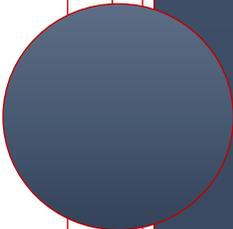


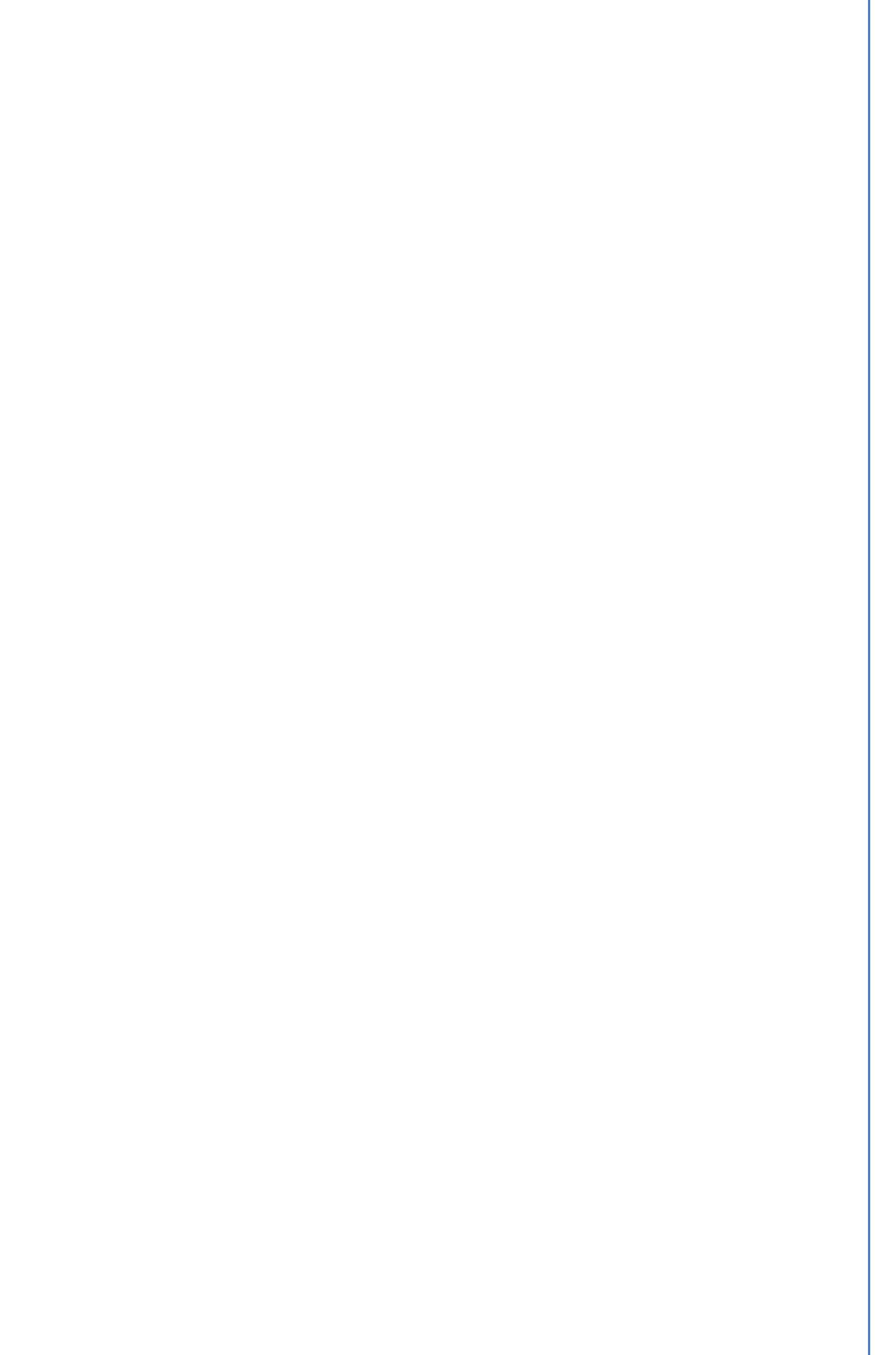
RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

Lesson Five: The Lord of the Covenants (Part Two)

The objective of this lesson is to make the connection between all of God's covenant promises and the mission of Jesus Christ. To those who teach that so much of the Old Testament has been done away with through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, it is a riddle they would rather not discuss for fear of unraveling so many centuries of their traditional teachings and making their so-called "Church Fathers" look like idiots and liars. By the time we complete this lesson, you will be able to connect the dots between the Old and New Covenants.

