heir, but the Lord God refused that request (vv. 18-22). In Genesis 17:18-21, we see that the Lord God specifically named Isaac to be the inheriting seed.

## The Sacrifice of Isaac

Now read Genesis 18:9-15. The promised seed would be born a year later – when Abraham would be 100 years old and Sarah would be 90. Genesis 21:1-8 is the record of Isaac’s birth. A few years later, the Lord God tested Abraham’s faith in His promises

and oath by commanding Abraham to take Isaac to a distant mountain and offer him as a burnt sacrifice (Gen. 22:1, 2). The “mystery” of this action by the Lord God is this: If the Lord God intended that *Isaac* should be the heir of the promises, *He would have to restore Isaac to life after he had been offered as a sacrifice*. Why? Isaac was not yet married and had no children who could inherit the covenant. Isaac would be bound, have his throat slit, be bled out, and be burnt to a black crisp. Would Abraham withhold his only heir from the Lord God ... or, would he sacrifice him as commanded? *This critically tested the Lord God’s truth*.

In two places in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us what was going through Abraham’s mind. In Romans 4:17, Paul says that Abraham believed in the Lord God’s power to *resurrect the dead* and explains the depth of Abraham’s faith in vv. 17-25. Paul does essentially the same thing in Hebrews 11:17-19 ... with the addition of important information in the last part of v, 19: “[the sacrifice] from whence [Abraham] received [Isaac] *in a figure*” (emphases added). What shall we make of that comment (see a similar statement in the last part of Rom 5:14)?

The answer, in part, is given in Genesis 22:3-8. The Greek term in Hebrews 11:19, from which the term *figure* is translated, is *parabole*. In that word you can see the similarity to the term *parable*. It is a “mystery” that is not evident to everyone who reads or hears it. It is meant for the spiritually mature (see 1 Cor. 2:6-16; Matt. 13:10-17). *Parabole* is “a type or symbol pointing to the present age ... as a type (of the violent death and of the resurrection of Christ)” (BAG, p. 617). How is this event and/or the sacrifice of Isaac a *type or symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ*? Simply this: (a) Isaac is the only begotten son of promise; (2) he was to be offered as a sacrifice for many; (3) he had the instrument of his death (the sacrificial wood) put upon his back; and (4) he was delivered from death during the third day of the journey. Does any of that sound familiar?

Isaac asked in v. 7: “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” Abraham answered in v. 8 that “God will provide for Himself a lamb.” When the angel stopped Abraham (during the *second* attempt to do so) from completing the test, he told Abraham that God had seen that he would not withhold his only heir from Him; whereupon, a ram was provided for the sacrifice (v. 13). In effect,

Abraham received Isaac back *as though* he really had been sacrificed and resurrected from the dead. In that event, Isaac was a *figure or type of Jesus Christ* – the “*redeeming seed*” through whom all the world will be blessed.

In vv. 15-18, the Lord God confirms the *Abrahamic Covenant* (another upgrade to the covenant) ... adding the promise that: “Your seed shall possess the gates of your enemies” (last part of v. 17). The other most important element in this Abrahamic covenant is: “In your seed shall all nations be blessed.” Paul tells us in Galatians 3:16, 17 that *this* promise in Genesis 22:18 is *Messianic* ... that it applies to a *single* “seed,” not to a *multiplicity* of “seeds.” Paul then shows how the covenant promises are to be inherited by *Jesus Christ* as the legitimate heir of Abraham.

Now, let’s consider the short version of how the covenant goes from Abraham to Jesus Christ ... thus insuring that God is not a liar and that the promise and oath of Genesis 15 and following are *immutable*. This information is little known or understood among most “Christian” groups today due to a problem noted by J. H. Allen in the introduction to his book, *Judah’s Sceptre and Joseph’s Birthright*. His comments expose a terrible lack of understanding about the old and new covenants.

Here is Allen’s frank admission:

Because of our connection with a certain school of Christian thought, we once held the *erroneous* opinion that most of the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled, and its *present* use was simply to feed the faith of devout men...

We were also led to suppose that the unfulfilled prophecies of “*Moses and the prophets*” were of no special moment to Christianity, because the great momentous question, the coming of a Saviour, was settled forever...

*These errors so blinded us, that, in our ignorance, we even considered the twelve apostles, whom our Lord had chosen and enlightened, were in gross error when they understood Christ and the Scriptures to teach that there*

*was to be a literal and visible kingdom of God on the earth with the Lord as king of all the earth when that day came* (Allen, pp. 5, 6; see Dan. 7:13, 14, 27; Zech. 14:9; Isa. 2:1-5; and Rev. 11:15; emphases added).

That is an admission of *great proportions* made at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in AD 1906! It is very sad to say, but that opinion has changed very little among mainstream Christianity as of AD 2018. Many do not even consider the idea of a Kingdom of God on the *earth* as scriptural orthodoxy ... even when the notion of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords over *the nations of the earth* looms very large in holy writ (see also Isa. 2:1-5; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 5:10; Matt. 6:10; and Luke 22:29, 30). This study enables you to understand more completely the promise of the Kingdom of God on the *earth* as a reality. One would do well to read Revelation 21 and 22 in that regard. Compare Isaiah 9:6, 7, Ezekiel 37:11-28, Luke 1:30-33, and Matthew 19:27, 28 in order to understand this truth.

Now, let's turn our attention to Genesis 26:1-5. Verse 3 is particularly instructive to the inheritance process. The Lord God tells Isaac that he is the inheritor of the covenant made with Abraham. He lays out the same promises He made to Abraham and includes *Isaac's seed* in the inheritance. There is very little, if any, difference in the covenant contents. The Lord God includes the concept that Abraham had been obedient and had kept the *charge* given to him (the things over which Abraham was responsible for preserving) – which included the Lord God's commandments, statutes, and laws. The same expectation was laid upon Isaac and his "seed."

Genesis 26:5 tells us that the Lord God had commandments, statutes, and laws *before* His covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai ... which signals that this time of man's history was not devoid of such things (see also v. 24). Many wrongly interpret Romans 5:13, 14 by saying that God did not mandate His law until Mt. Sinai after the exodus under Moses. In fact, Genesis 2:17 sets forth God's *law*. Genesis 26:5 is a witness to that truth. Peter even asserts that Noah was a *preacher of righteousness*. In our present discussion, is it unreasonable to claim that Abraham was no less a preacher of righteousness than Noah? No. Is it unreasonable to think that God

did not have righteous standards of behavior for 2,500+ years after creating mankind? Yes.

In Genesis 25:19-26, we are told of the circumstances of the births of Esau and Jacob to Isaac and Rebekah. The Lord God makes it known in v. 23 that Rebekah was going to give birth to two different nations, but ... the younger child and his descendants would be stronger than his brother and his descendants. Paul posits in Romans 9:9-13 that the Lord God chose Jacob to be Isaac's heir ... even though Jacob was not the firstborn son. You should be able to see how the lineage toward the "Redeeming Seed" is getting narrower.

In Genesis 28:10-22, we discover the Lord God's intention to transfer the covenant to Jacob (vv. 13-15). In Genesis 29 and 30, we see how Jacob married Leah and Rachel, as well as their handmaids Bilhah (Rachel; 30:3) and Zilpah (Leah; 30:9). The four women gave birth to a total of 12 sons and at least one daughter (34:1). You can see the separation of the children according to their mothers in Genesis 35:23-26. You should also be aware of how the expansion of Jacob's family is made more possible with the births of 12 sons. I say it that way because, generally speaking, daughters were not the designated heirs. Specifically, the primary heir was the *firstborn* son ... unless there were circumstances that prevented that from being the case. You will not find a discussion about Dinah's children in Jacob's lineage.

Genesis 32:24-32 explains to us why Jacob's name was changed to *Israel*. The name bears witness to Jacob's conversion from "the usurper" to "one who overcomes with man and God." This marked the beginning of Jacob's conversion process. Genesis 35:9-15 shows us that the Lord God later transferred the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob/Israel at a place that Jacob afterward named *Bethel* ("the house of God").

Notice how the Lord God repeats the terms of the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob. He had done the same thing to Isaac in Genesis 26:1-5. It remains *unconditionally* promised ... with the holy expectations that had been laid upon Abraham. Why would/should the Lord God enter into a covenant with any corrupt, defiled, unholy people? Holy expectations come from a holy God. We will see that premise tested in a later discussion ... but it will involve a covenant other than the Abrahamic covenant.

In Genesis 48 and 49, we find that Jacob is about to die. He is about to declare his *testament* regarding the heirs of his estate and how it will be divided among them. The same kind of *testament* had already been declared by Abraham and Isaac. What we must pay attention to is the Abrahamic covenant and the disposition of the *land of promise* (territory) and the *royal lineage* (rulership).

Although it makes sense that these two aspects of the covenant will eventually reside in the possession of one person, we might be able to understand that such a thing will be the consummation of the intents of this Abrahamic covenant. Put into the back of your mind at this point the significance of Revelation 11:15: “The *kingdoms of this world* have become the *kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ” (emphases added; see also Psa. 24 and Col. 1:13-19). Do you have in that Revelation 11:15 statement the declaration that the intents of the Abrahamic covenant are that the *rulership* and *territory* will ultimately reside in the possession of one person? That they will be realized on planet earth?

So, Israel names the inheritors of the *Birthright* and *Scepter* promises. He also pronounces blessings on the rest of his sons ... much like what Abraham did for Ishmael and the six sons he had with Keturah (Genesis 25:1-18). The main characters for the Birthright Promise are found in Genesis 48, and the main character for the Scepter Promise is in Genesis 49. It is interesting that the Abrahamic covenant is divided in this manner ... but it will eventually be brought together under one head in the “last days.”

In Genesis 48, Israel has been re-united with his firstborn son with his wife Rachel. Joseph took with him Manasseh and Ephraim, his two sons born to him while he was living in Egypt after having been sold as a slave by his jealous brothers. You can read this history beginning in Genesis 37. The true significance of this meeting is found in Genesis 48:3-6: Jacob adopts these two grandsons as his very own sons and says that any subsequent sons born to Joseph are to be reckoned as Joseph's heirs (vv. 5, 6).

In vv. 8-22, Israel blesses Joseph ... then he blesses Ephraim and Manasseh. In blessing the grandsons, Israel sets Ephraim in the role of the *firstborn son* (double portion), even though Manasseh was the actual firstborn. He tells Joseph in vv. 21, 22 that he gave Joseph “one portion above your brothers.” That signals that Joseph is the recipient of the Birthright Promise that will be passed down



to Ephraim when Joseph dies. That is Israel's *testament*. It should be noted that Manasseh is made a partner to the Birthright Promise (vv. 19, 20).

In Genesis 49, Israel blesses his other sons. It is noteworthy that his older firstborn son, Reuben, with his wife Leah, was disqualified from receiving the inheritance because of *moral turpitude*. He had sexual relations with Bilhah ... Rachel's handmaid that she gave to be Israel's wife (Gen. 30:1-8; 35:22; 1 Chron. 5:1, 2). For that reason, the Birthright inheritance defaulted to Joseph, Israel's firstborn son with Rachel. In vv. 8-12, Israel blesses Judah with the Scepter Promise. Verse 10 stipulates that it will be Judah's "...until *Shiloh* comes..." – which means "...until He to whom it belongs comes..." So, there is a "royal seed" to whom the rulership of the nation of Israel belongs.

With that, the heirs of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel are explained. We have the four elements of a kingdom in place: ruler, subjects, laws, and territory. The unveiling of the importance of the Abrahamic covenant will begin. And ... the existence of another *additional* covenant that will take place will be shown. You must not get confused regarding the existence of these two covenants because they play very important roles in the construction of the coming *New Testament/Covenant* under Jesus Christ.

## Review Questions

1. How does Genesis 1:26-28 demonstrate that it was vitally necessary for Adam and Eve to take upon themselves the character of God: holiness, blamelessness, and lovingkindness (see Eph. 1:4; 1 John 4:8)? What does the term *kind* mean?
2. From information provided by John 1:1-3, Ephesians 1:4-14, Philippians 2:5-11, and 1 Peter 1:18-20, give a brief explanation of the plan that was constructed by God before the creation of the orderly universe. Take your time to re-read the information and plan your concise answer. It is important for you to process this information and understand its importance to the lesson.



3. What two very important things does Hebrews 2:16 tell us about the Word's decision to become a human?
4. When the Word chose to become the redeeming sacrifice so that man would not be summarily wiped out and the creation of the "God-kind" brought to an end, how did this choice make His divine partner become His "God" and "Father" (see Eph. 1:3)?
5. In Philippians 2:9-11, Colossians 1:19, and Matthew 28:18, what does scripture reveal that the Father did in return for Jesus Christ's divestment of His divine equality with His divine partner?
6. Explain the significance of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 in verifying the information required for question #5.
7. Can you prove from the above information that Jesus Christ was the Lord God of the Old Testament? State your proof.
8. What two things do Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 53:6, and Galatians 3:22 reveal regarding the prophecy about woman's "seed"?
9. Briefly describe how Eve *misinterpreted* the Lord God's prophecy concerning the coming "Redeeming Seed" in Genesis 4:1.
10. In Genesis 3:20, Adam called his wife's name "Eve." Explain why some say that Adam called his wife's name "Life."
11. After the birth of Enos, something new happened among the earth's people. What was it? What is the possible significance of the alternate translation that reads: "then began men *to call themselves by the name of the Lord*"? (emphases added). What are your thoughts about the matter?
12. In the context of Genesis 6:1, 2, what is the significance of the religious schism between those known as "sons of God" and others known as "sons of man"? Why would the early prophets speak of a coming "Redeeming Seed" during those years? Was it merely for informational purposes? In what way could it have been that some

among the two groups were claiming to have been that “Seed” – that “horn of salvation” (see Luke 1:67-71)?

13. What is the significance of the lineage from Seth to Abram?

14. What is significant about the name *Yahweh Elohim*? How does that name apply to the Lord God and Jesus Christ?

15. How was *Shem* related to Nimrod? How was it possible that Shem could have known Nimrod, Abram, Isaac, and Jacob?

16. How did Nimrod become the earth’s first *tyrant*? What connection to the “Savior Seed” was made by Nimrod and his wife?

17. What is significant about the birth of *Horus*? What was the date of his birth? How was the religious concept about him celebrated? How is it celebrated in our time? How is 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 related to this kind of religious activity?

18. Explain briefly the nature of Nimrod’s opposition to the Lord God. How did he threaten Him?

19. With what spiritual challenge did Nimrod confront Shem?

20. What was Shem’s reaction to this challenge? How did Shem execute judgment against him?

21. How did Nimrod’s wife Semiramis immortalize Nimrod?

22. How is Horus represented in religious iconography (it has something to do with a tree)? How might that be related to Jeremiah 10:1-4? Is there any relationship between this and modern Christian practices?

23. How can Horus be connected to Matthew 24:4, 5 and 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15?

24. How did the Lord God change Abram's name? What special addition did He make to the covenant?

25. How was the covenant with Abraham sealed?

26. What two important changes to the covenant occur in Genesis 17:1, 2, 15-17? What is meant by the expression "walk before me, and be perfect"?

27. Through whom would Abraham's "seed" be known? What would happen to any other children Abraham had fathered with women other than Sarah?

28. How did the Lord God test Abraham's faith regarding Isaac? What is meant in Hebrews 11:19 that "[Abraham] received [Isaac] *in a figure*" (emphases added; see a similar statement in the last part of Rom 5:14)?

29. How is the sacrifice of Isaac a *type* or *symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ*?

30. Summarize the frank admission J. H. Allen made in the introduction to his book, *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright* that exposed a wide-spread, terrible lack of understanding about the old and new covenants in mainstream Christianity during his time.

31. How did that misunderstanding affect their understanding of where the Kingdom of God is to be established?

32. Explain the difference between Romans 5:13 and Genesis 26:5. Was God's Law known before Mt. Sinai?

33. What does the statement in Revelation 11:15 help us understand about the intents of the Abrahamic covenant?

34. Explain the expression "until *Shiloh* comes." Who is *Shiloh*?



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## Chapter Four

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# The “Marriage” Covenant between the Lord God and Israel

**I**t is indisputable that the Abrahamic covenant was passed from Abraham to Isaac to Israel to Joseph (Birthright) and Judah (Scepter). Because Ephraim was counted as being the *firstborn* (Jer. 31:1-9), he inherited the Abrahamic covenant from his father Joseph. In that position, Ephraim was the titular head of the nation of Israel. Within that framework, the *royal line* was to be provided by the lineage of Judah.

One must not be misled into thinking that the Birthright and Scepter promises ultimately can be separated and independently carried out from one another. In fact, the Birthright promise *is* the Abrahamic covenant. The Scepter promise ultimately determines the lineage within Israel that will lead to *Shiloh: The One to Whom It [the Kingdom] Belongs*. It is the “royal family” of Israel. *Unless and until you understand that, you will not fully understand the “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and the nation Israel.*

The objective of this chapter is to make clear that the *immutability* of the Abrahamic covenant is still in force *today* among the heirs of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Because the Abrahamic covenant is *forever*, then the “seed” of Abraham must be capable of possessing and maintaining it *forever*. Many different factors in the plan of God must come into play to make that possible (Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). The “family” phase begins with the “marriage” of Israel to the

Lord God by covenant. He was to be their King (read 1 Sam. 8). Again, *it is of utmost importance to understand that “marriage.”*

## The “Marriage” Proposal and the “Marriage”

You must understand that the “marriage” is for the purpose of creating a “unity” between the marriage partners that is necessary for two basic things: (1) the longevity of the relationship and (2) the production of “offspring” in whom the “unity” is actually expressed ... because the offspring represent the mixture of the husband’s “seed” with the wife’s “seed.” From the moment of conception, the combined “seed” can be nothing less than the “unity” of the marriage partners. According to Ephesians 1:4, Elohim had chosen *before the creation of the orderly universe* to have a “family” made in their “image” (see also Gen. 1:26-28 and Heb. 2) ... a “family” that will be holy, blameless, and loving.

In Genesis 15:13-16, the Lord God prophesies that Abraham’s “seed” would be held captive in a land other than that which He promised. This “seed” refers to the nation *Israel* – who did not exist at the time. They would, in fact, be slaves in that land for 400 years before He would deliver them. You can read the history of that enslavement in Genesis 37 through Exodus 15. Once delivered from that slavery, the Lord God set about to “marry” Israel. Let’s understand what is involved in such a “marriage.”

Isaiah 54:5 is part of a prophecy concerning the future restoration of Israel, whom the Lord God had cast aside because of repeated spiritual adulteries with the idols of pagan nations. Notice what He says of Himself: “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called” (emphases added). In calling Himself husband to Israel, He suggests that a “marriage” had taken place. If this is true, how did this “marriage” take place?

Of what significance is this “marriage” to our discussion of the old covenant/testament? In what way did He “make” Israel? And, why? There is much history and spiritual understanding to be gained in this part of the study that directly affects you and your relationship to Jesus Christ. This information will considerably

expand your understanding of the biblical paradigm. This information is paid scant attention among mainstream Christianity.

The main way in which this covenant differs from the Abrahamic covenant is that it is, on its face, totally conditional. In Exodus 19:5, 6, we see the “marriage proposal.” Notice the expression “if” in v. 5. That makes the “marriage” contingent upon Israel’s: (a) full and complete acceptance and obedience and (b) persistent maintenance of the terms of the covenant. In return for accepting those two stipulations, Israel would be given a “favored nation” status above all other nations and would become a nation of priests and a holy nation. In effect, Israel would become the Kingdom of God and would be wholly consecrated to serve Him and His holy purpose among all nations of the world. You can see the sense of that statement in Deuteronomy 4:1-13.

At that time, Israel accepted the Lord God’s proposal. Exodus 24 is a *second* affirmation that Israel accepted the Lord God’s proposal. Notice that Exodus 24:5 says that Moses told them “all the Lord’s words and laws” (emphases added; see Ex. 24:7; 34:28; Deut. 9:9-11; Rom. 10:19-21).

In vv. 4-8, Moses built an altar and set up 12 stone pillars to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. This would represent the acceptance of the proposal by each tribe of Israel. Some of the sacrifices were made as fellowship (peace) offerings ... which symbolized a peaceful and mutual sharing of the same objectives and interests with the Lord God.

Notice also that Moses had written a *Book of the Covenant*, which he read aloud to the people and to which they responded by re-affirming their acceptance of the Lord God’s proposal (v. 7). Moses sprinkled only half of the blood on the altar (v. 6). Once he had read the covenant again to the people, he sprinkled the other half of the blood on them (v. 8). It is not plain whether or not the blood was sprinkled on the *representative stones* or on the *people*. Half of the blood would not cover so great a population; so, my guess is that it was sprinkled on the representative stones. This, in effect, bound both parties to one another in a holy covenant of “marriage.”

What purpose did the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood serve? What was it called? Let’s get a reference point here for something being “sealed” with blood. A seal authenticates a transaction. It

serves as a *guarantee* that certain parties were involved in the transaction, as well as a *pledge* that the intents and purposes of the transaction are *genuine* and *irrevocably* determined. The Lord God set forth the terms and conditions of this covenant with Israel, and Israel responded by saying: “All the words which the Lord has said will we do.” That determined the unity of purpose involved in the covenant. The “sprinkling of the blood” meant that the Lord God and Israel were *irrevocably* joined in “marriage” – even though it was “conditional.” I will explain that later.

Why did Moses write down all of the words of the Lord, build an altar, set up representative stones, and assign the appropriate priests to offer sacrifices – from which Moses obtained the blood he would use to seal it? He sprinkled half of it on the altar. Why? The altar is a *witness* – a perpetual, tangible proof; a constant reminder – of the consecration of this agreement between the Lord God and Israel. A *witness* is one who offers *testimony* – evidence or proof – that a specific transaction involving certain requirements actually occurred. The 12 stones served the same purpose.

The term *testimony* is from the same word family as the term *testament* (*testari* [verb]: to be a witness, make a will, and *testis* [noun]: witness; for example, read Genesis 31:43-55). The altar also represents the active presence of the Lord God in the making of the covenant – as well as *His* commitment to abide by the terms of the agreement. It also seals *His* witness – *His* testimony, or officially stated purpose.

Next, Moses – who was the mediator of this covenant – read the book of the covenant to the *people*. Why? This is a *second* witness that the Lord God said these words and required these laws and judgments, and the people were given a *second* opportunity to acknowledge their agreement. In this agreement, it was established that at least *two* witnesses were necessary to bring a judgment against someone accused of a sin worthy of punishment: physical punishment, banishment, or death (see Numbers 35:30 and Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). Once they said “All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient,” Moses sprinkled them (presumably, the representative stones) with the blood and declared the covenant *sealed* – that is, it became official, authentic, binding upon both parties, and *irrevocable* ... except as stated in the conditions set forth in Exodus 19:5.



Sprinkling the same blood on the altar and the “people” united the Lord God and the people in a sacred fellowship – a holy covenant relationship. This is the culmination of what is metaphorically called a “marriage” agreement between the Lord God and Israel (see Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 3:1-14, and Ezekiel 16 for language that describes this “marriage”). As a result of this covenant, the Lord God became the “husband” of the nation of Israel: *The Kingdom of God in type.*

Read Mark 1:14, 15. What did Jesus preach that is called “the gospel”? If you search the scriptures in the New Testament to find out to what extent the topic “Kingdom of God” is discussed, you will find that it is referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, the Father’s Kingdom, and so on over 135 times from Matthew to Revelation – most of which is found in the four “gospels.” *All of those expressions refer to the same thing.*

This “Kingdom” is based entirely on concepts derived from the historical situations we have studied thus far in the Old Testament. *There is no situation in which this expression refers to going to heaven.* As we have seen, the Abrahamic covenant relates to a specific piece of land that is to belong to Abraham and his descendants forever. It is the territory to be inhabited by the Kingdom of God. *The “marriage” to the Lord God makes that possible ... but it is a separate covenant from the Abrahamic Covenant.*

During the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom was constantly on His lips as a matter of desperate importance. He spent a great deal of time describing it in various parables. In most cases where the word gospel is used, it implies the good news of the coming of *God’s Kingdom*. It would be very difficult to understand the importance of this expression in the teachings of Jesus if you do not understand its meaning within its historical context.

You never see anyone interrupting Jesus to ask what He means by it! This indicates that it was a common enough expression that no explanation was necessary. Although the expression itself might not sound overly strange to most in modern mainstream Christianity, it is generally either not understood, or it is misunderstood. 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? You can understand that only in the context of the Lord God’s covenants and their progressive renewals.

## New Testament Discussions about the “Old” Covenant

Romans 9:4, 5 list the things that pertain to Israel. What does pertain mean? Note especially four things that Paul says pertain to them: (1) “the adoption” – *sonship* (RSV, Moffat, and others); literally: “placed as sons”; (2) “the covenants” (plural); (3) “the promises” – the specific benefits within the covenants; and (4) “the fathers” – specifically, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but, by extension, including the patriarchal line from Abraham back to Adam. In the RSV and others, the term pertain is translated as belong – which indicates *ownership*. Why do these things belong to Israel? What is Paul’s reference point here?

The term adoption is translated in the RSV and others as sonship – which means that the nation of Israel was granted the legal status of *sons* by the Lord God. You have to understand that there are many metaphors that God applies to His relationship with Israel: “Father,” “Maker,” and “Husband,” to name a few. These metaphors describe the various aspects of His caretaker role as Lord and Master in this exclusive relationship.

In Exodus 4:22 (before Mt. Sinai), He calls Israel “...my son, even my firstborn...” In Jeremiah 31:9, He says: “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.” See Genesis 48 where Jacob [Israel] adopted Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons (v. 5) and blessed the younger Ephraim as though he were the firstborn of the two (vv. 15-20). Deuteronomy 32:6 says: “Do you requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people, [by acting in this manner]? Is not He your father that has bought you? Didn’t He create you, and establish you?” (emphases added). Hosea 11:1 reads: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Sonship is a legal status that denotes the right of inheritance – which includes a will and the death of a testator.

Expressing the plural covenants, Paul is not making a distinction between the old and new covenants; rather, he is making the point that the Lord God either renewed an original covenant *again and again*, or that He made and maintained several covenants between Himself and others. While both assertions are true, we have seen the repeated renewal of an existing covenant – beginning with Adam – as the basis of the plural term covenants. From where did Israel acquire the covenants? The answer to that question helps you to understand the “gifts and calling of God” (Rom. 11:29), as well as how all of that is ultimately connected to Israel through Abraham.

Read Galatians 3:8. Why did Jesus Christ make belief in, the expectation of, and the desire for that *Kingdom of God* incumbent upon all true Christians? Abraham is a pivotal character in this discussion. He is Israel’s (Jacob) grandfather. Remember this: *the concept of a Kingdom of God did not begin with Abraham*. The world (the earth and its inhabitants) was created to become the Kingdom of God, ruled over by Jesus Christ, the “Seed” (Gen. 3:15; Col. 1:16). God called Abraham out of Chaldea by explaining the good news (gospel) of the creation of that Kingdom of God to him and offering him a covenant relationship so he could be an active participant and critical part of it. Note Hebrews 11:8-10 to see why Abraham expected God to build a city in the land of promise. Compare that to Isaiah 2:2, 3 and Revelation 21:1-3.

What did *scripture* foresee – or, anticipate? Remember that the only scripture Paul had at that time was the Old Testament (Covenant). Ephesians 1:4-14, Philippians 2:5-11, and 1 Peter 1:18-20 show that the concept of the rule of God over His Kingdom was already there before Abraham learned about it! It was important to include all nations because they are the offspring of Adam and Eve – the ones who originally received it as an inheritance (something to be willed to one’s descendants).

It is also important to understand that God showed Abraham the same grace He had shown Noah. When He said to Abraham: “In you shall all the world be blessed...” (emphases added), He was indicating His choice of Abraham to be the man through whose lineage the appointed “Seed” would come. Scripture is the revelation of God’s unbreakable will. As such, it is a testimony of God’s desire to fulfill the plan He had from the beginning: to

establish His kingdom on the earth. The recipient of the covenant was to bless and be a blessing to all others – which would ultimately extend back to Adam and Eve.

The ancient Hebrews wished one another the highest possible well-being by saying “May you be like Abraham.” As *The Interpreter’s Bible* puts it: “All blessings were summed up in the belief that God’s kingdom, *for which the world had been created*, belonged to Abraham and his heirs” (“Galatians,” Abingdon Press: New York, 1953, vol. 10, p. 504; emphasis added). This is important understanding.

In Galatians 3:15, Paul says that once a covenant among men is confirmed, it is usually not capable of being annulled or added to. Does this imply that God’s covenant cannot be annulled or added to – except, perhaps, by God Himself ... in order to add benefits to it? In actual fact, the “additional” things that the Lord God revealed to Abraham were not “added” benefits. Does this have anything to do with Christ’s statement in Matthew 5:17? Why would He have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets that reveal so much of this plan?

Read Galatians 3:15 very carefully. Here, Paul uses the Greek word diatheke – translated *covenant* (*KJV*) and *will* (*RSV* and others). In most cases, no one annuls even a human covenant/will. How much more, then, would the Lord God’s covenant/will be kept intact? We will see that God slowly revealed the enormity of His promises in a way that might seem like *additions*, but, in fact, they were progressive revelations of the unfolding of His original intentions. Jesus Christ (the Lord God of the Old Testament) did not come to change or annul the covenants He had established, or the prophecies that related to their ultimate fulfillment. He came to ensure that they would accomplish the entire purpose for which they originally were intended relative to the coming Kingdom of God (see also Isa. 55:11).

In Galatians 3:16, who is identified as the *Seed of Abraham*? Paul observes that Abraham’s sperma (Greek = *seed*) is singular and argues that this makes Jesus Christ the intended recipient, not the *seeds* (plural; see also Col. 1:16 and Psa. 24). You can see that it is only in Christ that the other seeds are included as recipients of the promises (see Romans 8:9-17 and Galatians 3:26-29). *Jesus*

*Christ is the intended inheritor.* He is the “seed” of the woman, as well as the ultimate “seed” of Israel.

Galatians 3:17 demonstrates how the promises identified with a *covenant*. In whom was this covenant with Abraham *confirmed* – or, *sealed*? Jesus Christ. The atonement sacrifices presuppose the death of the “Redeeming Seed.” Remember our earlier discussion about the sealing of the covenant with the blood of a *sacrifice* – which foreshadowed the *redemption* price for sin.

In Galatians 3:15, Paul equates the Lord God’s *diatheke* (covenant; testament; will) with His *epaggelia* (promises) and likens it to a human will that disposes of a man’s property after his death. This would also presuppose that, upon the death of Abraham, the *covenant/promises/will* would be passed on to the next rightful recipient. Follow that same reasoning from Abraham to the nation Israel. This is how the term Old Testament as a will can be applied to the first division of the Bible.

The *law* that came 430 years later was *not* an *addition* to this covenant made with Abraham. Adding those laws *as part of the “marriage” covenant with Israel* did not *annul* or *render void* the *Abrahamic covenant*. They merely defined the type of behavior that was expected of those with whom the “marriage” covenant was made. Commandments, statutes, and laws were already obeyed and kept secure under the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 26:5). The presence of such *standards of behavior* did not *annul* the Lord God’s promises and oath with Abraham.

With whom was a covenant containing *laws* made? In Genesis 15, the Lord God made a few things clear to Abraham: (a) His heir would come from Abraham himself – not as the result of an adoption or substitute through a handmaid (v. 2); (b) the land Abraham would inherit would be between the Nile and the Euphrates rivers (v. 18); and (c) Abraham’s descendants through Isaac (“seeds” – plural; remember Gen. 17:15-21 and 21:12) would be afflicted in a strange land for 400 years (vv. 13-16).

The covenant containing the “laws” of which Paul speaks refers to *the covenant the Lord God made with the nation of Israel when they came out of Egyptian slavery and returned to this land of promise*. Exodus 12:40, 41 and Galatians 3:17 say it was 430 years after the covenant with Abraham. Confirming the “marriage” covenant with the nation of Israel did not annul or

*render void the covenant the Lord God made with Abraham.* The *KJV* has the better translation: “cannot disannul.” This is the argument that Paul takes up in Hebrews 6:13-20 when he said that the promise and the oath are immutable – that is: incapable of being made void.

Galatians 3:18 explains what God gave to Abraham by promise. Is the fulfillment of the covenant that the Lord God made with Abraham dependent on the *laws*? No. Why not? Notice that Paul refers to the inheritance when he speaks of the promise.

Paul covers that in Romans 4:13-16. He insists that the “seed” and “land” covenant was made with Abraham “through the righteousness of faith.” In doing this, the Lord God made it possible for His grace not to be overridden by law. The purpose of law is to define, expose, and punish sin. Law cannot require God to be gracious; but He is gracious. If the covenant is based on promise, instead of law, then sin cannot disqualify the recipient *if God extends forgiveness and grace and the recipient repents of his/her sins* (v. 15).

This quote from *The Interpreter’s Bible* is instructive:

God’s legacy [inheritance] to Abraham was both material and spiritual, both for this world and for the world to come. It consisted of Palestine as the land of promise and of faith; of an ever-increasing dominion; of the privilege and task of being a perpetual blessing to all mankind (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:4-7; 17:1-8; 1 Chr. 6:27). The Christians denationalized it, called it the kingdom of God, and claimed it for Christ and themselves as fellow heirs with Christ ([Gal. 3:]24; 5:2; Acts 20:32; Rom. 4:13-14; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 15:50). The Spirit was the first installment of this inheritance, and the guarantor of the rest of it (Ibid., p. 514; emphases added; see Acts 2:1-33 Ephesians 1:13, 14).

I agree with *TIB* that the Christians denationalized it by taking it away from Israel and giving it to the amorphous “Church” they call “spiritual Israel.” They call their version of the so-called “New Testament” “the kingdom of God” and insist that it means that the reward of the “saved” is to go to heaven. However, mainstream

“Christianity” gives little regard to the covenants and promises the Lord God made with the nation of Israel, but ... they do so to out of ignorance of God’s truth in His word (Matt. 17:17). After all, we have seen the history of the name *Kingdom of God*, and it most certainly did not originate with Christians in the sense meant in the above quote. After all, the first New Testament Christians were *Jews*, and the New Testament Church was begun with a remnant of Israel in the persons of 12 *Jewish* Disciples and the *Jewish* Christ: Israelites all! We will take up that discussion when we consider Isaiah 1:9, Romans 9:24-29, and Romans 11 relative to Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 39:23-29, Hosea 2:14-23; 14, and Amos 9:11-15. The fifth lesson in this series (*BSC 5*) will “drill” deeper into this matter

### The Significance of Deuteronomy 6:4, 5

Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 has long been claimed to be the signature scripture that supports monotheism – the belief in one God. You must remember, however, that I have advised you to understand things in the contexts in which they are written. So, we must ask who the speaker is. Go back in the context to v. 1 and find that the *Lord God* is the one who commanded Moses what to teach Israel. That being the case, then the *Lord God* is the source of the information in vv. 4, 5. If you continue to look back into the context, you will find Deuteronomy 5:1-21 to be a reiteration of the 10 Commandments given at Mt. Sinai.

The word Deuteronomy is a Greek term that means: “The recapitulation of the Law.” That is, it is a brief, summarized repetition of the account of the covenant experience at Mt. Sinai. As such, it is a reminder of the “marriage” proposal, acceptance, and consummation. The Israelite audience is being told to understand it thoroughly. *You must understand Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 in the context of that recapitulation.* What does that mean?

We find the meaning in the context of the language used in v. 4. I cite Clarke’s commentary below to set the stage for the conclusion I will draw about the true meaning of this instruction that requires Israel to listen attentively and to live by the “Hear O Israel” instructions:



*Hear, O Israel, Shema Yisrael, Yehovah Eloheinu, Yehovah achad.* These words may be variously rendered into English; but almost all possible verbal varieties in the translation amount to the same sense: “Israel, hear! Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah”; or, “Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one”: or, Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone”; or, “Jehovah, who is our God, is the one Being” (p. 209).

Notice the possible variants in translation given by Clarke. Some translations render *Jehovah* as *Lord*. By now, you should be aware that *Jehovah* is also rendered as *Yahweh*. *The Interpreter's Bible* says that the expression consists of four Hebrew words: “Yahweh, our God, Yahweh, one.” For that reason, they conclude that it is *enigmatic* (perplexing; confusing) because of the various possible interpretations, but ... the essential meaning is clear: It is a declaration that *Israel is to give their allegiance and attention to this single God, not to the numerous gods worshipped by their pagan neighbors* (vol. 2, pp. 372, 373; see also Ex. 20:1-17; 34:1-17; emphasis added). The RSV chooses to translate it: “The Lord our God is one Lord.” *Moffat* renders it: “the Eternal, the Eternal alone, is our God.” *The Jerusalem Bible* renders it: “Yahweh our God is the one Yahweh.” *All of this must be understood in the context of Deuteronomy 5:29-33*, which demonstrates a deep desire by the *Lord God* (Yahweh) to teach a holy people His thoughts and ways ... and lead them into the “Promised Land” given to Abraham in Genesis 15.