Larry E. Ford

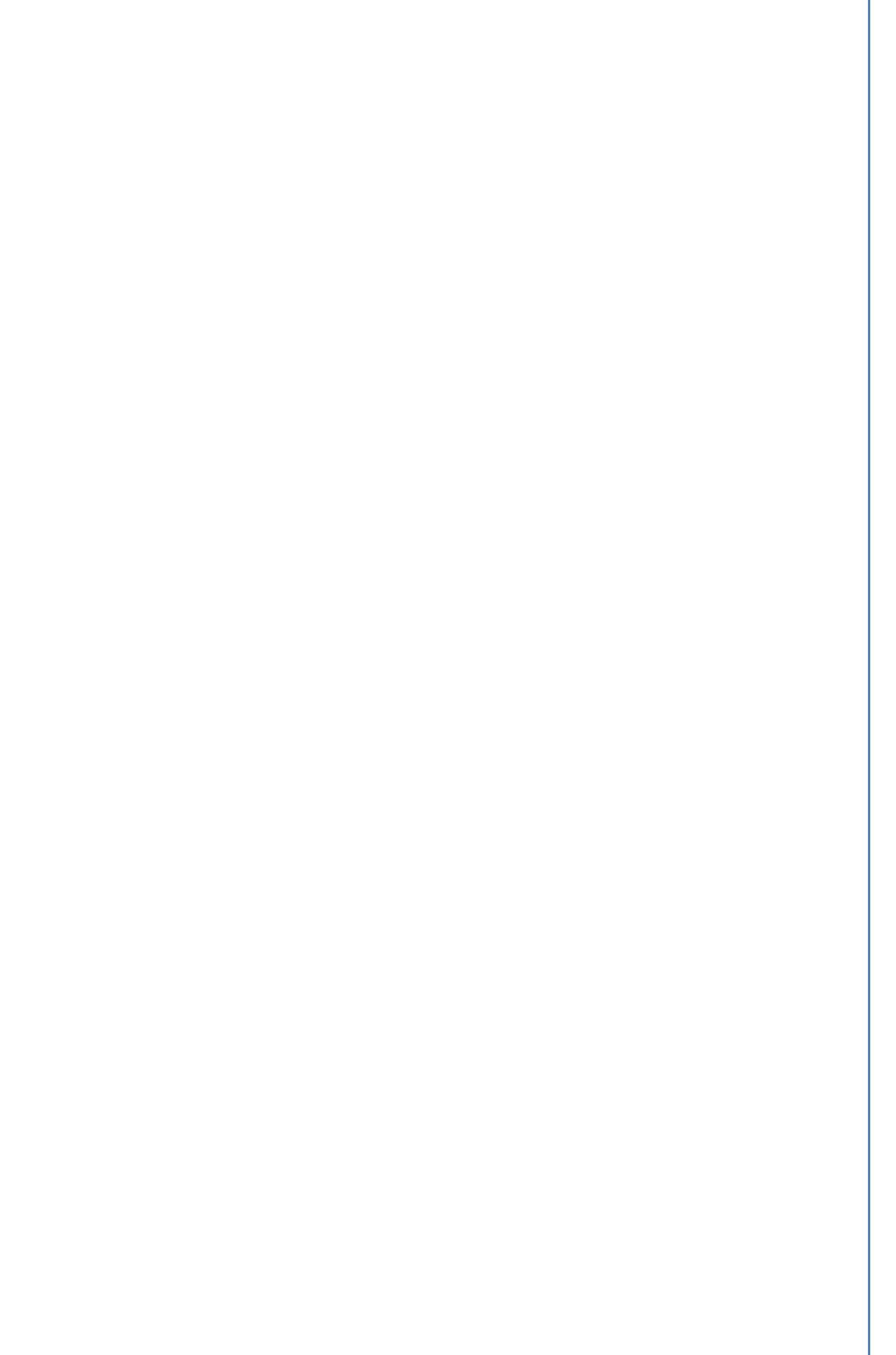




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Scriptures in this work are quoted from the *King James Version (KJV)* of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. The author changes terms like “thee,” “thou,” “thine,” and other 17th Century expressions to more modern terms.

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).



Scriptural Admonitions

Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31:31, 33).

I will betroth you unto me for ever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord (Hosea 2:19, 20).