In the second lesson of the *BSC*, you were taught the difference between the two members of *Elohim* – the “God” family. One of the great scriptural revelations has to do with the one who is known as *Yahweh Elohim* ... because He is the one who ultimately became *Jesus Christ* (John 1:1-3, 14). He is the one who was given all power in heaven and earth to carry out the Elohim plan to create mankind and make them family members (Phil. 2:10, 11; Col. 1:19; Matt. 28:18). He was made the “God” (Supreme ruler) of this world by divine appointment. Because He divested Himself of His equal status with His divine partner and became subject to Him, His divine partner thereby became *His* “God” (Eph. 1:3; 1 Cor.



15:24-28; John 14:28). It is shown in the New Testament that the “God” and “Father” of Jesus Christ did not play an open role in Yahweh Elohim’s dealings with mankind (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22). Jesus Christ (a.k.a. *Yahweh Elohim*) came to reveal the existence of His divine partner. That is a profound revelation! What does this mean relative to Deuteronomy 6:4, 5?

Paul gives us a hint in 1 Corinthians 8:6 when he says the following:

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.

This is plainly stated: There is one Father and one Lord ... and they are not one and the same Being. The Father is not Yahweh Elohim.

You might well wonder how this idea is expressed in the Old Testament. There are a few indications there, but they are there. The most prominent, I think, is found in Daniel 7:13, 14. Take note of how this prophecy is crafted. First, there is “one like the Son of man” who is brought into the presence of “the Ancient of days.” It is very difficult to argue that this describes a divine *trinity* that is vested in a single divine personage who reveals himself in three different “faces,” or roles. Who is this “Son of man”?

My *KJV* has a marginal reference to John 5:25. In this, Jesus Christ is citing the difference between Himself and the Father. I will add vv. 26, 27 to this reference. First, He refers to the “Son of God” as being the one who will execute the resurrections of the dead when the time for such arrives. Next, He shows that the Father has His own life power and ... has given to the Son the authority to have a similar independent life power. That came when He was resurrected from the grave. His own resurrection from the dead restored to Him the self-sustaining life He had before becoming flesh (John 17:5) ... as well as the authority to execute judgment when the resurrections of the dead occur. That “life power” is best described as self-sustaining life.” By that life-power, He is able to also give life to the dead (1 Cor. 15:45).

That power is inherent in His Old Testament name: *I AM THAT I AM* (YHWH – from which we get Yahweh; Ex. 3:13-15). Many

commentaries recognize I AM THAT I AM as the *Lord God's* claim to self-existence. Clarke opines: "It is difficult to put a meaning on the words; they seem intended to point out the eternity and self-existence of God" (p. 94; emphases added).

Matthew Henry says that the Lord God is proclaiming three things: (1) He is self-existent and is not dependent on any other power in creation for His existence; (2) He is eternal and unchangeable; and (3) no amount of searching can comprehend what/who He is and shall be for eternity (*The Matthew Henry Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House; 1961; p. 75).

Matthew 24:29-44 mentions "the Son of man" five times. Jesus Christ is prophesying His own return to reap the "firstfruit" saints. This is harmonized with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 14:14-16. How do we know that the expression "Son of man" applies to *Jesus Christ*? Read Matthew 16:13 where He asks His disciples: "Whom do men say that *I the Son of man* am?" How much clearer can it be than that? All of this has a bearing on Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 when you connect all of the various pieces of the puzzle.

The one known as *Yahweh Elohim* is the one also known as *the Word*. The title the Word (that is: the Logos) designates *Yahweh Elohim* as the *Spokesman* of the *Elohim* "family." He is the Creator and Savior by divine designation. We must understand Philippians 2:10, 11, Colossians 1:19, Matthew 28:18, and 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 in this regard. Before the creation of the orderly universe, He was made to be, so to speak, the *Chief Executive Officer* of the *Elohim* plan to create mankind for the purpose of expanding the *Elohim* "Family" ... and to make them acceptable to the Father as His true "children" through Him (Eph. 1:6). What does all this mean relative to Deuteronomy 6:4, 5?

Very simply put, it means that *the one who became Yahweh Elohim's "God" and "Father" did not "marry" Israel. Yahweh Elohim "married" Israel.* If Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 is a reference to *Yahweh Elohim*, then, of necessity, it must be interpreted with the "marriage" of *Yahweh Elohim* and *Israel* in mind. Relative to any other "gods" in existence, Israel is reminded that her faith and trust and singular devotion is to be invested in her "marriage" to *Yahweh Elohim*. *Israel did not know of the existence of Yahweh*

Elohim's divine partner. This is instruction from her "Husband" that **He** is to be the singular focus for her life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness and holiness (read also Eph. 5:22-33). How else shall they be "one"?

Knowing this, it is difficult to attribute to this scripture the status of being the clarion call for monotheism as it is popularly understood among mainstream Christianity. It is monotheism in the sense that Israel must not "marry" or consort with multiple "gods." It is monotheism in the sense that only Yahweh Elohim is to ever be her "Husband." But it is not monotheism in the sense of the trinitarian claim that the Bible teaches the existence of only one God. Elohim (Gen. 1:1-2:3) is a plurality – only one of whom "married" Israel. Therefore, "Yahweh, our God, Yahweh, one" should be understood to mean that Yahweh Elohim is the only Elohim divinely appointed to be Israel's "Husband."

Such a declaration does not in any sense or manner diminish from the existence and holiness and worship of the "God" and "Father" of the one who became Jesus Christ (see Matt. 6:1-13). The "Father" and "God" of Jesus Christ must also be our "Father" and "God" (Heb. 2:6-18). After all, the main goal of Jesus Christ is to reconcile all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:19, 20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21). That is why He divested Himself of His equal divine status to be our Savior. It is through Him that we are made acceptable to the Father (Eph. 1:6).

Finally, let's consider some references in Isaiah's prophecies. It can be seriously argued that in Acts 4:12 that the Apostle Peter took his reference to Jesus Christ from Isaiah: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This is Peter's claim, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ is the only Savior in existence. While it might seem totally opposed to all that scripture teaches us, Peter's claim infers that the Father *is not known* as the Savior and Lord. Jesus Christ occupies both offices by divine appointment (see again Phil. 2:5-11 and 1 Pet. 1:1-20).

What did the Lord God reveal to Isaiah? You have to understand this in reference to the above discussion about Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. In Isaiah 40:28, He refers to Himself as: (1)

the Everlasting God, (2) the Lord, and (3) the Creator. In Isaiah 41, He refers to: (1) Israel as His servant, (2) Jacob as His chosen, and (3) Abraham as His friend ... and says that He has no plan to cast any of them aside (vv. 8, 9). Several times He refers to Himself as Israel's God, redeemer, creator, and Holy One (vv. 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20). In 42:6-8, He says that He chose Israel to be a covenant people who would be *a light to the Gentiles in order to free them from their spiritual blindness and slavery to man-made "gods."*

Isaiah 43:1 is a bold proclamation that He actually created Israel and made her His own. In v. 3, He repeats His claim of being her Savior and having given Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as the ransom price for her. Verse 11 is probably where Peter got his scriptural warrant for his claim in Acts 4:12: "I ... am the Lord; and beside me [or: "other than me"] there is no savior." Verse 15 repeats His earlier claims with the addition that He is Israel's King. He makes a monumental claim v. 21: "This people I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise" (emphases added).

Relative to Deuteronomy 6:4, 5, we can understand Isaiah 44:1, 2, 6, 8, 21, and 24 to be His claim to Israel's singular worship as their only "Husband." Nevertheless, He was, in fact, their "God" by divine appointment, but not to the ultimate exclusion of the Father (see 1 Cor. 15:27, 28). In similar fashion, you can understand Isaiah 45:5, 6, 11-18, 21.

What is the point of this? Yahweh Elohim covenanted a "marriage" relationship with Israel with the expectation that Israel would not commit "adultery" with other "gods." He created Israel to be His inheritance forever. He is Israel's only Savior and Lord ... forever. At one point during the exodus from Egypt to Canaan, He threatened to destroy most of Israel and make a covenant nation from Moses (Ex. 32:1-10; Deut. 9:24-29). Moses would have constituted a "remnant" of Israel. Moses dissuaded Him from doing so because of the ridicule it would bring upon His holy name (vv. 11-14). In Deuteronomy 9:29, Moses calls Israel the Lord God's *inheritance*. The point of all of this is simple: Israel will be obedient, or Israel will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah were (Isa. 1:1-9). The righteous and faithful "remnant" would prevent Israel's total destruction. The Lord God (Jesus Christ) is her Creator and only Savior and "Husband."

## Review Questions

1. What is the difference between the *Birthright Promise* and the *Scepter Promise*?
2. You must understand that the “marriage” is for the purpose of creating a “unity” between the marriage partners that is necessary for *two basic things*. What are they?
3. Explain briefly the “marriage” proposal in Exodus 19:5, 6.
4. What is the significance of the Ten Commandments in this “marriage”?
5. In Exodus 24:4-8, what is the significance of the altar, 12 stones, and the blood? How does Hebrews 9:19, 20 relate to this ritual?
6. What purpose did the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood serve? What was it called?
7. Why did Moses write down all of the words of the Lord, build an altar, set up representative stones, and assign the appropriate priests to offer sacrifices – from which Moses obtained the blood he would use to seal it?
8. Explain the relationship between the terms *witness* and *testimony*. How do those terms relate to what Moses did in Exodus 24:4-8?
9. Why did Moses – who was the mediator of this covenant – read the Book of the Covenant to the *people*? Why is Moses called the *mediator* of the covenant?
10. Explain the following statement: “Sprinkling the same blood on the altar and the “people” *united* God and the people in a sacred fellowship – a holy covenant relationship.” Include what that means relative to how long the covenant was supposed to last.

11. Explain the relationship between this “marriage” and Mark 1:14, 15. How does this suggest that Yahweh Elohim became Israel’s *King* (read 1 Sam. 8:1-9)?
12. Is the Lord God’s covenant with Abraham related to the belief that heaven is the reward of the “saved”? Why/why not?
13. Why did Jesus Christ make belief in, the expectation of, and the desire for that *Kingdom of God* incumbent upon all true Christians?
14. What four things *pertain* (belong) to Israel? Why do they?
15. Explain the term *adoption* relative to Israel.
16. Explain why Paul uses the plural term *covenants*. Is he referring only to the Old and New Covenants? Why/why not?
17. How was the *gospel of the kingdom* preached to Abraham and Israel?
18. How does Galatians 3:15 imply that God’s covenant cannot be annulled or added to – except, perhaps, by God Himself ... in order to progressively unfold all of its benefits? How does Christ’s statement in Matthew 5:17 relate to this idea?
19. In Galatians 3:16, who is identified as the *Seed of Abraham*? Why? In whom was this covenant with Abraham *confirmed* – or, *sealed*?
20. Explain why adding the laws to the “marriage” covenant with Israel did not annul or render void the *Abrahamic covenant*.
21. Explain the meaning of the term *Deuteronomy*. Why was it addressed to Israel?
22. Why is the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 *not* a declaration of *monotheism* as it is popularly understood and taught in mainstream Christianity?

23. How do scriptures like 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 1:3, and Daniel 7:13, 14 help us to understand Deuteronomy 6:4, 5?

24. Briefly explain the expression: “Yahweh, our God, Yahweh, one.” How does it relate to the “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and Israel?

25. What do numerous prophecies in Isaiah contribute to this discussion? Did the *Father God* “marry” Israel?

26. Explain why and how God the Father worked discreetly in the background.

27. How did true believers come to understand the existence of the “Father”?

28. What does the name I AM THAT I AM mean? What does *self-sustaining life* mean?

29. Does 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 indicate that true Christians will receive the same kind of self-sustaining life? “Prove” your answer.





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## Chapter Five

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# Why the Lord God “Divorced” Israel

**D**euteronomy 12:29-32 is a key scripture citing the Lord God’s expectations of Israel. The main idea behind this scripture is that He did not want Israel to inquire about the “gods” of the heathens and how the heathens worshipped them. To do so would be a gross and flagrant violation of their “marriage” covenant with Him. Verse 32 unmistakably signals the serious nature of His command: “Whatsoever I command you, observe to do it: you shall not add to it, nor diminish from it” (emphases added). This was a very serious matter to the Lord God because disobedience would break the first four of the 10 Commandments in the Book of the Covenant.

In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus Christ points us to a proper understanding of the role played by the Lord God’s 10 Commandments when He says: “All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments” [that is: (1) love God supremely and (2) your fellow man as yourself]. Paul supports this by saying “Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:8, 10; emphases added). The Greek term for fulfill, in this context, is pleroo (pronounced *ple-ruh-oh*). This term has several definitions, but the one that is intended here by Paul is this: “*fulfill*, by deeds, a prophecy, an obligation, a promise, a law, a request, a desire, a hope, a duty, a fate, a destiny, etc.” (BAG, p. 677. Def. #4).

In the sense in which Paul intended, the word does not have any indication that the deed, obligation, law, purpose, or duty of *love* (*agapao/agape*) will ever be *finished* and, thereby, become *null and void* (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Matt. 5:17). A prophecy can be fulfilled and no longer be necessary (1 Cor. 13:8), but *love* for God and fellowman is always necessary ... as are faith and hope. This has much to do with the meaning of Hebrews 8:8: The problem was not with the Old Covenant itself; *it was with the people*.

The objective of this chapter, therefore, is to demonstrate how Israel flagrantly committed spiritual “adultery” against the Lord God by ignoring His commands. You will see the measures He took to correct the situation, as well as the ultimate course of action to divorce Himself from her. This is a pitiful and painful commentary about a people who were so spiritually bereft of a sense of covenant love that they very well could have been totally destroyed. Chasing after *Baalism* was at the root of the problem.

## The Typical Mainstream Christian Concept

One problem with *mainstream Christianity’s* repudiation of the Law of God is their basic ignorance of what *sin* is. The idea that is generally spread abroad is that *sin* is any offense or personal fault against a holy and righteous God. It is a good sound byte and *seems* to satisfy God’s demand for holiness; but, in that definition, there occurs the problem of *adding to* and/or *diminishing from* God’s word. Proverbs 14:12 speaks to such a problem: “There is a way that seems right, but the end of it is death.”

Because their idea about sin does not rely on a specific scriptural definition like 1 John 3:4 (mainly because it would dispute their orthodoxy about the Law having been done away with), they rely on a gross generality to explain why there is nothing good in human nature as compared to God’s holy nature. In essence, the *generality* is true, but ... it *circumvents* a very important aspect of the covenant relationship with the Lord God and why it is based on 10 “words.” Deuteronomy 6:24, 25 connect *righteousness* with obedience to those 10 “words.” Deuteronomy 8:2, 3 is cited by Jesus Christ in Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4 as worthy of our personal attention. Those “words” were the legal

bases of the “marriage” between the Lord God and Israel. James says that breaking one of them is sufficient enough to completely break the entire covenant (James 2:10-13). According to Genesis 26:5, it is equally true that adding to and/or diminishing from the laws, statutes, and commandments over which Abraham was given charge was not acceptable – in fact, it would also have constituted sinning against the Lord God.

The most common tactic used to authenticate the claim about the Law having been done away with is to find scriptures that supposedly support their claim. Instead of referring to Matthew 5:17-19, they refer to Colossians 2:13-17. In this claim, they state that the Law was “nailed to the cross” when Jesus Christ was crucified (v. 14). Therefore, they claim, we are no longer under the Law because it was destroyed through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This act, they say, fulfilled all the Law and Prophets, and thereby the Gospel of Jesus Christ replaced both. If it is true that the Law was nailed to the cross, is it equally true that the Lord God did away with the basis upon which He divorced Israel ... and was free to re-marry her as His prophecies had declared?

The following two statements pretty much summarize the sentiment of mainstream Christianity in that regard:

The Ten Commandments ... [were] in force as the law of God for His people ... until it was supplanted by the Gospel of Christ, for He was the fulfillment of the Law.

The scepter of divine favor passed from Judah to Christ, from the Law to the Gospel, from Judaism to Christianity, and henceforth the record of God in the lives of His people is found to be in the record of the Christian Church (*Doctrines of the Bible*, Daniel Kauffman (editor); Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1928; pp. 95, 96; emphases added).

This doctrinal statement presumes that the 10 Commandments were supplanted (that is: *removed* in order to be *replaced* with something else) by the *gospel of Christ*. However, it says nothing about the Lord God’s responsibility to fulfill the prophecies about His re-marriage with Israel. Instead, it transfers the whole matter

to “the gospel” and puts it into a new covenant relationship with an *amorphous* “Church” in which “whosoever will” makes up the “body” instead of Israel (whom they assume is the *Jews*).

You have been shown that the gospel of Christ was the good news about the *Kingdom of God* – which, no doubt, had to do with the Lord God (Jesus Christ) completing His plan to bring a New Covenant to Israel as He had prophesied through His prophets. How could He have *fulfilled all of the Law and the Prophets* if He did not bring into existence, on the earth, the Kingdom of God as the ruling power over all of creation ... finally “married” again to a Christianized Israel that will have been changed from flesh to spirit at His return (Isa. 2:1-5; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 5:10; 11:15; Matt. 22:34-40)?

It is interesting that Paul cites a pivotal scripture in Hebrews 8:6-13 and 10:12-17. This is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It specifically says that the New Covenant will be made with Israel (the House of Israel and the House of Judah combined – see also Ezek. 37). This New Covenant began at the Passover meal Jesus Christ had with His 12 Jewish disciples (all of whom were Israelites) just prior to His crucifixion (Matt. 26:26-29). We will discuss this in the fifth lesson of the *Bible Study Course* and how it affects the Church. You will be amazed at what the Bible reveals about this.

My reason for pursuing this conversation is really very simple. It is set in juxtaposition to what is revealed in scripture about why the Lord God *divorced* Israel ... and followed that by making plans to clean her up, forgive her sins, and prepare her for the new covenant (re-marriage) He intends to enter with her. The answer is not found in the claim that the *Jews* will get the earth because of earthly promises, and the *Christians* will get heaven because of heavenly promises. Those claims are made by dispensationalist theologians out of an ignorance of who “Israel” is and why the Law and Prophets are important to Israel’s continued relationship to the Lord God ... and, subsequently, to Jesus Christ. There is much about the Law and Prophets that was not fulfilled by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Some in Dispensational theology claim that any prophecies not fulfilled by the time Jesus Christ died were summarily made null and void. Can you say: “Fake news”?