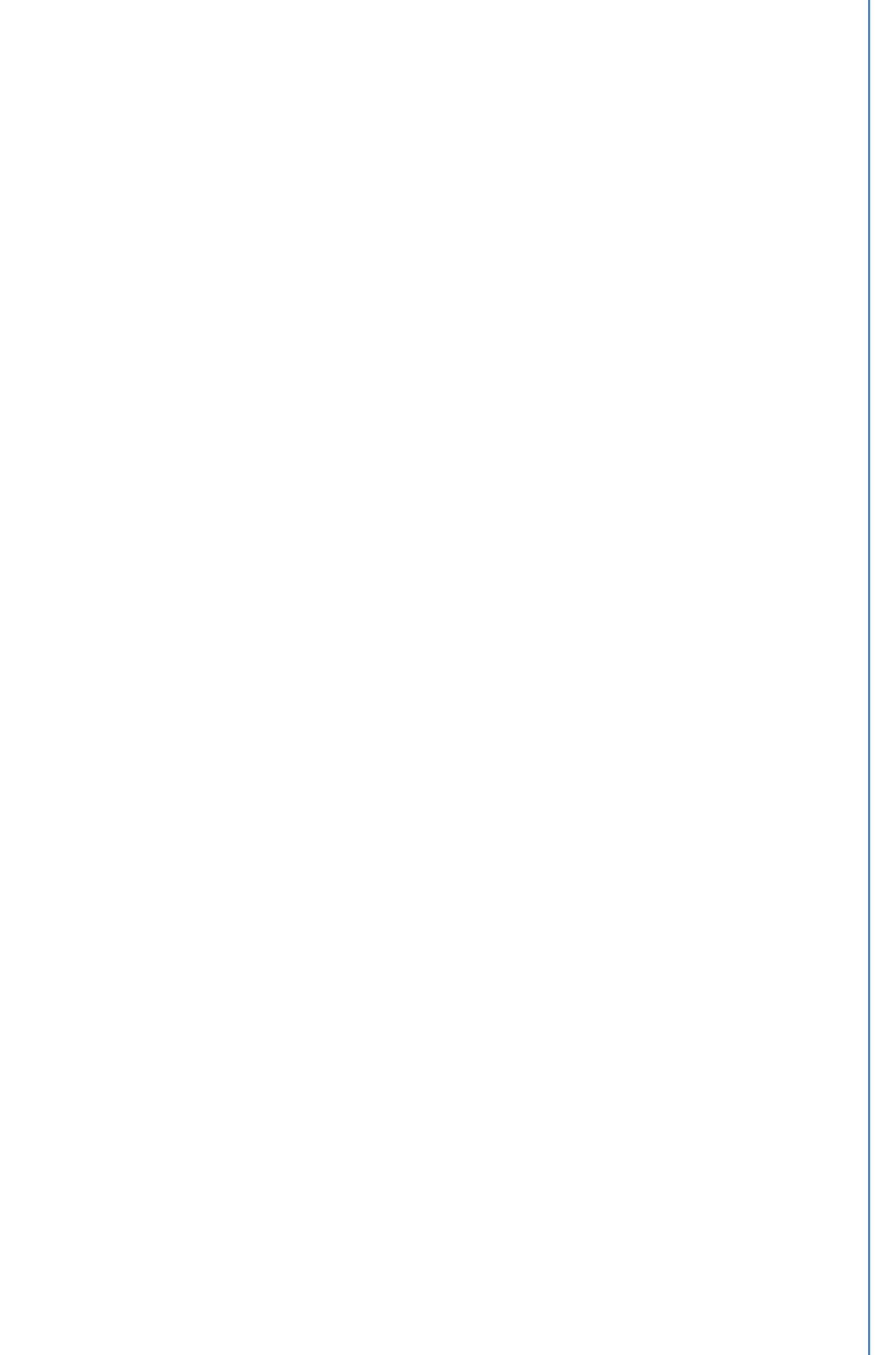
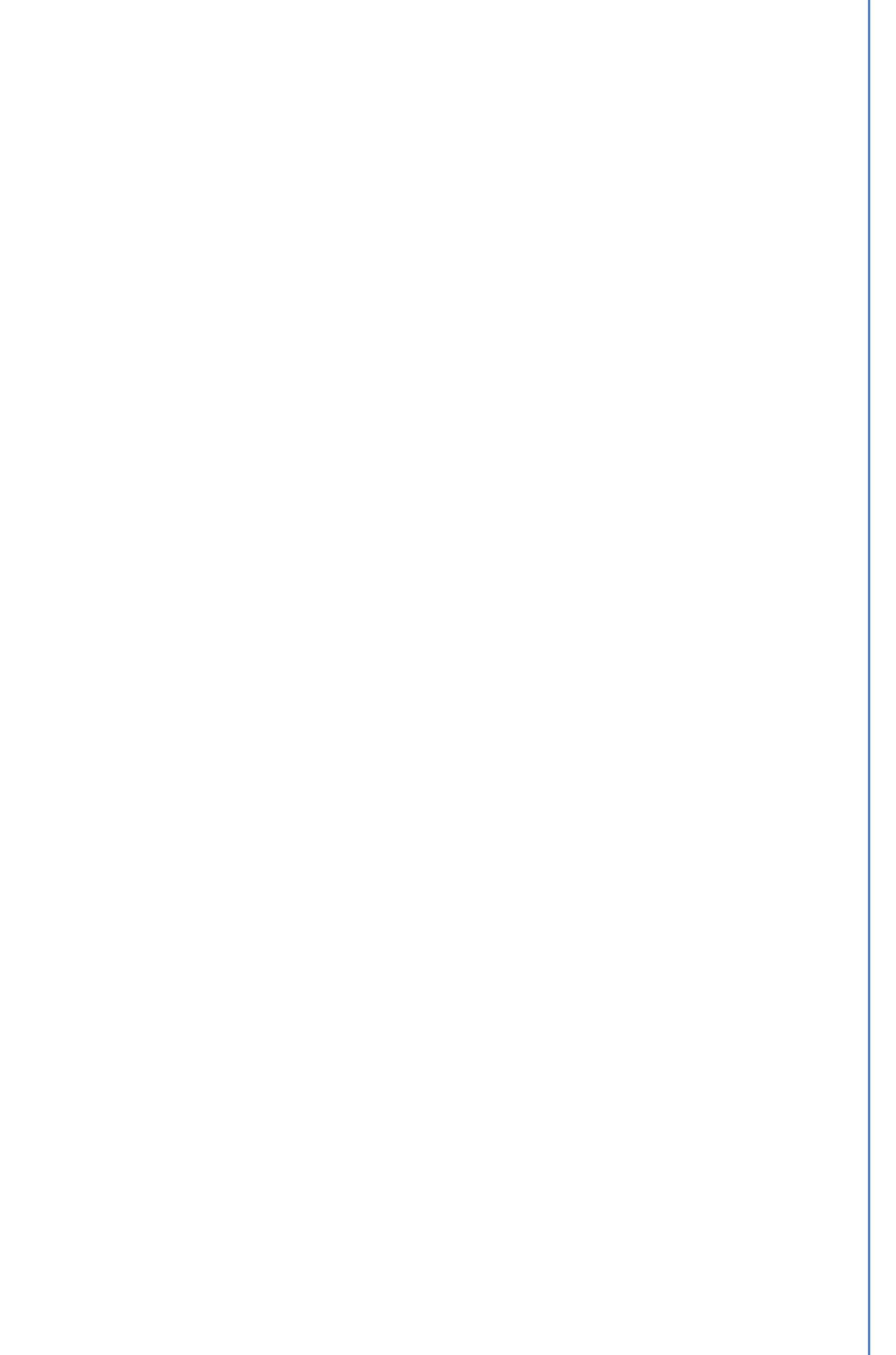


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Introduction

Principle-centered Theology

In 1990, Stephen R. Covey published a book titled *Principle-Centered Leadership* (A Fireside Book published by Simon & Schuster). The premise of his book is that there are various principles of leadership that, if followed correctly, will improve one's personal and interpersonal effectiveness ... as well as his/her managerial and organizational abilities and effectiveness. I dare say that Covey tapped into an essential concept for business and personal development that can, indeed, enable one to become a more effective and productive leader. Here is an informative snippet from his 333-page tome:

... Natural laws, *based upon principles*, operate regardless of our awareness of them or our obedience to them.

The only thing that endures over time is *the law of the farm*: I must prepare the ground, put in the seed, cultivate it, weed it, water it, then gradually nurture growth and development to full maturity (p. 17; emphases added).

When correctly understood, such “farm” principles can be applied to a variety of situations in life (see 1 Cor. 3:5-15). Our ability to comprehend them and navigate our lives with them can be

improved markedly if we follow the principles faithfully and with determination. That said, this Lesson Five is dedicated to the premise that God reveals to us what I call principle-centered theology ... from which we derive His truth (John 8:31, 32).

How God Thinks and Acts

Theology is often simply defined as being “the study of God and His relation to man and the world.” I like a more specific definition that is derived from the construction of the word itself: *theo* (Greek = “God”) and *logy* (Greek = “correct reasoning”). I will discuss in this series of lessons various principles about *correct* reasoning about how God thinks and acts ... as well as the correct reasoning by which God executes His thoughts and deeds over time – regardless of how much time passes (Isaiah 46:9, 10; 55:8-11).

With that in mind, you will be studying material that demonstrates that the Lord God has not forgotten the things He declared He will be doing to bring Israel, His wayward, divorced “wife,” to repentance so He can clean her up, purify her of the hideous sins she has committed with other gods, and take her back as His “wife” forever under a “new covenant” (Hosea 2:14-20; Jeremiah 31:27-40).

You will see how He has professed that He will make a “new covenant” with her, give her His Holy Spirit, and facilitate her spiritual growth and development in His truth and thoughts and ways. What you are about to study is a rare look at what Scripture reveals about the link of the old covenant to the new covenant with Jesus Christ being the Lord of both of them.