## Deuteronomy 12:20-32

The setting for this scripture is prior to Israel being allowed to take possession of the land of Canaan. They were on the “wilderness” side of the Jordan River – eleven days’ journey after the covenant was sealed at Mt. Sinai/Horeb (Deut. 1:1-8). This final instruction was aimed at drawing Israel’s attention to the great responsibility they would have in occupying “holy ground” that was part of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15). This is born out in Leviticus 18:24-30. Committing the same types of sins as the heathens had committed would result in Israel being vomited out of the land (Lev. 18:25, 28). They were on the verge of fulfilling the Lord God’s prophecy to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-21.

Being violently removed (vomited/spewed out) from the Promised Land would, in effect, disqualify the guilty from taking part in the inheritance involved: the land, peace, plenty, safety, and mission to be a blessing to all nations. Covenant-breaking by the entire nation would be catastrophic! The destruction of the pagan inhabitants was part of the prophecy in Genesis 15:13-21. That was the problem the Lord God had to resolve before He set Israel free from Egypt (Deut. 12:29).

The Lord God considered the religious practices of those pagans to be a *snare* (a noose trap) to Israel. David speaks to this issue in Psalm 69:22-29. This part of the psalm has application to Judah and Israel over a long period of time. Note in v. 22 that David refers to a snare and a trap. From there through v. 29, he gets more specific in a prophetic voice. Those among Judah and Israel who were repentant of their sins were not included in this snare/trap ... they were a minority/remnant.

The altar of sacrifice was called “the Lord’s table.” They took the choice parts and left Him the “dregs.” Their “choice parts” would, in fact, become gall and vinegar to them. Verse 23 is a reiteration of Isaiah 6:8-13: no ears to hear and no eyes to see. David says, in effect: “Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion.” Then he asks that their status as a nation be taken completely away and laid waste (see also Mic. 3:8-12).

From there, it goes downhill. Such is the snare/trap into which Judah and Israel fell.

The ultimate fulfillment came in AD 70 when Titus brought his Roman forces into Jerusalem and completely destroyed it and the Temple. Judaism, as such, was essentially destroyed and scattered over the world just like the House of Israel had been destroyed and scattered by the Assyrians. In Romans 11, Paul takes up this prophecy by David and foretells the remedy to the situation.

The net effect of this kind of *noose* trap is that it will either bring a quick death by hanging the prey by the neck and breaking its neck, or it will be a slow, but steady, death process due to choking or asphyxiation ... or, if it catches the prey by the heels and hangs it upside down, it will cause gradual asphyxiation. It is a lurid description of Israel's national fate if they paid no attention to the Lord God's warning. Note the example below:

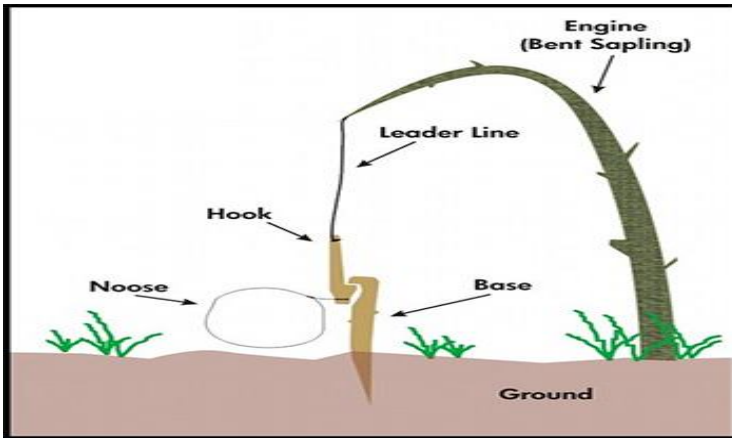


Diagram Courtesy of artofmanliness.com

Deuteronomy 12:30 is the *caveat*: “Do not even so much as inquire about the pagans’ religious practices to find out how they worship their false ‘gods’ so you can inculcate their practices into yours.” The reason: “The Lord God *hates* everything they do and stand for.” Verse 32 indicates that *the Lord God allows no compromise in the matter*. You are not allowed to “tweak” your own true practices with some outwardly “nice” aspect of their practices. It does not matter how “warm” and “fuzzy,” “sensible,”

wonderful, or beautiful their practices might otherwise seem. No additions or subtractions to the Lord God's commands are allowed.

I will not be exhaustive about why the Lord God "divorced" Israel – mainly because a few well-placed scriptures can do the job and ... you can expand your own search of scriptures to get a bigger picture. You need to learn how to search scripture to find things that you want/need to know.

### Jeremiah 19:5 and 32:35

Of all the Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah seems to have been specially chosen by the Lord God to prosecute His divorcement from the nation Israel. The Lord God begins that prosecution in Jeremiah 1:4 by declaring Jeremiah's credentials:

Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified [set apart for holy purposes] you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations.

Part of Jeremiah's responsibility in being a prophet to the nations was "to root out, and pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (v. 10). This was *Israel's* intended fate. Then He warned Jeremiah not to be dismayed by Judah's reaction when he is sent to speak the Lord God's judgments against them (vv. 11-19). You should note that v. 10 goes full circle from "root out" to "build and plant." That, for all practical purposes, signals an ultimate, positive outcome to a horrendous situation relative to Israel.

Jeremiah 2 focuses the Lord God's contempt on the entire nation of Israel ... even though the House of Israel had earlier been removed from their territory by the Assyrians (721-718 BC; read 2 Kings 17 for the historical background). The House of Judah was left in place and were worse than Israel (Ezek. 16; make note that *Samaria* refers to the House of Israel). The Lord God rehearses the entire sorry matter in Jeremiah 2 from their exodus from Egypt to that present day. He says a most important thing in vv. 19-21 that is reminiscent of Romans 1:24, 26, and 28:

Your own wickedness shall correct you and your gross immoralities shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the Lord your God, and that my fear is not in you, says the Lord God of Hosts. ...You said, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree you wandered, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then are you turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

She admitted no wrongdoing (vv. 23, 35). She was spiritually blind and deaf as the Lord God proclaimed in Isaiah 6:9-13. She pledged to be faithful, but her actions proved her to be a liar.

Jeremiah 3 begins the discussion about His divorcement from both “houses” of Israel. He had already separated Himself from the House of Israel (vv. 8-11), but now the House of Judah needed to be dealt with. In vv. 14-25, the Lord God turns to the “building” and “planting” aspects of His divorcement. *He shows a willingness to make a continued effort to cleanse and purify the entire nation if they will repent and return to Him* (vv. 22-25).

There is no reason to pursue endless scriptural references in order to understand the problem under discussion. The “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and Israel was being dissolved. Isaiah 1:1-9 shows that the Lord God found no remedy for the situation ... which left Him with two possible outcomes: (1) accept the faithful commitment of a *remnant* of true believers in Israel and complete His plan through them (see Ex. 32:1-14), or (2) destroy the entire nation as He had done to Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah 1:9 indicates that completing His plan with the *remnant of Israel* was His choice.

However, Jeremiah 19:4, 5 and 32:35 provide some amazing information about the depths to which the House of Israel and the House of Judah fell into spiritual and physical immorality and adultery as they adopted more and more pagan religious practices. Jeremiah 19:5 says: “They [Judah] have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I did not command or decree, a thing that never entered my mind (MLB; emphases added). It appears that the Lord God was completely caught off guard by that behavior.



He includes the House of Israel in this in Jeremiah 32:31-35. Kings, princes, priests, prophets, leaders, and ordinary citizens were all involved with these abominable practices. You can see in 1 Kings 11:1-13 how King Solomon set a most unworthy example of this treachery. They even gave their small children (usually the firstborn) to be burnt sacrifices to Baal and Molech! Notice the last part of v. 35 where the Lord God confesses that *it never entered His mind that they would do such a thing!* This is evidence that God is not *omniscient* as the term is popularly defined (that is: *knowing everything about everything in minute detail before it happens*). There are things that He *learns* (Gen. 18:17-21; Ex. 16:4; Jer. 17:9, 10)! And ... the storehouse of the things He has learned thus far is *huge* (see Isa. 55:8, 9). He was *shocked* at the depravity of both houses of the nation Israel!

### Ezekiel 16 and Jeremiah 31:31-34

Read the entirety of Ezekiel 16. Verse 1 specifically addresses the message to *Jerusalem*. Why? There is an unusual statement in v. 61 that gives us clues by which we can understand this entire allegory:

... You will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger: *and give them to you as daughters*, but not on account of the covenant with you (*RSV*; emphases added).

Make note of the two allegories contained in this chapter: (1) *the sin of ingratitude* (vv. 1-43) and (2) *the three sisters* (vv. 44-63). The first is an allegory about an abandoned girl who is found by a rich man who raises her to womanhood, marries her, and gives her life, wealth, and status that she otherwise would never have had. No doubt, it is an allegory applicable to the Lord God's relationship with the whole nation of Israel represented by Jerusalem. It is a picture of frightful, incredible sin that ends with unrelieved judgment.

In the second allegory, which helps us to understand v. 61, the middle sister (*Jerusalem*) compares herself with her elder sister

(*Samaria*) and younger sister (*Sodom*) ... and feels morally superior to both because she survives while they do not. However, she comes under greater judgment from God because of all of the advantages she had received. Therefore, she suffers a different fate from what they suffered (a summary of commentary from *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 6, pp. 141-148). So, this is undoubtedly an allegory about *Jerusalem*.

The amazing thing about the Lord God's deep, abiding love for Jerusalem is found in vv. 59-63. Despite all of the sin, despicable behavior, and thanklessness on her part, He will yet remember the "marriage" covenant He made with her ... and establish a *new, everlasting* covenant with her. Part of that covenant will include the responsibility that Jerusalem will have for her two sisters (v. 61). *Why is the covenant said to have been with Jerusalem?*

Let's step back and review a few things about Jerusalem that have bearing on the meaning of this entire prophetic parable. Two things should be noteworthy: (1) A *new* covenant will be made with "Jerusalem" (v. 59), and (2) "Jerusalem" will become a "mother" to her two sisters. Our first question has to be about how *Jerusalem* came to this "covenant" relationship with the Lord God. *It is in Israel's history as a nation that we find the answer.*

The first mention of Jerusalem is in Genesis 14:18, where it is named *Salem* ("peace"). Melchizedek was the king of Salem during the time of Abraham. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* says that the Jewish Rabbis said that he was Noah's son, Shem. However, if Paul's record in Hebrews 6:20-7:3 is correct, then there would be reason to doubt that Shem would have been Melchizedek because we can find Shem's *family lineage* in scripture (Gen. 5:32; 10:21-32). Melchizedek, at that time, is said to have had no such lineage.

Whatever the true historical record might otherwise be, this Melchizedek is a mysterious character whose name means "king of righteousness" – and his association with Salem leads to his also being called the "king of peace." He was, in fact, recognized as being a priest/king in the service of Yahweh. He is venerated in numerous Christian, Jewish, and Islamic groups.

The Canaanites occupied the land at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Genesis 15:18-20 lists some of the descendants of Canaan (see also Gen. 10:15-19). The *Jebusites* (*Jebus* = 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Canaan) settled in that area. They are first mentioned in Numbers

13:29 in the report the Israelite spies brought back to Moses. They lived in the mountains around Salem.

As the Israelite occupation of the land progressed, Judah could not drive out the Jebusites – they took part of the territory and burned other parts of it, but the Jebusites held the citadel (*city fortress*) for about 300 years (Josh. 15:63). The Benjamites did not drive them out. They mixed and mingled with them (Jud. 1:21). The city did not become the capital of Israel for over 450 years from the time of Joshua until David took it from the Jebusites and made it his royal residence and the religious sanctuary, near the center of his *Zion* (2 Sam. 5:1-11) – the hill in Jerusalem (Mt. Zion) where the Jebusite castle was located. This area also later became the site of Solomon’s Temple (“Temple Mount”).

In 1 Chronicles 11:1-9, we find all 12 tribes of Israel making a covenant with David to support him as the Lord God’s chosen king. Verse 3 says: “According to the word of Samuel.” First Samuel 16:1-13 gives us the account. The Lord God told Samuel to choose one of Jesse’s sons (vv. 1-5). Jesse made all of his sons but David to appear before Samuel, and Samuel refused every one of them. When Samuel commanded Jesse to bring David to him, the Lord God told him to anoint David as King over all of Israel (vv. 11-13). The spirit of the Lord came upon David.

With all of Israel united under David as their king and Jerusalem (*the foundation of peace*) named as their capital city, we find this “Zion, City of God” considered to be the place where the Lord God had chosen to place His name. This became even more evidenced when Solomon built the Temple there (the *permanent* dwelling of God) to replace the Tabernacle (the *temporary* dwelling of God).

With the land now conquered and Israel ruled by the Lord God’s specially chosen King, the Kingdom of God had become more of a reality to Israel. All of the Lord’s Feasts were observed in Jerusalem. That is where their tithes were brought and the sacrifices were made at the Temple. This would have been a foretaste of Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 2:1-5. This would have been a fitting outcome of His earlier “marriage” to Israel: one nation, under God, by a covenant agreement that was consummated at Mt. Sinai under Moses. This should have made a huge impression on all of Israel.

Now ... mix in all of the sin and rebellion that ensued thereafter, and a frightful thing becomes apparent. Israel thought they had God in a “box,” so to speak, and felt they were free to live any way they wanted to live as long as they paid superficial homage to Him in His capital city and at His residence, the Temple. They had His covenant, His promises, His presence, His Law, and His blessings. Israel was His “wife” by covenant and they were His adopted children. What could go wrong?

Jeremiah 7:1-28 gives us the answer. In vv. 1-11, the Lord God reminds them that their continued existence in the land and in Jerusalem depended upon their repentance and the mending of their evil ways. Verse 4 is a reminder to them that sacred places, sacred observances, and sacred symbols and objects are *nothing* in the sight of God if the *heart* is not in unity with Him. Verse 5 is His warning that He will no longer accept less than a thorough mending of their ways. Verse 11 is a reminder that unholy actions in the residence of a holy God is a gross abomination to Him. Then comes His great warning in vv. 12-15. Verse 28 is a terse summation of the seriousness of the matter: “By your own gross disobedience and lack of repentance, *truth is perished and cut off from your lips*” (author’s paraphrase; read again Deut. 4:1-43).

The Lord God’s chosen course of action was to *abandon* Jerusalem and the Temple built to be His residence. Verses 12-15 name two places that He had previously abandoned because of Israel’s sinfulness and rebellion. The entire list is as follows: Shechem, Shiloh, Gibeah, Nob, and Gibeon. Jerusalem was to be next ... and apparently the last if Israel could not be redeemed and saved. Perhaps this lends additional meaning to the term “salvation” in scripture.

This is not aimed simply at the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Ultimately, all of the towns and cities of the entire nation of Israel were to be included. If the Lord God abandoned His residence and the city in which it was housed, then that amounted to the *decapitation* and *dissolution* of the entire physical Kingdom. All of Israel was ultimately to pay an awful price for committing adultery against her Husband! *Jerusalem* would be to the nation what the head is to the body. If you lose the “head,” you lose the “body.”

Perhaps Paul gives us additional insight into this situation that must be considered in figuring out why the Lord God divorced Israel and removed His presence from her Temple and her lands. We can use the allegory that he presents in Galatians 4:22-31 to understand this more completely. He uses Hagar/Ishmael to represent the “present-day [to Paul] Jerusalem that is in bondage.” Hagar was a substitute “wife” for Abraham, and the son she bore to Abraham was not Abraham’s legal heir ... according to the Lord God. Some commentators say that the Arab name for Mt. Sinai – *Agar* – is a reference to Hagar – *Mt. Hagar*.

Sarah/Isaac are represented by the “free Jerusalem above that is the mother of us all.” Sarah was the wife of first choice to Abraham and the woman through whom the Lord God chose the “seed” who would be a blessing to the entire world. The fact that she is portrayed as being in heaven demonstrates that the time for her residence among God’s redeemed people on the earth has not yet arrived (see Rev. 21:1-5). It is a metaphor; do not over-think it and conclude that heaven is, therefore, the reward of the “saved.”

In both cases, the focus is on a type of “Jerusalem” – both of which are “mothers.” One is presently not serving God’s eternal purpose; the other is being held in abeyance until her time to be manifested has arrived (think in terms of Eph. 1:10-14). What is Paul’s point in this allegory? Of course, there are varying opinions. Let’s put it in the context of our above discussion. Let’s consider a short historical perspective about how the Lord God ultimately abandoned the “present” nation and Jerusalem.

Between 721-718 BC, the Assyrians came in and took the House of Israel into captivity. Those Israelites could have been called “Samaritans” because the House of Israel was known as “Samaria” and its capital was “Samaria.” Any Israelites who were not taken by the Assyrians probably escaped to Judea and lived among Judah, Benjamin, and Levi (collectively known as the *Jews*). There will be more information about that later.

Read 2 Kings 17 to get an idea of the problem involved. Verses 1-17 explain that rather vividly. Verses 18-41 explain how the Lord God caused the Assyrians to remove the House of Israel from Samaria into Assyrian territory. The Assyrians replaced the Israelites by bringing in people from other Assyrian territories (v. 24). These people are known as the “Samaritans” of the New

Testament (see Luke 10:25-37; John 4:1-30). Notice that the woman at the well in John 4 claims Jacob as their “father” (v. 12).

In 2 Kings 17:25-41, we find an interesting account of a problem faced by these “transplants” into Samaria. The Lord God sent lions among them ... and some of them were killed by the lions. They figured out that the problem lay in their unfamiliarity with the “God” of the land. So, the Assyrian king sent a Levitical priest to teach them how to properly fear the Lord. Despite that knowledge, they still worshipped their own foreign gods and mixed the new knowledge they acquired with their own religious concepts and practices. Same song; different band. These were the “children of Jacob” spoken of by the Samaritan woman in John 4:7-12. Because of the religion taught them, after a span of time they thought they were “Israelites.” The Jews knew better (v. 9).

That left Judah, Benjamin, and Levi (the House of Judah) in their territories as a “remnant” of Israel (Isa. 1:9). But they were no better than the House of Israel. They were actually worse. But ... *they* had Jerusalem and the Temple! Most of the prophecies of Jeremiah are aimed specifically at “Judah” as an amalgamation of Judah, Benjamin, Levi, and scattered Israelites. Collectively, they are called “Jews.”

You can see this appellation applied to them in 2 Kings 16:5, 6 when they were at war with the House of Israel and Syria. This is the first scriptural usage of the term “Jews” – especially in that collective sense. That appellation applies to more than the tribe of Judah (compare Ezra 1:5 to Romans 11:1 and Acts 4:36). Paul was a *Benjamite*, and Barnabas was a *Levite* – but both were ethnic “Jews.” Jesus Christ was from the tribe of *Judah*. He was a “Jew.”

When the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, began to fulfill Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 25:1-11), he destroyed much of Jerusalem, robbed the Temple, and tore it completely down. This was the prophecy that Daniel was studying in Daniel 9:2. Read Daniel’s prayer in vv. 3-19 to see how *systematically* the Lord God made good on His threats. Make note of the mentions of *curses* and *desolations* that were poured out upon all of Israel because of her sins.

Under the Medo-Persian king, Cyrus the Great, the House of Judah began to be returned to Judea to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-5). He made a Prince of Judah, Sheshbazzar, governor (1:8;

5:14). Ezra wrote that 42,360 people returned to Judea with 7,337 additional servants and maids ... and numerous animals (2:64-67). They did not return merely to Jerusalem (2:70). They went back to their own ancestral towns and cities and began to set up house. Ezra attributes this to the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (1:1).

Without previously stating when they left and when they arrived, Ezra says that they gathered in Jerusalem "When the seventh month was come..." (3:1). Verse 6 indicates that it was "the first day of the seventh month; so, one could assume that "all of the set feasts" mentioned in v. 5 indicates that Trumpets and Atonement were observed prior to the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 4). By that time, they had built the altar (vv. 2, 3), but they had not yet laid the foundation of the Temple (v. 6). That did not take place until the second year (vv. 8-13).

Because of problems with the non-Jewish people of the land (4:1-5), the building was postponed until Darius succeeded Cyrus (v. 7). The non-Jews argued that rebuilding Jerusalem would pose a serious threat to the Medo-Persian Empire (vv. 11-24). The Jews were made to cease their rebuilding activities ... which was only in reference to the Temple at that time. This is about the time when Haggai wrote his prophecy (Hag. 1).

The Jews began their work again in the second year, 24<sup>th</sup> day of the sixth month (v. 15). One could logically surmise that the Lord God used the 70 years as a warning to Israel about how swiftly He could remove His name from His house. He was now calling for action, not resignation and timidity. Ezra 7:8 indicates that Ezra did not come to Jerusalem until the fifth month of the seventh year of *Artaxerxes*, who succeeded Darius. This was about 457 BC. The Jews had been returning there since about 515 BC. The rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem was not approved by the Medo-Persians until 445 BC when Artaxerxes gave permission to Nehemiah to go back and rebuild it (Neh. 2; Dan. 9:25).

You can gather by this that the 70 years prophecy in Jeremiah 25:1-12 probably was not about the length of time the Jews would actually be in Babylon because many of them did not return – only a "remnant" of them did so. They were under Babylonian captivity from (according to the source cited) 598 or 587 BC until 538 BC ... 49 to 60 years (*Interpreter's*, vol. 5, p. 1001). Several commentators believe that the number 70 represents "a normal



lifetime,” rather than a specific number of years (*The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah*, vol. 21, p. 160). *Adam Clarke* reckons it to have been from the first year of Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Cyrus (p. 632), while *Matthew Henry* is uncertain when the time began, but he is convinced that the destruction of Babylon by Cyrus marked the end of the 70 years (Jer. 25:12; p. 983). It should be understood that the 70 years specified by the Lord God served the purpose for which they were intended and accomplished what He laid out for them to accomplish (Isa. 55:10, 11).

The rebuilt Temple ultimately was remodeled under Herod the Great (b. 74 – d. 4 BC). In this project, he expanded and beautified the Temple. Paul wrote *Galatians* about the mid-50s AD – roughly 15 years before Titus came into Jerusalem between AD 69-71 and destroyed it and what is called “the second Temple.” From the time Israel made their exodus from Egypt to the “Promised Land” until AD 70, nothing much had really changed. Jesus had told His disciples in Matthew 24:1, 2 that such destruction would come. The Lord God has not been in a hurry to “mend fences” with Jerusalem/Israel. Not yet.

The Temple has not been restored since AD 70. Only a remnant of Jews has returned there since the late 1940s. The Levitical priesthood was disbanded, but a Sanhedrin has existed. There are no sacrifices offered or tithes paid. For more than 1948 years, God has withdrawn His name from Jerusalem and His presence from a non-existent “Temple.” *Jerusalem* exists today and is widely considered to be the capital of the Jewish nation of “Israel.” However, it is not the entire nation – it is only three tribes of 12. But ... God has not chosen to put His name there ... yet.

Note the following from Wikipedia:

“The “Temple Mount” is still the most holy place in the world for the Jewish people because it is considered to be the place of the connection between God and humanity. Observant Jews recite the Amidah three times a day facing Zion in Jerusalem, praying for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, the restoration of the Temple service, the redemption of the world, and for the coming of the Messiah.”



Please make note of this most important point: Although the Lord God has withdrawn His name from the land, Temple, and the Israelites ... at present, He has prophesied through several prophets that He intends that Israel shall be thoroughly cleansed of their transgressions against the “marriage” covenant they entered with Him at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:5, 6). Once that is accomplished, He will *re-marry* her and take her to Himself *forever* (Jer. 31:31-37; Ezek. 16:59-63; Hos. 2:14; Amos 9:9-15).

That “marriage” covenant was part and parcel to the Abrahamic covenant and sealed it even more firmly in perpetuity: *The Lord God “married” the legal heirs of the Abrahamic covenant!* Paul says in Galatians 3:16-18 that the intended “seed” in the Abrahamic covenant was *Jesus Christ* (read again Heb. 2:16). His inheritance of the *promise* was not dependent upon the *law* ... and the giving of the law did not cancel the *promise* of the Abrahamic covenant (v. 17).

Paul says in Romans 4:13-16 that the Abrahamic covenant was based on *promise*, not *law*. The “marriage” was based on *law* – the 10 Commandments (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 10:4). Paul adds in Galatians 3:19-25 that the purpose of the law is to bring us to *Christ*. In that case, all of the rituals and sacrifices that were added to the law were, in fact, “preaching Jesus” to the Israelites because they pictured every aspect of the necessity of a holy sacrifice to “save” Israel from her sins (John 5:46; Isa. 53; Acts 8:26-35; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Heb. 10).

Whether or not we realize it, bringing us to “Christ” also has much to do with the “marriage” aspect of our relationship with *Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. 11:2, 3; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7-9). When Peter proclaimed to the Sanhedrin council that *salvation* is not possible by any name other than *Jesus Christ* (Acts 4:12), the “re-marriage” of Israel to the Lord God was brought into play because *Israel* must be redeemed and made clean before Him before she can become His wife forever. *That is a “salvation” message relative to His prophecies that He will again take her for His wife forever* (read Rom. 11:26-36).

In conclusion, the prophecy in Ezekiel 16 is about *Jerusalem* because she represents the “mother of us all” relative to all of the tribes of the nation of Israel. The ruler of Israel was to be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:8-10). That is whom David represented

when he was made king over all of Israel and Jerusalem was made to be his capital city. That is why Jesus Christ appointed His 12 Jewish disciples to be the kings over the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). The Kingdom of God will be ruled from Jerusalem (see Isa. 2:1-5).

The comment in Ezekiel 16:61 about giving Samaria and Sodom to Jerusalem as her “daughters” is about expanding the family of Israel *by adding the Gentiles to her*. Paul calls this the “grafting” of the Gentiles into the “holy root” in Romans 11:16-24 – the “holy root” being the “remnant [of Israel] according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). That “remnant” was selected from the Jews and has spread from there to the House of Israel (Matt. 10:5, 6, 23: 15:21-28). The “strangers” to whom Peter wrote were the lost “sheep” of the House of Israel (1 Pet. 1:1). How do we know? Paul says in Galatians 2:7 that “the gospel of the circumcision was [committed] unto Peter” (emphases added). All of Israel is the “circumcision,” not just the Jews (see also James 1:1).

All in all, you should easily understand that the Lord God was well justified in divorcing Israel (Heb. 8:7, 8). The problem was not with the Law that undergirded the relationship. It was with the people. That notwithstanding, He plans a “new covenant” with her.

## Review Questions

1. Why is Deuteronomy 12:29-32 a key scripture relative to the Lord God’s expectations of the nation Israel?
2. Explain why the mainstream “Christian” belief that God’s Law was done away with by being “nailed to the cross” is wrong ... according to scripture.
3. How would you “prove” by scripture that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was not, in fact, the fulfillment of that Law and Prophets?
4. What supposedly replaced God’s Law ... and why?

5. How do Hebrews 8:6-13, 10:12-17, and Jeremiah 31:31-34 prove that the Law was not “nailed to the cross”?
6. If the Law is the legal bases for the Lord God’s “marriage” to Israel, does the “divorce” do away with the Law (use Romans 7)?
7. In what manner is the New Covenant going to employ God’s Law? Upon what will it be written?
8. Does Jeremiah 31:31-34 indicate that there will be a new “marriage” with the nation Israel?
9. How does Hebrews 8:6 explain the problem with the Old Covenant? Was the problem with the Law? Why/why not?
10. Knowing what you now know, how would you answer those who say that the Jews will inherit the earth and Christians will inherit heaven? How does Matthew 5:5 help to dispute that claim?
11. Explain the importance of Deuteronomy 12:20-32.
12. Using Romans 11:9 with Deuteronomy 12:30, explain how the religion of the pagans would be a snares to Israel.
13. Using scriptural references, explain what it means to be vomited out of the land.
14. Using Romans 1:24, 26, 28 and Jeremiah 2:19-21, explain how the Lord God uses Israel’s sins to correct and reprove her. Pay attention to the expressions “gave them over to” in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. What does that expression mean?
15. How would you “prove” that the Lord God does not know everything beforehand in minute detail? How do Jeremiah 9:5; 32:35; and Matthew 24:36 help you understand that question? Refer to the following scriptures for clues: Genesis 6:5, 6; 18:1-21; Exodus 16:1-4; Jeremiah 17:9, 10. Operate from the position that *omniscience* has to do with unlimited knowledge as opposed to being “all knowing.” Is God a learner? In what way?

16. In Ezekiel 16:1-43, what does the allegory about *the sin of ingratitude* teach us about dealing righteously with the Lord God? How did Jerusalem display that sin?

17. In Ezekiel 16:44-63, what is most important about the allegory of *the three sisters*? Who are these three “sisters”?

18. How did Jerusalem come into the possession of Israel? Why is it important to understand 1 Chronicles 11:1-9 relative to this allegory? Relative to the Lord God, what is significant about the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in the formation of the nation of Israel under David?

19. Explain the significance of Jeremiah 7:1-28 relative to the allegory of the three “sisters.”

20. Read Jeremiah 1:28 and compare it to Deuteronomy 4:1-43. How does the Lord God’s truth *perish* in this situation?

21. Name all of the places from which the Lord God removed His name because of Israel’s sins. Why would the removal of His name from Jerusalem and the Temple be the most significant?

22. How can you know that the present-day *Jews* do not make up the entire nation of Israel? Think of the roles of Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. Which three tribes of Israel are represented by today’s *Jews*?

23. Briefly explain Jeremiah 25:1-11. What is the significance of the “70 years” in this prophecy? Did all of the Jews return from this captivity?

24. Who finally destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple about AD 70? Has it been rebuilt since? Were the Jews dispersed as a result of this? Does this have anything to do with Jeremiah 7:1-28? Why/why not? How will all of Israel ultimately be “saved”?

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## Chapter Six

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# The “Fading Glory”

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul discusses the “fading glory” of the Old Covenant with Israel. He alludes to that idea by comparing that “fading glory” to Moses’ face after he had spent such a long time in the presence of the Lord God writing down as a testimony the terms and conditions of the Lord God’s “marriage” to Israel (Ex. 34:29-35). Moses had to put a veil on his face when he spoke to Israel because they were afraid to even look at him. That “glory” faded with time until Moses returned to normal. Paul uses that experience to explain the “fading glory” of the Old Covenant.

The objective of this part of the study is to assist you in understanding two remarkable things: (1) how the “Law” (Moses’ writings in Genesis through Deuteronomy) and the “Prophets” continue to be important to *Christians* today, and (2) how the “Law” of God will achieve a higher glory in the New Covenant that is prophesied in numerous places in the Old Testament. If you can clearly understand this discussion, then you will begin to understand true “New Testament” Christianity in an entirely different manner and ... on a remarkably higher level.

### Paul’s Commentary in 2 Corinthians 3

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-6, Paul’s prelude to his discussion of the “fading glory” involves elements of Jeremiah 31:31-34, where Jeremiah prophesies a new covenant by which God’s laws will be written in the hearts of the House of Israel and the House of Judah

when they are again joined together to be a single nation. Paul admits in this prelude that the Gentiles will be partakers of that covenant – no doubt, providing support to his claims in Romans 11:16-25 that the Gentile converts will be grafted into the “holy root” of Israel and become partakers in that new covenant “marriage” to Jesus Christ (see also Gal. 3:26-29). Notice the similarity to Jeremiah 31:31-34 when he writes about the epistle of Jesus Christ being written in their hearts (vv. 2, 3). He also points out that God’s true ministry are “ministers of the New Testament” (v. 6). That is directly related to Jeremiah 31:31-34.

What is Paul’s point in 2 Corinthians 3:6-11? Does he denigrate the Old Covenant ... or does he call it glorious? This is where we can better understand BAG’s definition of the kainos (new relative to quality) covenant (Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8; Jer. 31:31-34).

First, the approach to the new covenant was not used in the original “marriage” covenant ... it will be a new (kainos) approach. Second, calling it a new covenant carries no implication of criticism of the old covenant. What is old has merely become obsolete because it is being replaced by what is new and superior in quality (pp. 394, 395). Nevertheless, the old covenant was glorious, but the new covenant is more glorious ... which renders the old covenant of no use in the new approach. How so? *The new covenant will not be written in stone, but on the heart.*

Here is the idea that Paul is expressing in his comment in v. 13 when he says that “Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is [being] abolished” (emphases added). They were spiritually blind to what was happening. That comment presupposes that even when the glorious Old Covenant was first put into effect, it already had a limited lifespan! Its “glory” was not designed to last forever ... because it was a “marriage” between the temporary (Israel) and the eternal (the Lord God).

That is, on its face, an unequal yoking. The Lord God already knew that a greater glory was planned for the future. It was a new “glory” that would be unfolded as the Lord God’s plan and design achieved the purpose for which it was created. It would be “unfolded” as Israel grew in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. That is a main tenet of the concept of the Kingdom of God. It is the same goal in the New Covenant (see 2 Pet. 3:14-18).

If the “wife” is to be a suitable helpmate to her husband (Gen. 2:18), then *Israel* would have to be *changed*. Paul says in Hebrews 8:8 that the fault in that unequal “marriage” was with *the people*. He has no criticism for the law or the Old Covenant. He quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 (vv. 9-12). In other words, there *eventually* would have to be a more glorious “marriage” between the Lord God and Israel if Israel is to be His *eternal* partner. That would require that she would have to become *spirit* as He is spirit. That requires a discussion about being “born again” (John 3:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:50-54). We will have that discussion in Lesson Five.

Paul says in Hebrews 8:13 that the Lord God prophesied such a change in Jeremiah 31:31-34. When He said “*new*” covenant, He *automatically* made the first covenant “*old*.” Once it was declared to be “*old*,” it *began* to decay and grow old *toward* vanishing. By AD 70, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and dispersed the Jews, the deed was done with the “*old*.” He had completely removed His name from physical Israel. The “*New*” Covenant had begun during the last Passover meal Jesus Christ had with His disciples – the “remnant” of Israel according to the election of grace (Matt. 26:27, 28; Isa. 1:9; Rom. 11:5). Both the *covenant* and the *people* will become “*new*.”

Read Ephesians 2:15 and 4:24 regarding the *new man*; read 2 Corinthians 5:17a and Galatians 6:15 regarding the *new creature*. Focus on Romans 6:4 where Paul says that the baptism of the repentant sinner should mark the beginning of a *new life*. The term *newness* is translated from the Greek term *kainotes*, which means a *newness* with the connotation of something extraordinary. And ... it will be *extraordinary* if it has never been used before in all of history. Now read Romans 12:1, 2. Make the connection with Paul’s statement about being “*transformed* by the *renewing* of your *mind*” (emphases added).

The word *renewing* is translated from the Greek term *anakalupto*. What Paul is referring to here is having one’s mind *changed* due to an *unveiling* process. It is not a once-and-done thing; it is a *process* ... an “unfolding” ... by which the spirit-imbued person gradually learns the thoughts and ways of God by revelation (1 Cor. 2:6-16; Isa. 55:8-11). The *spirit* of God works on the *heart* and *mind* – the deepest emotions and thought processes. In that way, God’s thoughts and ways are made to be *internal*

rather than external because they are unveiled in such a way that the new person will understand them in ways beyond the comprehension of the ordinary person (1 Cor. 2:6-10).

That is also the sense of Galatians 3:23-25. Once we learn the spiritual nature of God's law and the righteousness attached to it (Rom. 8:1-4), we will not have to be reminded over and over as we were until we learned the ABCs, arithmetic, writing in cursive style, et cetera. Once we learned them, we were able to go on to greater things because we were becoming independent learners. Both ways are glorious because they emanate from God, rather than man. But the new way is more glorious because it has never been used before ... at all. And ... it is internal rather than external.

In 2 Corinthians 3:13-18, Paul explains what happened to Israel because of their unwillingness to listen to and obey the Lord God. This is directly from Isaiah 6 ... and is repeated by Jesus Christ in Matthew 13:9-17. The Lord God (who became Jesus Christ) put a veil over Israel's understanding of His thoughts and ways because they misused them, abused the Lord God's sovereignty, and refused to obey Him and the things He was using to bring them to "Christ" (Rom. 9:30-33; 10:19-21; Gal. 3:22-25; 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5; Col. 1:23-29).