You will have opportunity to understand the link between the “*ekklesia* in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) and the “*ekklesia*” that Jesus Christ is presently building (Matthew 16:18). All of this truth is derived from what is revealed in Scriptures ... writings handed down through long ages to teach us what God’s word declares as His truth (see John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

This subject is not as well understood as some assume ... simply because it has been removed from what Scripture reveals into the arena of *human misunderstanding and religious traditions*. Matthew 7:21-23 and 15:1-9 are two of many admonitions and warnings to

be wary of man-made religious beliefs, customs, and traditions because they can and do work against God's truth.

Principle #1: God is a God of Laws

Isaiah 33:22 reveals three characteristics of the Lord God to which we should pay attention: (1) The Lord God is our judge; (2) the Lord God is our lawgiver; and (3) the Lord God is our king. From those three characteristics, we should derive three principles by which we regulate our relationship with Him:

- ❖ He is the Being who has the power and authority to decide the relative worth of anything ... including what constitutes truth.
- ❖ He is the one who has the power and authority to legislate proper thoughts and actions relative to Himself and among His creatures.
- ❖ He is the Being who has the right and authority to rule and enforce His laws ... which are indicative of His thoughts and ways.

Psalm 100:3 says: "You should know that the Lord is God: He is the one who made us; we did not make ourselves. We are his people..." (author's paraphrase). Now, let's follow up on that thought with a couple of appropriate Scriptures:

- ❖ Isaiah 64:8: "But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter, and we are the work of your hand." (This declaration is predicated on Genesis 2:7; 3:19; and Eph. 1:3-14).
- ❖ Romans 9:21: "O man, who are you to reply against God? Shall the thing that is formed say to him that formed it: 'Why have you made me in this fashion?' Does not the potter have power over the clay ... to make

from the same lump a vessel of honor, and another with no honor at all?”

What does this teach you about the Lord God being our King, Lawgiver, and Judge? What does it teach you about the source from which, and the basis upon which, He derives His power and authority? What can you understand about what His reaction can and will be toward those who question His power, authority, laws, and expectations? These questions should be in the forefront of our minds ... always.

Read Philippians 2:10, 11 about Jesus Christ having been given “all power in heaven and on earth” because He volunteered to be the sacrifice for sin (see also 1 Peter 1:18-20 and Col. 1:19). Read Colossians 1:17 (“...by Him all things consist” – KJV; emphases added) and Hebrews 1:3 (“upholding all things by the word of His power” – KJV; emphases added). What do these comments reveal about the one who became Jesus Christ? Together they tell us that all of the natural laws were created, supported, and perpetuated infinitely by the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

How does this fit into Covey’s observation about natural laws that are based upon principles? How does it impress you that they “operate regardless of our awareness of them or our obedience to them”? Two Scriptures provide us insight into this situation that is most important for our understanding of this subject. Pay close attention to the definitions given and the conclusions to be drawn from them.

In 1 John 3:4, we see a definition for “broken” law: “Whoever commits sin transgresses the Law [of God].” With that transgression, there is a judgment that is issued toward the guilty individual. Paul covers this in Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death.” In this, you should be able to see the consequence of questioning and/or ignoring the power and authority of the Lord God to legislate our behavior ... our thoughts and ways (see Gen. 2:15-17).

Here is another Scripture that reveals God’s truth about His power and authority: “He that says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments [laws], is a liar and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). All of this should reveal to you a very important piece of

principle-centered theology: *The Lord God is a God of Laws*. Once you begin to know and understand that important principle, you should begin to order your life in such a way as to practice that principle of understanding God's thoughts and ways. Your ultimate success depends heavily on your daily success in doing so. But ... is God only concerned with legislating and demanding cooperation? Is that all there is to being the most powerful force in creation? No, it involves holding all natural and spiritual forces together in order to achieve the purpose for which all of them were created. That is the purpose of "laws" that govern such things.

Principle #2: God is a God of Holiness

What is holiness, and why is it important for you to be aware of its existence in creation? If you are to gain a logical understanding about who and what "God" is and how He operates in His creation, then it is necessary for you to understand what holiness is. Why? Leviticus 19:2 gives us an example: "You shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (emphases added).

Paul reveals in Ephesians 1:4 that, before the creation of the orderly universe, God planned how He wanted mankind to be in their hearts and minds: holy, blameless, and loving ... all three being attributes of God Himself (see Gen. 1:26-28). What is meant by this expectation of holiness? From what you have seen thus far, what has impressed you about that?

The Hebrew word holy involved in Leviticus 19:2 is from qaduwah and qadosh. Both forms have to do with being spiritually pure in mind and heart, without sin, and deserving of deep respect, awe, *et cetera*. There is not any trace of evil to be found in such a Being. To say that God expects the human to ultimately become holy in mind and heart implies that holy actions must follow. The process of the human becoming holy, blameless, and loving is built into the plan of God to create man "in [His] image, after [His] likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

This is the intent of Jesus Christ's instruction in Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, you are to be [that is: become] perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" (author's paraphrase; emphases added). The Greek term for "perfect" is teleios, which means that the Father has

full, complete enlightenment. This is the basis for describing Him as being omniscient – having unlimited, unimpeded ability to know ... which implies that He also has unlimited, unimpeded ability to learn ... as well as: (1) to be wherever He desires to be at any given moment (omnipresence); (2) to use whatever power it takes to fulfill His will (omnipotence); and (3) to bless and prosper others to whatever degree He deems necessary and proper (omnibenevolent).

What is involved in this process? You should read Hebrews 12 in its entirety ... paying very close attention to the last part of v. 10: "...That we might be partakers of His holiness" (emphases added). This entire chapter is about how God trains the Christian toward His thoughts and ways.

Peter says basically the same thing in 2 Peter 1:3, 4:

...His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue ... that by [God's great and precious promises] you might be partakers of the divine nature (emphases added).

Both statements explain that we are being trained by God to become holy and perfect as He is holy and perfect. That is the short version of why God wants us to be "...holy and without blame before Him in love..." so we can be adopted into His family through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-14).

While He might accept us just as we presently are, by no means does He intend to allow us to remain just as we presently are. That is the root and core of Peter's admonishment in 2 Peter 3:18: "...Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (emphases added).

There are two different translations to this verse: Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord (KJV); and Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (RSV). The difference between the translations might not be clearly apparent. In other words, there is a question about whether Peter focused on action by the Christian ... or action by God and/or Jesus Christ. The most evident question, perhaps, focuses on the admonition to grow in grace. Why does this beg the question about how a Christian can grow in grace?

It should be obvious that the reason that God is gracious is because He is holy. If the Christian's goal is to be holy as God is holy, then the Christian must also become gracious as s/he grows into holiness. God is not going to zap you with a magic twanger and make you instantly and miraculously holy and gracious. You have to be trained to become holy and gracious.

A proper answer will enable us to understand the full force of Peter's admonition. Make note of the following comments. With only one exception, every mention of grace in the New Testament is derived from the Greek term charis. As is true of many Greek terms, charis has several definitions that give information about the writer's intended meaning.

In this case, we can find out whether this is: (a) an admonition for the Christian to expand his/her own use of grace toward others, or (b) if it is an admonition for the Christian to grow in spiritual knowledge and understanding because of the grace that God and/or Jesus Christ have exercised toward him/her in the salvation process.

Of the five definitions given in the *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; 1957; pp. 885-886), the "b" part of the third definition begins with this: "b. on the part of God and Christ." Then *BAG* offers a potpourri of Scriptures to demonstrate why this is an appropriate application. They cite such Scriptures as 1 Peter 5:10 ("the God of all grace") and John 1:14 regarding God-in-the-flesh, Jesus Christ ("full of grace and truth").

Without citing numerous Scriptures and comments, suffice it to be said that *BAG* concludes that Peter's admonition is aimed at grace exercised by God and/or His Christ relative to mankind – especially the Christian. Whether this grace has been dispensed by God and/or Christ as a source of blessings, or a state of unmerited, unearned favor, or a deed of grace that allows the Christian to grow in holy knowledge and understanding depends upon the circumstances involved.

The point is simple: While you have the advantage of this marvelous, holy charity (favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill), take full advantage of your opportunity to spiritually grow and develop your spiritual gifts and skills in service to God through Jesus Christ (Ibid; pp. 885, 886). This piece of

understanding will be important knowledge to be applied to the contents of Lesson Five.

The “Point-of-the-Day”

As one man I knew would sum up his lengthy comments: “I said all of that to say all of this.” I set out in the introduction with the goal of acquainting you with what I call “*principle*-centered theology.” What do I mean by that expression? It is very simple to explain. A *principle* is a fundamental truth, law, et cetera upon which other truths are based. With the knowledge of such principles, one can explain both the method of operations involved, as well as the actions carried out according to the method. In the process, you can also understand the “why” of the matter.

Why is this important relative to the first two principles: God’s laws and holiness? Let me use one example from the New Testament that pretty much encompasses the direction of the discussion that follows:

Do not think [and, therefore, believe and act like] that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil (Matthew 5:17; emphases added).

This statement by Jesus Christ is based on a fundamental *principle* that enables us to logically understand how God thinks and acts as He carries out His original “plan” through Jesus Christ. As stated above, if you understand this fundamental principle, then that understanding should enable you to understand various other truths that are based on the principle involved.