Bringing them to "Christ" is speaking of two things: (1) The recognition of the Lord God as their Savior and King [of the Kingdom] – the one who will have redeemed them from their slavery to sin, and (2) the change of the believer's mind and heart in such a way that s/he will be totally subject to God in the same way Jesus Christ is (Gal. 4:19; Phil. 1:20, 21; Col. 1:27).

Now, keep in mind that Jeremiah 31:31-34 speaks of this being possible because God's laws will be written on the hearts of men. Contrary to what is widely taught among mainstream Christian groups, Jeremiah is revealing the Lord God's claim that He will be using those very same laws in a new way that has never been used before. Paul claims that this will be done by unveiling God's truth in a way that mankind has never known or understood before.

If you understand 2 Peter 3:8, 9 correctly, then you will understand that the Lord God is not as concerned with time as the human is. Whether it is a "twinkling of the eye" or 1,000 years, what is intended to be done will be done ... and done properly.



## Acts 2:38

A man who professed to be a Christian once asked me if I believe that it is necessary for a person to be baptized ... hinting that baptism serves only a ritualistic role and that a person can take it or leave it. This, of course, is born out of the belief that all a person has to do to be saved is call upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:9). My answer was simple: *There is more to salvation than meets the eye.* You cannot base a complete doctrine about salvation through Jesus Christ on one scripture.

What do you do about the command of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20? What do you do about Acts 2:38 ... which says that you have to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit? What do you do about the examples set by the Apostles in which receipt of the Holy Spirit came by the laying on of hands by a qualified minister of God in relationship to baptism? Acts 8:12-17 is an example of such an action. It is true that Philip preached and people believed and were baptized. But, the scripture shows that the Holy Spirit was not given to them until Peter and John came to lay hands upon them so they could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that would gradually unveil God's truth to their minds.

Read about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9. You will see that a disciple named Ananias was sent to baptize him and lay hands on him for the receipt of the Holy Spirit (vv. 10-18). It appears in this case that God gave Paul the Holy Spirit before baptism to help Ananias understand that Saul would be a new man in the service of God. Saul was later known as Paul, the Apostle.

Read Acts 10 where Peter was assigned to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. Notice vv. 44-48. It appears that God gave these Gentiles the Holy Spirit before baptism as a sign to Peter that the action was His will (read Peter's comment about *Jewish* law in v. 28). Even then, Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (v. 48).

Now read Acts 19:1-7. Paul finds some believers who had been baptized by John the Baptist. Did he accept John's baptism as being valid? No. He re-baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ and laid hands on them for the receipt of the Holy Spirit. All of these examples give us a firm, complete answer to the question

about the necessity of baptism in the process of salvation. Just so you can understand completely: Salvation is *not* complete the moment you profess faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:13, 14 says that we receive only a “down-payment of our inheritance *until* the *redemption* of the purchased possession” (emphases added). What does that mean?

The Greek term that is translated as “redemption” is *apolutrosis*. That word is a big clue about the *process* of salvation, rather than the *instantaneous action* expected by most. *Apolutrosis* means two things: (1) the complete and utter forgiveness of our sins (see Isa. 65:17), and (2) the release from the limitations of the flesh. While we might be completely forgiven for sins committed before and after our confessions of faith, we will have not been released from the limitations of the flesh. Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26, 27 reveal that it is possible for the Christian to lose his/her claim on the pending salvation. You cannot claim belief and repentance ... then live any way you want to live. That was the fault with Israel after they entered into a “marriage” covenant with the Lord God.

In Romans 8:23, Paul shows that this *apolutrosis*, with regard to the *release from the limitations of the flesh*, involves the redemption of our *bodies*. What does that mean? Read John 3:1-8. You must be *born again from flesh to spirit*. Paul covers this in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. Notice that we must “put on immortality” and “put on incorruption.” *When we are reborn from flesh to spirit, then our salvation will have been completed.*

With this evidence, it is not possible or reasonable to believe that baptism and the laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Spirit are merely rituals for those who need *extra* assurance ... that they are *optional*. Why would Paul list *baptism* as a fundamental doctrine of Jesus Christ if it is *optional* (Heb. 6:2)? Why did Paul consider it to be a symbolic *death and burial with Jesus Christ* if it is merely *optional ritual* (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12)?

Here is the importance of this symbolic death, burial, and resurrection ritual: It is the *gateway* to entering the *New* Covenant that Jesus Christ is executing with the faithful “remnant of Israel according to the election of grace.” For the Gentiles, it is the ceremony by which they become grafted into the “holy root” of Israel and become the fulfillment of Paul’s words in Ephesians

2:10-22. Notice how Paul says that God, through Jesus Christ, is making “one new man” from Israel and the Gentiles. What did Paul mean by that? Is this simply taking all of the true Christians from all “people, nations, and languages” (Dan. 7:14) and calling them “Spiritual Israel” ... *without any regard for His former “marriage” relationship with the nation of Israel* (who became the inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant) and His prophecies that He will take her, *the whole nation of Israel*, to Himself as His wife forever once she has been sufficiently punished and cleansed? Is the Kingdom of God about a totally different entity of an amorphous, mixed people, languages, and nations that form His New Church (Acts 7:38)? No!

Please pay close attention to this observation by the noteworthy scholar, John Bright, in reference to Hosea’s prophecy about the moral certainty of Israel’s punishment (Hos. 7-13):

It is precisely because he is God, not man, that *he will not make a total end of Israel* (11:8, 9). The doom, to be sure, remains inescapable. Israel will be stripped of all that she has (2:3, 9, 12-13), ejected from the land, sent back literally to her desert days when she had nothing. But there she will learn again of her ancient purity and loyalty (2:14-15), now so long forgotten (9:10; 11:1-4; 13:4-6). From there she will have a new start, a new betrothal to her God (2:19-20). Here indeed is Israel the true bride of God! Here lie the seeds of things of which we shall hear much more: the hope beyond tragedy of a new Exodus, a new beginning, a New Covenant (The Kingdom of God, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953, p. 76; emphases added).

Bright makes his case based on the premise that “God does not divorce one people and take back another” (Ibid; p. 75). I would also make this case based on scriptures like Numbers 23:19 (“God is not a man that He should lie”) and Malachi 3:6 (“I am the Lord; I do not change” – that is: “I am not duplicitous”).

Pay attention to Paul’s comments in Ephesians 2:12 about those who have been “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” and v. 19 that “you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens.” In that, he is addressing the premise that *unfaithful*

*Israelites* and the *converted Gentiles* can be admitted to the “commonwealth of Israel” through Jesus Christ. That is part and parcel to Paul’s claims in Romans 11 that the Gentiles can be grafted into the “holy root” (the faithful *remnant* of the commonwealth of Israel) and made to be “fellowcitizens.” This is a scriptural revelation that is little understood and mostly ignored among mainstream Christians ... and others.

### Matthew 26:27, 28

One of the grossest misinterpretations of scripture is found in the words of Dispensationalist theology ... which has spilled over into mainstream Christianity. Let’s examine the claims of a very well-known, early proponent of Dispensational theology, Harry Allen Ironside, in his 1906 work *The Mysteries of God*. In the quote below, he bases his conclusion on Israel’s rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ:

Because of this [rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ] *the prophetic clock stopped at Calvary*. Not one tick has been heard since. From the moment Jesus bowed His head and yielded up His Spirit to the Father, *all the glories of the kingdom spoken of by the Old Testament seers and prophets have been in abeyance* (p. 54; emphasis added)).

What did Ironside propose beyond that? He referred to Ephesians 1:9, 10 as “God’s wonderful purpose” (Ibid.) because he believed that this scripture is the foundation of Dispensational theology that teaches that *the earth* will be given to the *Jews* (the Dispensationalists do not know who *Israel* really is) because of earthly promises and *heaven* will be given to *Christians* because of heavenly promises. Notice this comment about the “Bride” of Christ that supports that theology:

The Church is that Bride [that will inherit heaven with Jesus Christ], as the fifth chapter [of Ephesians] shows. In the Millennium it will share with Christ His sceptre and power when He will be manifested as the Head of all

things, the first-born, or preeminent one, of all creation (Ibid; pp. 54, 55).

How can we understand the faulty nature of such theology? The proper understanding lies in letting scripture interpret itself by its very plain nature ... along with a good dose of the Holy Spirit to guide you in rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Matthew 26:27-29 is a very good place to begin with that correct handling of God's word of truth.

For example, read Zechariah 14:9. Where will Jesus Christ rule? Read Revelation 5:10. Where will Christ's true people rule? Read Daniel 7:14, 18, 27. Where will the Kingdom of God be established? Read Isaiah 2:1-5. Where will Jesus Christ set up His throne? Read Revelation 11:15. What does the expression "kingdoms of *this world*" mean relative to what Jesus Christ will rule over? All of this is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 2. Read closely vv. 35, 44, 45. When Jesus Christ destroys this "statue," He will set up God's Kingdom on the earth. His true people will rule with Him over the survivors of the final conflict (Zech. 14:16). There will never again be a human government that rules on the earth. Enough said?

If you have understood all that has gone on in this entire lesson, then the following statement should not be a mystery to you: *In this statement during His last Passover with His disciples before He was crucified, Jesus Christ actually predicated His comments on the prophecies we have studied.* If you do not understand that, then you might well have fallen victim to the idea that the "prophetic clock" has been stopped cold, dead still without a single tick since. Of course, you might also be victimized by eyes that do not see and ears that do not understand (Isa. 6:9-11; Matt. 13:9-17).

What did Jesus Christ mean when He told His 12 disciples that the wine they were drinking represented His "blood of the new covenant"? How many Old Testament prophecies are related to that comment? To what does the expression "new covenant" refer? Would it make sense that Jesus Christ actually opened the door for numerous Old Testament prophecies to begin the fulfillment of things like Hosea 2:14-23; 14:1-9; Jeremiah 31:31-40, and Ezekiel 16:60-63? The "prophetic clock" was never stopped ... even

*temporarily!* It is persistently “ticking” toward the intentions for which it was established!

I daresay that even the brightest and best of our theologians have missed the point of Matthew 26:27-29 and of the “remnant” of Israel with whom Jesus Christ *began* this quest to bring to fruition His “wooing” of Israel to return to Him (see again Matt. 10:5-15; 15:21-28; 18:1-11; 2 Pet. 3:9). Why would He have come with great power to begin His ministry of “preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14, 15) if “all the glories of the kingdom spoken of by the Old Testament seers and prophets have been in abeyance” [Ironsides]? Read again Bright’s statement on p. 97 about “the hope beyond tragedy of a *new* Exodus, a *new* beginning, a *New* Covenant.” For whom? *Israel!* The “whosoever” of John 3:16 is aimed primarily at *Israel*, but ... it also encompasses the Gentiles – as it is definitely *later* revealed in New Testament scriptures.

Finally, why would Paul write of the “today” that continues to be offered to *Israel* (Heb. 3, 4) ... if the “prophetic clock” had been stopped by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Why would he write about this in Hebrews 8-10? Note Paul’s message in Hebrews 9:11-28 about how Christ’s *blood* is “the blood of the [*new*] testament which God has enjoined unto you” (v. 20). That is the means by which *Israel* will be made clean and purified before the Lord God, her estranged Husband ... and why the converted Gentiles are being grafted into that *holy root*. The “fading glory” of the “old” is progressively giving way to the “emerging glory” of the “new.” The “unveiling” process began with the event revealed in Matthew 26:27, 28.

## Review Questions

1. What is the objective of this chapter?
2. How will the two aspects of that objective enable you to understand New Testament Christianity?
3. What does the “greater glory” of the New Testament have to do with Jeremiah 31:31-34?

4. Did the Old Testament have any kind of “glory”? What did Paul mean by his statement that the Old Testament has a “fading glory”? Why was Paul’s analogy not a criticism of the Old Testament?

5. Explain Paul’s comment in 2 Corinthians 3:13.

6. How does *unequal yoking* play a part in the limited lifespan of the Old Testament?

7. Explain the terms *kainos*, *kainotes*, and *anakalupto*. How do those terms affect your understanding about the process you must undergo to be part of the *kainos* covenant and enjoy becoming the *kainotes* person with a *kainotes* mind as you experience the *anakalupto* process? Take time to collect your thoughts about the “extraordinary nature” involved.

8. Explain Galatians 3:23-25.

9. What two things are involved when God’s law brings someone to “Christ”? How is that related to Jeremiah 31:31-34?

10. Why is baptism (complete submerging under water) required? You can use Acts 2:38 and Romans 6 in answering this question. Is baptism optional? Of what is baptism a symbol?

11. What do you think is meant in John 1:33 and Acts 1:5 about being “baptized with the Holy Spirit”? Based on what you have studied, would this baptism with the Holy Spirit also be optional for the true Christian? Why/why not?

12. Explain the importance of the baptism ritual relative the New Covenant?

13. What is the importance of John Bright’s comment on p. 97? How would you relate that comment to Romans 11? How about Ephesians 2:10-22 and Paul’s comment about making “one new man” from Israel and the Gentiles?

14. Why is the concept about the prophetic clock having been stopped when Christ died a gross misinterpretation of scripture?

15. Does Ephesians 5 say in any verse that the Church will inherit heaven with Jesus Christ? Why would it not do so?



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## Chapter Seven

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# Remembering the “Remnant of Israel According to the Election of Grace”

It is of the utmost importance that you understand the scriptural significance of the revelation of the “remnant” of Israel “according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). It is a concept that is brought from what otherwise might be considered as being *scriptural obscurity*. Let me state this most unequivocally: The “remnant” concept is *not* obscure or unimportant in the scriptural record. It is a concept that demands our attention because it enables us to understand the concept of the *New Testament Church* as being *Israel* (see Gal. 6:16). The New Testament Church is, in fact, the continuation of that “righteous few” among Israel whom Jesus Christ chose to carry the “good news” of the “Kingdom of God” to the rest of the world (see Deut. 4:1-13, Matt. 25:34, and Luke 12:32).

Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to trace the theme of the “remnant” in Old Testament scriptures and demonstrate its importance to Jesus Christ’s comments in Matthew 16:18, Stephen’s comment in Acts 7:38, and Paul’s comments in Romans 9:27-29 and 11:1-5. The New Covenant with *Israel* is embedded in the messages found in those references. *When it is completed, all nations of the earth will be the beneficiaries as the Lord God had*

originally intended (Deut. 4:1-13). It is part and parcel to Paul's meaning when he said: "to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles" (Rom 2:9, 10).

As you go through this information, keep in mind the "Principle-Centered Theology" of which I wrote earlier. This is derived from such scriptural references as Numbers 23:19 and Hebrews 6:13-20 that speak of the Lord God as being incapable of lying. It is found in Isaiah 55:11 when He says that His words do not go out from His mouth without fulfilling the purpose for which they were spoken. It is derived from others like John 17:17 that refer to His word as being truth ... and Malachi 3:6 where He says that He is not duplicitous. This is important relative to fulfilling promises and prophecies.

## The Results of the Spying Campaign in Canaan

Numbers 13 is where we learn that the Lord God commanded Moses to send one representative from each tribe of Israel to spy out the land and bring back a report. The only tribe not represented in Numbers 13:1-16 was the tribe of *Levi* (the priestly tribe). Moses laid out the spies' objectives in vv. 18-20. They were to collect samples of the fertility and wealth of the land as proof that the Lord God was truly blessing them by placing them in the land and uprooting the present inhabitants (Gen. 15:16).

Of the 12 spies sent to spy out Canaan, only two gave a good report: Joshua and Caleb (vv. 26-33). The negativity of the majority caused great anguish and concern among the majority of Israel about going into the land as directed. Only Joshua and Caleb recommended moving into the territories the Lord God had set aside for each of the 12 tribes (Num. 14:1-10). Moses had to talk the Lord God out of destroying all of Israel except Moses' family (vv. 11-21).

Then came the penalty for their unbelief: All but Joshua and Caleb and their families would be denied entrance into the Promised Land (vv. 22-30). Israel would return to the wilderness to wander there until they died (v. 29, 32, 35). The Lord God assigned Israel one year of wandering in the wilderness for every day they had spied out the land – 40 years total (13:25; 14:33, 34).

What was the result of this situation? Everyone 20 years and older among the rebel families would *die* in the wilderness (14:29). *Their children under 20 years of age would be allowed to enter.* Thus, a “remnant” from among all of Israel was allowed to enter the land after the 40 years were completed. Had Moses not convinced the Lord God not to wipe out all of them and to allow them to continue their covenant with Him, *Moses* would have been the “remnant.” Verses 42-45 show that there were some who were not willing to accept the Lord God’s judgment. They admitted their sin (v. 40) and, evidently, believed that such an admission would ameliorate the Lord God’s decision. Moses warned them not to act upon that assumption (vv. 41-43): “Take the punishment ... or be destroyed.” Those who did not listen suffered the consequences of their decision (vv. 44, 45).

There is one major point that requires our serious attention: the decision of the Lord God to destroy *all of Israel* except Moses’ family (vv. 11, 12). It *seems* that this would have allowed the Lord God to be faithful to His “marriage” covenant with *Israel*. In vv. 13-19, Moses reminds the Lord God of the power and might that He exhibited in freeing His people from Egypt. His point was to demonstrate that His power and glory would be *diminished* in the eyes of those whom He had conquered because it would look like He had freed all of Israel only to take them to the desert and kill them. It would have left only *one tribe* of Israel ... out of which no one would have inherited the *Birthright* and *Scepter* promises. So, Moses pled for Him to show the same grace and mercy He had shown in other incidents before this one. The Lord God relented and agreed not to destroy 11 tribes of Israel ... a majority of His “wife” by covenant.

This one event is indicative of so many others whereby various “sins” of Israel brought about destructive consequences. Untold thousands of Israelites were sentenced to death because of their sins and disobedience. In the entire record from Genesis to the crucifixion and beyond, it appears that only a *faithful few* have been the standard bearers of God’s truth – a “righteous remnant.” Joshua and Caleb represent a faithful “remnant” among Israel at that time.

The same problem has been, and still is, afoot among those *today* who claim to be God’s True Church. Dare we answer

truthfully Paul's question in 1 Corinthians 1:13 about whether or not Christ is divided into different component parts that claim to be in spiritual unity ... when they most assuredly are not? If we were of the same Spirit, we would not be divided into various competing *sects* (Eph. 4:1-16; 1 Cor. 11:18, 19). In this, we are no better than the ancient Israelites. In our present age, there eventually will be a faithful few who: (1) will emerge from the spiritual quagmire of the last 40 or so years in God's Church and (2) will teach God's truth as it should be taught among His people.