For example: If I were to read Colossians 2:14 in conjunction with Matthew 5:17, could I logically conclude that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ nailed God’s law to the cross and, in effect, did away with God’s law? What would the *principle* that is embedded in Matthew 5:17 dictate? What would you conclude if God’s law were done away with despite Jesus’ comment in Matthew 5:17? Would you conclude that He is either a liar or duplicitous (saying one thing but doing another)? Or, would you conclude that you did not rightly

interpret Jesus' comment relative to Colossians 2:14? Or ... would you conclude that someone destroyed God's law without His consent (see Dan. 7:25)?

Such is the complexity of the individual's approach to Scripture and dispensing his/her conclusions via personal opinions and/or doctrinal traditions, rather than truth. If you do away with God's law, how, then, do you explain Romans 3:31; 4:15; 7:5-7, 11-14, 25; 13:8-10; and 1 John 3:4 with regard to Romans 6:23? *The law of God operates to define sin*. Faith in God through Jesus Christ makes it possible for God to be gracious and merciful so we can be made acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ and, thereby, treated as though we were newly created (Eph. 1:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:17).

With that in mind, let's read Isaiah 55:10, 11 with the understanding that the Lord God is the Divine Being who came in the flesh as Jesus Christ. What does He say about how trustworthy His word is? Does He say that His word does not go out of His mouth without accomplishing the purpose for which it was intended? How plain and easily understood is that principle?

What relationship does Isaiah 55:10, 11 have to Jesus' statement in Matthew 4:4 ... which He quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3? What is so important about living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? Does it have anything to do with God's truth (John 17:17; 8:31, 32)? Does it have anything to do with 2 Timothy 2:15: "rightly dividing [correctly interpreting and rightly handling] the word of truth"?

The "point-of-the-day" in this introduction is that there are principles revealed in Scripture that enable us to logically understand how God thinks and acts (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Rightly understood, these principles show us the interpretational boundaries that divide God's truth from man's interpretations. This is important understanding.

Martin Luther made a grave mistake in his theological paradigm when he posited that "Every believer is a priest under Jesus Christ and has the right to read and interpret Scripture for himself as the Holy Spirit leads him." How can we know whether or not this is true? How are 32,000+ different "Christian" denominations, that disagree with and oppose one another, proof that the one Holy Spirit of God led every single individual to so many opposing theological

conclusions? Does that sound to you like the way God's thoughts and ways work? Would 1 Corinthians 14:33 change your mind?

How would that agree with Ephesian 4:1-16? Ephesians 4:1-16 suggests that all True Christians will follow the same truth of God as a unified body. I demonstrated that in the introduction: (1) God is a God of laws and (2) God is a God of holiness. If we are led by His Holy Spirit into His truth (John 14:26; 16:13-15), then *we will not be denominationalized by so many different, opposing, conflicting traditions, doctrines, practices, and theologies.* We will be one with God and Jesus (John 10:30; 17:17-23).

Are you beginning to get the point? If so, the following studies will help build your spiritual knowledge, correct reasoning, and proper understanding. Once you have learned those lessons, you can begin to more properly "rightly divide the word of truth" and become a profitable servant of God.

In Christ's Service,

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Chapter One

Theological “Drift”

Sometimes you run upon mainstream theologians and/or historians who are pursuing a line of reasoning in an argument that, perhaps, *unintentionally* reveals critical pieces of history that are needed to understand the growth and development of the Church. Their *unintentional* revelations go against the “grain” of commonly accepted mainstream theological concepts and beliefs ... and are discounted or overlooked in the theologians’ and/or historians’ overall conclusions. This is the essence of the warning in Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that *seems* right to a person, but its result is the way of death” (emphases added).

Below, I offer three examples by two eminent *church* historians [Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (b. 1693 – d. 1755) and Jesse Lyman Hurlbut (b. 1843 – d. 1930)], and one eminent *secular* historian [Edward Gibbon, (b. 1737 – d. 1794)] that provided valuable evidence that there has been *noteworthy* and *considerable* theological “drift” away from the doctrines and practices of the early apostolic Church. That “drift” has most definitely resulted in a skewing and perversion of God’s scriptural truth.

“Missing” History Revealed

Mosheim admits that there were *conspirators* who infiltrated the Church, masqueraded as God’s true ministers, and operated as

wolves in sheep's clothing (see 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Jude 3-5). The "Church" that emerged from this invasion *must not be mistaken as being the True Church*. It became, in fact, the *counterfeit* "Christianity" that has emerged through the centuries as the mainstream "Christian" religion that is made up of over 32,000 denominations spread all over the world!

Take careful note of Mosheim's assessment of this situation. Note how he demonstrates a movement *away from Scripture* toward *fictitious* religious concepts:

Christian churches had scarcely been organized when men rose up, who, not being contented with the simplicity and purity of that religion which the Apostles taught, attempted *innovations*, and fashioned religion *according to their own liking*. [When *proof* was required of them,] recourse was had to falsehoods and impositions ... When asked where they had learned what they so confidently taught, some produced *fictitious* books under the names Abraham, Zoroaster, and Christ, or His Apostles; some pretended to have derived their principles from a *secret doctrine* taught by Christ (emphases added).