### The "Remnant" of Isaiah 1:1-9

It should not be strange, therefore, that the Lord God would reveal to Isaiah that He, after so many centuries, continued to face the same problems over and over again with the same "wife" who had an obstinately uncooperative attitude against His authority and discipline (Isa. 1:1-9). When He says in v. 4 that "they are gone away backward" (*KJV*), He means that they had become totally alienated from Him and His thoughts and ways ... that they had separated themselves from Him spiritually and morally. In other words, they had chosen not to be His "wife" and live with Him in peace, love, and spiritual unity. He laments the iniquity, corruption, and waywardness of His "Church in the Wilderness" (Acts 7:38): "Ah, sinful nation ... laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters [those who propagate vice and infect others with it – as if by design] ...." Does any of this sound familiar among the people of the United States nowadays? If it does, then we should be aware that it is a nation that claims a righteous affiliation with God ... perhaps to its detriment because it is so divided and denominationalized that it is getting increasingly difficult for the government to work together for the common good of the people.

It was a shameful condition that forced the Lord God to admit that nothing He had done to discipline Israel had worked (vv. 5-8). Verse 6 is a frank admission that Israel was irretrievable ... irredeemable ... totally unaffected by further punishment. In fact, Israel had become nothing more than a barren "woman" incapable of giving birth to spiritual "offspring" suitable for being called the

“children of the Lord God” (Deut. 32:1-43; John 3:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:50). He uses an illustration of a leprosy body that is covered with oozing, putrifying sores that cannot be medicated with ointment, closed, and properly bandaged (see example in Job 2:7, 8). This infectious, viral disease of the *spirit* (a metaphor) had spread over their entire national body and entered their vitals and brains, which corrupted their soundness of mind and judgment.

As a result of this illness, their country was overrun, their nation was at the brink of total ruin, and their natural resources had fallen into the hands of their enemies. They were so weak and divided that they could not prevent any of it because the disastrous “tipping point” toward destruction already had been reached (v. 7).

Verse 8 addresses the Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord God compares it to: (1) a cottage in a vineyard, (2) a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and (3) a besieged city. What is the point of those comparisons? At this point, *Jerusalem* was in the process of being besieged and dismembered by Israel’s various enemies. Many had been dragged off to other countries as slaves ... others had been killed in war or by starvation as a result of a siege (read, for example, 2 Chron. 28). They were as empty and exposed as a cottage in a vineyard after the harvest was over ... as deserted as a lean-to in a cucumber patch after the crop had been gathered. Neither was a place people wanted to go because they feared whatever vermin and/or wild animals that might have taken up residence there in the off-season. And ... who wanted to slowly starve to death in a besieged city?

Verse 9 was as much a comfort to the *Lord God* as it was to the “remnant” He reveals. Even among the calamities discussed above, there was a small group, *a faithful few*, who were kept pure from the thoughts and ways of the apostates. Isaiah has this “remnant” in mind in Isaiah 8:16-20 where the Lord God refers to “my disciples” and shows how to recognize them (v. 20).

Paul refers to this “remnant” in Romans 9:27 and 11:5. They were the ones whom the Lord God helped to escape much of the common calamity. One might very well believe this to presage Jesus Christ’s selection of His 12 disciples as a “remnant” out of the “Israel” of His day. John’s vision in Revelation 7:3-8; 12:13-17; and 14:1-5 are as much about a “faithful remnant” out of *Israel*

as they are about the innumerable multitude of Gentiles (6:9; see also Rom. 11:25-27).

It has been commonly taught in God's True Church that "multitude is no mark of the true Church" (Matt. 7:13, 14) and "Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of a little flock" (Luke 12:32). As Matthew Henry states in his commentary:

It is good for a people that have been saved from utter ruin to look back and see how near they were to it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap [see Ezek. 22:23-31], and that that was owing to a good God, who left them these [few] good men (p. 827; emphases added).

Indeed, *The Anchor Bible's* commentary on Acts by the eminent New Testament scholar, Johannes Munck, has merit in this discussion:

No agreement with the Jewry of that time was the prime consideration [of the emerging Christian movement]. On the contrary, from the very beginning this Jewry is thought of as a hostile power which causes the Romans to crucify Jesus and which later persecutes Paul and the Palestinian Christians. As a result, the Jews find themselves in disagreement with their sacred books as well as their God and his Messiah. Thus the two-part work [of Luke and Acts] shows that ... there is a coherence within which God ... prepares his salvation in many different ways *but is prevented from this by unbelieving Israel. Thus only part of the Jews followed Jesus, later* to be joined by the Gentiles to whom God also sent his gospel of salvation (*The Anchor Bible: The Acts of the Apostles*, Introduction, Translation, and Notes by Johannes Munck, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967; p. LVIII; emphases added).

The point that I am making should be obvious: The "remnant" of Israel prophesied in Isaiah 1:9 will be a willing participant in the New Covenant that the Lord God planned to enter with the

obedient “remnant” of Israel scattered all over the world due to the disobedience of the majority. This is in direct conformity to His will as expressed in so many places in Old Testament prophecies like Hosea 2:14-23; 14:1-9.

The *beginning* of the New Covenant was sealed between Jesus Christ and His disciples – the “remnant of Israel according to grace” *at that time* (Rom. 11:5) – during His last Passover with them just prior to His crucifixion. The ministry of Jesus Christ among these “faithful few” was the *beginning stage* of His “wooing” of and “re-marriage” to *Israel* (Hosea 2:14-22).

## Review Questions

1. Why is the revelation of the “remnant” of Israel “according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5) such an important piece of the New Testament?
2. How is the *New Covenant* with *Israel* embedded in the messages found in Matthew 16:18, Stephen’s comment in Acts 7:38, and Paul’s comments in Romans 9:27-29 and 11:1-5? The question presupposes that the “Church in the wilderness” is related to the “remnant of Israel.” So, explain what “I will build my *Church*” means in relationship to Stephen’s and Paul’s comments.
3. How does “Principle-Centered Theology” play a vital part in the New Covenant with Israel? Use the scriptures cited in the lesson to support your answer.
4. How do Numbers 13 and 14 play a role in the “remnant of Israel” theme? How about the Lord God’s offer to destroy all of Israel except the family of Moses? How would that have affected the Lord God’s promises and prophecies? Does modern-day “Christianity” have a similar problem? Explain your reasons.
5. What is the relationship between Isaiah 1:1-9 and Acts 7:38? How is the USA similar to ancient Israel?

6. What is the point of the comparisons between the Temple and: (1) a cottage in a vineyard, (2) a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and (3) a besieged city? What part does the “faithful few” play?
7. What is significant about Jesus Christ’s choice of 12 Jewish disciples relative to the “remnant of Israel”? How would you include the 144,000 in Revelation 7:3-8 in this discussion?
8. Relative to the existence of Christ’s True Church, does size matter? Why/why not? How do Matthew Henry and Johannes Munck contribute to this discussion?
9. Explain how Matthew 26:27, 28 support the idea that the New Covenant with the “remnant” of Israel “according to the election of grace” was sealed that night? Of what was this the beginning?
10. Look up the definition of amorphous. Explain why the New Testament Church is not an amorphous organization with whom Jesus Christ is concluding a new covenant. Keep in mind the “remnant of Israel” theme. In other words, explain why Jesus Christ is not starting over with a totally new group of people that merely includes Israel among them. Think in terms of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Acts 7:38.



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# Some Last Thoughts ...

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These “last thoughts” are a critical summary of numerous things in the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. After all, the argument is not really over whether or not the Old Testament contains a will that is dependent upon a death. It does ... *in plain sight*.

The proponents of the argument that the Old *Testament* should be called the Old *Covenant* enter it without understanding a fundamental principle of scripture found in Romans 4:17: “*God is the Being who resurrects the dead and calls those things **that shall exist as though they already exist***” (author’s paraphrase of *KJV*; emphases added). Paul’s statement is a declaration that is congruent with Isaiah 55:10, 11: The Lord God does not declare things and then allow them to fall uselessly to the ground. Whether or not they are immediately realized, *they are as good as done*.

## The Significance of the Sacrificial System

Such was the principle embodied in the sacrificial system given to Israel by the Lord God. *The entire sacrificial system was framed around a death that was going to take place in the future*. Two references from the New Testament are found in 1 Peter 1:18, 20 and Philippians 2:5-11. This was part and parcel to the imagery of the animals sacrificed by the Lord God in Genesis 3:21 and practiced by Abel in Genesis 4:4 (see also Heb. 10:1-14; 11:4; Isa. 53; Rom. 1:1-4).

It was part of Jesus Christ’s ministry about the Kingdom of God. Mark 1:14, 15 was directed at Israel at that time. In other words, this death was as good as done before the creation of the orderly universe. When Jesus Christ (the Word; John 1:1-3) made the decision to be the redeeming sacrifice, there was nothing that

stood in the way of it being carried out. The Old Testament sin and atonement sacrifices *foreshadowed* His crucifixion. In addition, Isaac inherited from Abraham, Jacob inherited from Isaac, and Israel inherited from Jacob (Israel) *after the deaths of their testators*.

John the Baptist showed that he understood it perfectly when he exclaimed:

Behold the *Lamb of God*, which takes away the sin of the world ... I did not know him; *I only knew that he was to be made known to Israel*, therefore I have come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode on him. *And I did not recognize him*: but he that sent me to baptize with water said to me: “Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God (author’s paraphrase of John 1:29-34; emphases added).

Hebrews 9:16-23 is a discussion of this that should enlighten us about the *symbolic nature* of those sacrifices and the comment from John the Baptist about Jesus Christ being the “Lamb of God.” After all, the *blood* by which the Old Covenant was sealed was *symbolic* of the *holy blood* that, in fact, *would be spilled* for the salvation of Israel and the rest of mankind (read Rom. 2:9, 10).

Verses 16, 17 plainly state that a *death* must take place where there is a *will* that involves an *inheritance*. The Old Testament involves both an *inheritance* and a *death*. As long as the testator is alive, the inheriting party will not receive the inheritance. Who, in this case, was the testator? *The Lord God*. We have already discussed Israel’s place in *inheriting* the covenant from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... all of whom *died*. Did they actually receive the entirety of the *Abrahamic* Covenant? The argument given in Hebrews 11:13, 39 says that they *did not* receive the *contents* of the promises; they only received the *promise* itself (Heb. 6:13-20).

How did Abraham *inherit* anything from the *Lord God* before the *Lord God* actually *died*? Read Abraham’s question in Genesis 15:8. *He did not, in fact, inherit anything at any time during his*

*lifetime; he merely received the promise and oath that he will receive it in the future (Heb. 11:8-10; 6:13-20). According to Hebrews 11:8-13, Abraham died before he received the contents of the inheritance. To this day, neither Abraham nor his descendants have received the inheritance promised by the Lord God in Genesis 15. Read Romans 3:4.*

But, according to Paul in Romans 4:17, Abraham believed that it was as good as done ... even if the Lord God allowed him to die and return to his dust in the grave with plans to resurrect him from the dead at His chosen time in the future. Matthew 22:23-32 is Christ's claim that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be resurrected in the future. If you "stand on the promises of God," then this information should be very good news to you ... if you also hope to inherit with Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29)!

Now read about the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. Hebrews 11:17-19 says that Isaac was a symbol/type of the sacrificial "lamb" that pictures Jesus Christ. The upshot of the lesson is plain: This was a promise that such a real sacrificial death would occur ... in the future from Abraham's time ... by which both the promise and oath would be upheld in support of the validity of the will that the inheritance will be, in fact, brought to fruition. The animal sacrifices were symbolic of the death demanded by a will. Jesus Christ was, in fact, the Messiah for whom Israel looked and prayed (read John 1:1-14). He was the "Lamb of God" ordained to that office before the creation of the orderly universe (1 Pet. 1:18-20). *It was as good as done from before the creation of the orderly universe!*

Here is a wonderful thought not much conceived of among modern Christian folks. The Old Testament sacrifices could never take away the sins of the people (Heb. 10:11). Only one specific sacrifice could do that (v. 12). However, the people who offered those typical sacrifices in spirit and truth identified themselves with the True Sacrifice of the "Redeeming Seed" to whom they looked for their deliverance from sin. *In that sense*, those who made up the Lord God's "Church in the wilderness" were, indeed, Christians because they believed in and looked forward to the coming of the Christ/Messiah. Every goat, lamb, and cow that was offered as an atonement sacrifice and sin offering was a picture,

*foreshadow, type, et cetera* of that Savior whom they sought. Those faithful few were His true people.

The comment in Hebrews 10:5 is about the sacrificial “body” that was eventually provided for the Messiah/Christ. It was, in fact, the sacrificial *human* body necessary for the *holy blood* that sealed the New Covenant and atoned for the sins of Israel and all of mankind (John 1:1-3, 14; Rom. 2:9, 10; Matt. 26:27, 28). It was the sacrifice that is necessary for the new “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and all of Israel (Heb. 9:22-28).

## Understanding Who “Israel” and Judah” Are

Too many operate under the misconception that the terms *Israelite* and *Jew* are synonymous. Many of those who do understand the difference between the two terms do not always understand the distinction made in scripture when the name *Israel* is used in reference to either or both people.

The name “Israel” was originally applied to all of the descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed by the Lord God to “Israel” (Gen. 32:24-28; 35:9-12; 49:1-28; Exodus 2:11; 16:31; Psa. 114:1, 2). When they left Egypt under Moses, they were a single people. In the “Promised Land,” they had a quasi-unity (read the book of Judges and make note especially of Judges 21:24, 25). During the time of Samuel, all of Israel mustered enough courage to send representatives to Samuel to demand a king (1 Sam. 8). Their first king was a Benjamite named Saul (1 Sam. 9). Because the Lord God was dissatisfied with Saul, He had Samuel seek out a young man from the tribe of Judah to be anointed king in Saul’s place ... a young shepherd named David from the house of Jesse (1 Sam. 16:1-13).

David did not immediately replace Saul; so, several years passed before he actually ascended to the throne ... but *it was not over the entire nation of Israel*. Second Samuel 2:1-11 reveals that he was made king over Judah. A long war with the house of Saul ensued (2 Sam. 3:1). Abner, who succeeded Saul as Benjamin’s leader, proposed to make a league (an association of nations) with David and bring all of Israel under David’s kingship (2 Sam. 3:9-

12). The summary of that is found in 2 Samuel 5:1-12 – which includes moving his throne from Hebron to Jerusalem.

Later, when 10 of the tribes were separated by the Lord God from Judah because of Solomon’s sins, two “Houses” of Israel were created: the *northern* kingdom led by an Ephraimite king and the *southern* kingdom led by a Davidic king from Judah (read 1 Kings 11, 12 for the history). The larger northern kingdom is called “the House of Israel” and the smaller southern kingdom is called “the House of Judah.” Although the House of Judah was made up of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin ... with a smattering of other Israelites ... collectively, they are called the “Jews.” *Both “Houses” considered themselves to have been “Israel.”*

The misunderstanding about “Israel” among mainstream Christianity is especially evident when they refer to the Old Testament as being *Jewish* scripture ... and to the Law of God as being *Jewish* law. There is a simple test that can make it plain about whose scripture and law is involved. Read Leviticus 23:1, 2 for one simple example of this test. Take time to examine who is speaking to whom about what. Few pay attention to such details and, sadly, work from a wrong theological paradigm as a result.

Who is doing the speaking (commanding)? *The Lord God*. To whom is He speaking? *Moses*. About what is He speaking to Moses? The feasts that *Israel* (*all 12 tribes*) is to observe and the days on which they are to declare holy convocations. Is the Lord God, at this time, a *Jew*? No. Is Moses a *Jew*? No. Exodus 2:1-10 identifies him as being a *Levite*. Genesis 29:31-35 identifies *Levi* as the third son born to *Jacob* with *Leah*. *Levi*’s brother *Judah* was the fourth son born to *Jacob* and *Leah*. *Jacob*’s name was changed to *Israel* (Gen. 32:24-32; 35:9-12). *Levi* and *Judah* were his sons – children of *Israel*. The *Levites* became the priestly tribe of *Israel*. *Judah* was known as the *Jews* (2 Kings 16:5, 6). The equation is simple: All *Jews* are *Israelites*, but not all *Israelites* are *Jews*.

Now the big questions: (1) Whose *scriptures* are the Old Testament? (2) Whose *laws* are the laws of the Old Testament? (3) Whose *feasts* are the feasts of Leviticus 23? (4) Whose *Sabbath* is the seventh day Sabbath (see also Mark 2:27, 28)? If you say “the Jews’,” then you are spiritually blind. Read the entire matter again and pay closer attention to Leviticus 23:1, 2. If you understand that *Jesus Christ* was the *Lord God* of the Old Testament, then you

should know why He made His famous statement in Matthew 5:17-19 (see again Isa. 55:11).

I once polled a Sunday School class about whether or not they believed that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Paul were Jews. Among the 20-25 members of that class, most answered that they believed that all of them were Jews. They were astounded when I told them that not one of them was a Jew. No one born before Jacob's children were born could have even been an Israelite, much less a Jew. Jacob was Israel by name ... only his children could have been Israelites. Only those who are descended from Judah, strictly speaking, are the Jews.

Some people of Israel became ethnic Jews because of common characteristics, customs, and language. For examples: Paul was a Benjamite (Gen. 35:9-21; Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:1-6) ... but he was an ethnic Jew because of the common religion, customs, and practices shared with the Jewish majority of the same group of people that constituted Israel during his day and time. The same is true of Barnabas, who was a Levite (Acts 4:36). Esther 8:17 demonstrates this concept of the ethnic Jew in the last sentence of the verse: "And many of the people of the land [Gentiles] became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was upon them." It would be prudent to remember that three things could have happened in this case: (1) Some Gentiles identified themselves with the cause of the Jews and pretended to be Jews; (2) some actually and sincerely converted to Judaism because (3) "the fear of the Jews" is a reference to the fear of the God of the Jews, rather than fear of the Jews themselves.

The point here is to make a distinction between a natural-born Jew and an ethnic Jew. The ethnic Jew from among the Gentiles, according to Paul in Romans 11:16-25, would have been "grafted" into Israel as a "legal son" by adoption. Based on such a practice, some claim that: "The modern Jews are very different from the original Jews who are a minority in world Jewry" (*Bible Research Handbook*, vol. 1, Durham, England: The Covenant Publishing Company, Ltd, 1972 edition, Section 220.6; Serial No. 94a emphases added). That might well be true if the Gentile ethnic Jews outnumber the natural-born Jews.

In another situation, I asked a Jewish girl (a college student) if she was aware of the "lost" 10 tribes of the House of Israel. She

knew nothing about the matter ... and hinted that I was ill-informed about it. I am not sure of how widespread such an ignorance of the other tribes is among Judaism.

## Acts 15: The Conversion of the Gentiles

The following discussion will explain the decision made in Acts 15 regarding the decision about the conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity. I offer the following quote as the basis of the discussion that follows:

...While the disciples might enter into many synagogues and preach, they might not partake of the sacrifices in the Temple or elsewhere. A profound gulf existed between them and the Jews *in the matter of the observance of the Sabbath* after the Atonement [that is, after the crucifixion]. The Atonement terminated, *by reason of complete fulfillment*, all that had been *typified* hitherto in the many sacrifices rendered not only on the Sabbath in particular, but on every other day (Ibid, 263.; Serial No. 79a).

Many believe that, just before Jesus died on the cross, when He uttered the words “It is finished,” that He meant that *all* of the Law and Prophets had *completely* fulfilled the purposes for which they were uttered (Matt. 5:17). *The above quote makes that point.* However, they sidestep, or evade, the real issue with their claim when they speak of the “*complete* fulfillment.” Let’s look at a couple of situations that will suggest an answer to that question.

In Acts 15:13-21, we find James’ conclusion of the Jerusalem conference about the *circumcision* of the Gentiles who had become Christians. The argument by a certain sect of Christian Pharisees was that they had to be circumcised and agree to observe the Mosaic law in order to be saved (vv. 1, 5). Peter, Paul, and Barnabas spoke their witnesses about how God had shown His will regarding the Gentiles and their salvation. It is noteworthy that none of those men claimed that *God* had revealed anything regarding *circumcision*. James used the “evidence” in the



statements by Peter, Paul, and Barnabas to draw a conclusion. James laid down four requirements that the Christian Gentiles were to follow.

In all of the hubbub, we must remember that the Christians were a *Jewish* sect at that time (v. 5; 24:5; 28:22). Note that among this *Jewish* sect were *Gentiles*. Therefore, it is apparent that many of the Gentiles addressed in Acts 15 could have already been associated with *Judaism* ... enough to know about many of the things required of them by the *Jews* in order to be “seekers” of the true God. The Jews required them to be *circumcised*. Peter’s commission toward the “circumcision” included *all of Israel* and such Gentile converts to Judaism. They were also already observing the Mosaic law. Jewish Gentiles and non-Jewish Gentiles who wanted to convert to Christianity were the focus of the Jerusalem Conference.

It is not revealed in any of his letters that Paul had required any Gentile to be circumcised upon conversion. He did require a half-Jew, half-Gentile named Timothy to be circumcised ... after the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 16:1-3). But ... it is clear that Paul taught the Gentiles certain aspects of so-called “Mosaic” law. How else do we explain his discussion with the Corinthians about Passover and Unleavened Bread (1 Cor. 5:6-8; 11:17-34)?

The lesson he taught in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 was not a “holy communion” or “Eucharist” observance like the varieties of which are prevalent among mainstream Christianity. It is the instruction given by Jesus Christ at His last *Passover* meal with His disciples that sealed the beginning of the New Covenant “marriage” with a *Christianized* Israel. You should note that the unleavened bread and wine are *symbols* that celebrate the completion of the blood sacrifice and look forward to the *New* Covenant with Israel.

When He was crucified, that death was the *fulfillment* of the meaning and intent of the *Passover* sacrifice; therefore, it was not necessary to continue the repetition of that *forward-looking* sacrifice of the Passover lamb. Jesus Christ instituted new symbols for His Church ... to be observed on the same date as Passover (v. 23: “the same night in which He was betrayed”). *It did not do away with observing Leviticus 23:5.*

It is apparent that Paul did not guide the Christian Gentiles away from observing the Law and the Prophets. Read Romans



3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; and 8:1-4. See Romans 9:25, 27, 29 where he refers to Hosea and Isaiah. Note Romans 11:8 where he refers to Isaiah 6:8-13 and Romans 11:9, 10 where he refers to David's prophecy in Psalm 69. Finally, note Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-18 where he refers to Jeremiah 31:31-34. What is the point here? Paul understood that *Jesus did not come to abolish either the Law or the Prophets*. If that is true (and ... it is), then the Gentiles were held responsible for adhering to them ... but were not required to be *physically* circumcised (see Deut. 10:12-16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Romans 25-29; Col. 2:10-13).

James says in Acts 15:20 that there were things from which the Gentile converts to Christianity needed to abstain: (1) pollution of idols (Ex. 34:11-17; Lev. 19:4), (2) fornication (Deut. 22:13-30), (3), strangled things (strangling prevents the blood from being drained from the body), and (4) consumption of blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 7:26, 27; 17:10-14). It is apparent that Gentile converts receiving this instruction were probably not converts to Judaism. But ... that list of prohibitions does not *automatically* presuppose that *those* converts did not at all need to obey the Law of God.

From where did these four prohibitions come? *The law given to Moses*. Think of the implications in that answer. Some translations, like *Luther* and *The Living Bible*, say that v. 20 reads: "For Moses of old time has those in every city that preach such things...." So, it should not surprise us if James exhorts the Apostles to teach the new Gentile converts to Christianity in that vein.

*The Anchor Bible: The Acts of the Apostles* makes an interesting comment about the translation of Acts 15:20:

At a later time, the provisions of the Apostolic Decree [that is: vv. 19, 20] were *modified* so as to conform with *later demands* of the church: thus, according to the *Western text*, James suggests that Gentile Christians "abstain from idolatry, from fornication, and from bloodshed [murder] and from doing to others what they would not like done to themselves" (p. 141; emphases added).

Note the following conclusion drawn by Bruce Metzger about the value of the "Western text":

The complex phenomena, however, that characterize the Western text in relation to the Alexandrian text include ... at least three kinds or levels of *variant readings*.

Secondly, there are *variants of another kind*, peculiar to the Western text of Acts. These include many additions, long and short, of a substantive nature that reveal the hand of a reviser ... [who] did his work at an early date, before the text of Acts had come to be generally regarded as a sacred text that must be preserved inviolate.

Thirdly, there are still other variants which are not to be associated with the Western text as such, nor with its reviser, but which belong to a particular manuscript, namely codex Bezae. ... It follows, in the words of Haenchen's conclusion, that "*in none of the three cases does the 'Western' text of Acts preserve for us the 'original' text of that book*; this is the lesson that we are gradually beginning to learn."

[T]he Bible Societies' Committee proceeded in an eclectic fashion, holding that *neither the Alexandrian nor the Western group of witnesses always preserves the original text* ... [and] that some of the information incorporated in certain Western expansions may well be factually accurate, *though not deriving from the original author of Acts* (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975, pp. 259-72; emphasis added).

James adds that anything else they needed to know about God's requirements could be learned during the weekly seventh-day Sabbath services held in every city by those that who preach Moses ... presumably, the Jews. This sounds more like an encouragement to observe the seventh-day Sabbath and get additional instruction in God's thoughts and ways ... not a prohibition of doing so ... or an encouragement to adopt the first day of the week as a new Sabbath.

## God's Law and the New Testament Church

Jesus warned His disciples that the Jews eventually would drive them out of the synagogues and Temple. Many of the disciples kept quiet about their belief in Jesus Christ precisely for that reason (John 9:22; 12:42). Nicodemus came to Jesus under the cover of darkness (John 3:1, 2) – even though he was “a ruler of the Jews.” In Luke 21:12, Jesus warned them that they would be hunted down and brought to the synagogues to be prosecuted and thrown into prison. In John 16:2, He warned that they would be thrown out of the synagogues and killed as though it were a service to God. Saul of Tarsus (who became the Apostle Paul) did that very thing before his conversion on the road to Damascus (read Acts 6:1-8:3; 9:1-31).

All of that does not presuppose that the Apostles would, therefore, start a totally new approach to the truth that the Lord God had revealed to Israel. It is obvious that the Jews and Israelites, in the main, did not live by that truth. It is obvious that the Apostles had to deal with the circumstances in which they found themselves, but not to the point of *abandoning* what the Lord God already had revealed to them as His will and truth through Moses and the Prophets. Let's consider a few examples.

In Acts 16:1-5, we see that Paul had a young man named Timothy *circumcised* because he was half Jew through his mother. He did it to quiet an uproar “because of the Jews in those quarters.” Some knew Timothy's father was a Greek (v. 3); so, they objected strenuously because they considered him to have been a Gentile. But, he was a *Jew* because his nationality was derived from his mother's nationality. If he was to accompany Paul and others to the synagogues and the Temple, he had to be circumcised in accordance with the Abrahamic covenant inherited by Israel. And ... so did any Gentile Christians among them.

In Acts 21:15-29, Paul was told by Jewish Christian leaders in Caesarea to take four men, who had taken a Nazirite vow, *to the Temple* and pay for the sacrifices necessary for ending their Nazirite vow. For the background information, read carefully Numbers 6:1-21 and notice the *sin* offerings involved (vv. 11, 12, 14, and 16). What is the purpose of a *sin* offering? *Atonement*.

Jesus Christ had long been dead at this time; yet, Paul agreed to carry out the “separation” exercise involved in the Nazirite vow. Why did Paul agree to such a thing if all of that had been terminated the moment Jesus died on the cross?

Two things are apparent in the New Testament: (1) The Jews were still under the discipline levied upon them by the Lord God in Isaiah 6:8-13 (which was still in force in Matthew 13:10-17); and (2) In Isaiah 1:10-15, the Lord God addressed Judah and Jerusalem as being Sodom and Gomorrah because they had mixed and mingled His truth with the idolatry and religious rituals and practices of the pagans in their midst (see Deut. 12:29-32). Amos addressed the same problem among both houses of Israel (ch. 5).

Many believe that the Lord God was repudiating the weekly Sabbath and the Feast days that He had given them in Leviticus 23. Far from it! He was repudiating the mongrel religion they had created with the mixture of His word with pagan trash! That is why He called them “your feasts” ... instead of “my feasts” (read again Lev. 23:1-4).

When Paul speaks of Passover and Unleavened Bread in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, and 11:23-34, it is not a repudiation of the holy days from Leviticus 23. It is a verification that he continued to observe the “righteousness” bound up in what they represent (see Rom. 3:31; 8:1-4). That would indicate that Paul and the other Apostles believed that there is a “spirit” of the Law and Prophets that exists beyond the “letter” of the law and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Read the prophecy about Jesus Christ in Isaiah 42:21 ... and compare it to what Jesus did in Matthew 5:17-48. He magnified the law by comparing the “spirit” of the law to the “letter” of the law. *Therefore, there was no necessity that dictated that the weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days needed to be abolished or re-arranged for Christianity.* Although the Passover sacrifice was fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the wine and unleavened bread became another Passover symbol that points prophetically to a future event for God’s true people. Everyone who partakes of the wine and unleavened bread take in the “body and blood” of Jesus Christ. That enables the spiritual part of the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33, 34 ... which forgives Israel for her sins and prepares her for her “re-marriage” to Jesus Christ.

The Atonement (read Leviticus 16) is no longer observed with the sacrificial animals because Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the symbols of the two goats: (1) the blood sacrifice for the redemption from sin and (2) the complete removal of sin and its effects and consequences. His crucifixion did not bring to complete fulfillment – at that time – the full intentions of the Atonement because there is yet a ministry of reconciliation that must be completed in the coming ages (Rom. 5:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:17-21). Every person who wants to be included in the New Covenant must accept the conditions set forth for that to take place: (1) repentance of all sin, (2) acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, (3) baptism, and (4) laying on of hands for receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:28). This is the method by which all of mankind is made to be “God’s people.”

This is part of the ongoing ministry of reconciliation. How does atonement take place just because Jesus Christ died upon the cross? That single act does not, in and of itself, complete the atonement. It remains incomplete until every human who has ever lived either accepts God’s conditions or is adjudicated as unfit to enter the Kingdom of God (see Matt. 25:31-34; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rev. 20:14, 15). The sacrifice opens the door for that reconciliation.

In the *King James* translation of Romans 5:10, 11, they show Paul using the Greek term *katallasso* (v. 10) twice and *katallage* (v. 11) once. Both words mean “reconciliation.” There is only the slightest difference between them: *katallage* means “to receive” and *katalasso* means “to become.” The sacrifice of Jesus Christ opened the way for the reconciliation between the Lord God and Israel to take place (the context is from Rom. 2:9, 10: Jew first, then Gentile).

The sense of *katallage* is that we have been offered the reconciliation to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It does not mean that we have come into possession of the complete package regarding reconciliation. Paul signals this incomplete process in the last part of v. 10 when he writes: “being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” It is as though Paul conceived of the reconciliation as a process through time in the sense of “becoming reconciled.” How could it even begin being completed until the individuals involved accept the demands involved and remain faithful to them for life? The ultimate goal is the spiritual rebirth.

The sense of *katallasso* is similar. The *KJV* translates it to read “Atonement.” It is true that the Atonement *sacrifice* is a *fait accompli* – an act accomplished against which there is no possible opposition. However, *becoming* atoned is a different matter. One generation after another passes as the Lord God continues to add to the “seed” of Abraham through *Israel* that will be as numerous as the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth. *That process is not completed.* The door of opportunity to *become reconciled* through the Atonement is opened to each successive generation that arises.

Consider also, for example, the “spiritual” meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread observed by God’s True Church. It pictures our own “exodus” out of the “Egypt” of sin. Even though we have repented, been baptized, and given the Holy Spirit, we are still subject to human nature and the pulls of that nature toward sin (see 1 John 2:1, 2). And ... we will be until we are changed from flesh to spirit at Christ’s return. Until that time, we still have to participate in the process of our own “exodus” from the “Egypt” of sin ... an “exodus” that also is not yet complete. It is *as good as done* ... if we maintain the faith and practice that God expects of us as His people (read again Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26, 27).

What happens to us if we act like the ancient Israelites described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10? Paul explains the problems that the Israelites brought due to their unfaithfulness (vv. 1-10). He explains in v. 11 that God’s true people must avoid such attitudes and practices. It is especially noteworthy that Paul describes the spiritual unity that must be maintained through the true faith (vv. 11-17; see also Eph. 4:1-16). He warns us away from the “sacrifice to devils,” the “fellowship with devils,” and the “table of devils” (vv. 18-22). Why?

Paul explains in Hebrews 6:4-8 that it is possible for the converted person to change his/her mind and become “*not my people.*” Israel did all of those things and were cut off from the Lord God. These actions are the source of the conflict about whether or not the Atonement is presently a *completed* process. Even if it were completed, it would not have given warrant to the Apostles, nor anyone else in subsequent history, to do away with God’s Law, holy days, and Sabbath. Read Matthew 5:17-19, Isaiah 66:22, 23, Jeremiah 31:31-37, and Zechariah 14:16-21. What do

you think they mean in relationship to the above prophetic comments?

The short answer is simple. The expression “not my people” applies to anyone who has not entered the new covenant agreement through Jesus Christ ... or has accepted the responsibilities of the new covenant agreement laid upon them by Jesus Christ and subsequently “falls away” as though it meant nothing to them. In Isaiah 1:10, He calls the disobedient, rebellious Israelites “you rulers of Sodom ... you people of Gomorrah.” What was He saying by that? “You are not my people.” With that, He made rebellious Israel – both Houses – the equivalent of Gentiles. The disobedient and rebellious old covenant Israelites would be those who may have opportunity to be grafted back into Israel through Jesus Christ (Rom. 11:23-36; Heb. 9:14, 15).

The “not my people” status is also the sense of Matthew 18:17 when He teaches His disciples to treat the unruly and rebellious in the Church as “a heathen man.” The word “heathen” is translated from the Greek term ethnikos (derived from ethnos), which means “heathens, pagans, Gentiles.” Such unruly and rebellious Christians will have Hebrews 6:4-8 applied to them because they will have broken covenant with Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:6; 10:26, 27).

## Review Questions

1. Explain the significance of Isaiah 55:10, 11 in the discussion about the Lord God’s promises to Israel.
2. How does Isaiah 55:10, 11 relate to Romans 4:17 and Hebrews 6:13-20?
3. Whom did the sacrificial system of Israel picture? What is the significance of John the Baptist’s declaration in John 1:29-34 that Jesus of Nazareth was “the Lamb of God”? Also consider Hebrews 9:16-23 in your answer.
4. Did Israel actually receive the entirety of the Abrahamic Covenant? Use Romans 11:1-7 and Hebrews 11:13, 39 in your answer.



5. How did Abraham *inherit* anything from the Lord God before the Lord God actually *died*? Use Hebrews 11:8-10, Romans 4:17, and Matthew 22:23-32 to support your answer.
6. In Hebrews 11:17-19, what does Paul reveal to be the *real* significance of the sacrifice of Isaac? Compare this to Romans 4:17. What is the significance of the resurrection of the *dead*?
7. Read the last paragraph on p. 113. From that, explain how the Lord God's Church in the wilderness can be described as having been "Christians."
8. Briefly explain the difference between the "House of Israel" and the "House of Judah." How could both of the claim to be "Israelites"?
9. Explain what makes a person an *ethnic Jew*. Use Paul and Barnabas in your answer.
10. Explain, with the support of three Scriptures from the book of Acts, how the early Christians were actually a sect of Judaism.
11. What is the conflict between Matthew 5:17-19 and the mainstream Christian idea that Colossians 1:14 declares that the Law was "nailed to the cross" and voided? Use Romans 3:31; 7:7, 12; and 1 Corinthians 8:1-9 to support your conclusion.
12. Were the Gentile converts freed from the religious duty to obey the Law of God? On what scriptural basis do you draw your conclusion? Is God a liar?
13. Did Christianity's divorcement from Judaism necessitate the development of a theology that rendered God's Law null and void? Can you find anywhere in Scripture even a single Scripture that indicates that it was God's will that any of the 10 Commandments were null and void subsequent to the death of Jesus Christ? What about changing the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday?



14. What are the four conditions by which New Testament Christians receive atonement and become “God’s people”?

15. What is the difference between being offered reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ and becoming reconciled? Use the concept of the ministry of reconciliation to develop your answer. Also, explain the process of the Atonement. Use Acts 4:19-21 as a reference for your answer.

16. Using Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26, 27 to explain what happens to us if we act like the ancient Israelites described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10.

17. Explain one profound idea that you learned from these “last thoughts.”

\*\*\* We will continue this study  
in Lesson Five. \*\*\*