There are numerous indications in the New Testament that there were "counterfeit" (false) Christians who were infiltrating the True Church congregations in order to bring in "damnable heresies" and make "merchandise" of the weaker members of the congregations (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:1-16; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1; Jude 3-5).

As we will see, it was not the *Apostles* who changed Christ's teachings; it was those who preached "*another* Jesus, *another* gospel, and *another* spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4). The changes came when there was, by reason of the deaths of the 12 Apostles, an absence of leadership sufficient enough to stem the tide of the onslaught of those "counterfeit" Christians. Much of this was predicated on Jesus Christ's warning in Matthew 24:4, 5: "Many will come in my name ... and deceive many." The faithful will be the *few* (Matt, 7:14; 20:16). How true do you think these prophecies by Jesus Christ are? Is that the problem with 32,000+ "Christian" denominations?

Note what Edward Gibbon candidly admits in his most famous work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

The scanty [that is: barely sufficient] materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the cloud that hangs over the first age [century] of the church (emphases added).

After the death of the Apostle Paul (ca. AD 67), nearly 100 years of Church history is blank! Why? The “small flock” true Church (see Acts 1:15) slowly faded from view and was replaced by another church that taught another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit. Yes, they called themselves “Christians.” But ... were they?

Pay close attention to what Jesse Lyman Hurlbut wrote in his book *The Story of the Christian Church* regarding an “Age of Shadows”:

...[O]f all the periods in the church’s history, it is the one about which we know the least ... for fifty years after St. Paul’s life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest CHURCH FATHERS, we find a CHURCH in many respects VERY DIFFERENT from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul (emphases added).

Because of such evidence as this, it begs the question of whether or not this “church” of the so-called “fathers” was the Church of which Jesus Christ is the Head. This problem is similar in nature to that which Jesus Christ confronted the Jews in Matthew 5:21-48: “You have heard it said, but...”

We shall see how the theological “drift” perpetrated by the so-called “early church fathers” gives us cause to answer the question in the negative. We shall look at things that have been said and written in Scripture ... and see if there is sufficient evidence in the things that Jesus Christ taught and the Bible reveals to overturn the teachings that “paradigm shifts” have changed and corrupted.

If you truly desire to know God’s undiluted truth, then you must be willing to confront the theological “drift” that has taken place

since the early second century. In fact, lots of “drift” had already taken place throughout the history of the nation of Israel. Jesus addressed centuries of “drift” in Matthew 5-7.

The Effect of “Paradigm” Shifts

Loosely defined, a “paradigm” is a simple model of something that generally sums up the more complex idea behind it. The “flat earth” concept is a paradigm that is opposed to the “round earth” paradigm. Each paradigm very narrowly expresses the complexity of the entire concept. In some ways, a paradigm expresses a “world view” involved in a specific concept.

Philosopher-scientist Thomas S. Kuhn, in his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), challenged the prevailing view of scientific progress held at the time – that is: the idea that scientific knowledge developed by an accumulation of accepted facts and theories. Put simply: Each generation added to the previously accumulated knowledge.

Kuhn’s concept was that normal science (the accumulated treasure of scientific knowledge and practice) is periodically interrupted by periods in which revolutionary discoveries are made that fundamentally change the “accumulated” conclusions. Kuhn concluded that such “anomalies” (something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected) would come along at various intervals and ask new questions of the old data and derive different answers than previously posited.

I am sure that Kuhn would have understood the *Star Trek* concept of “anomalies” in the “space/time continuum.” The changes made as a result of the “anomalies” resulted in paradigm shifts: changes in the way certain concepts are held and, supposedly, forcing creations of new “maps” for better and more complete understanding of a “world view”:

Kuhn called the core concepts of an ascendant revolution its “paradigms” and thereby launched this word into widespread analogical use in the second half of the 20th century (wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Structure_of_Scientific_Revolutions).

What the “church fathers” brought to “Christianity” was a theological *paradigm shift of immense proportions*. What the “church fathers” represent in this matter amounts to nothing less than a theological “anomaly” because they attempted to set aside the *accumulated* knowledge and understanding of what represents “God’s truth” (see Psa. 119:43 and John 17:17). As determined by the three sources quoted above, there were *changes* made by the *revolutionary* use of “innovations ... according to their own likings ... falsehoods and impositions ... fictitious books ... secret doctrines.” *History*, from about AD 67 to AD 120, has *barely sufficient* materials from which we can glean how such a theological “drift” took place ... which has produced a period of the history of God’s True Church about which we know the *least*.

Consider the following information from a research article by D. Matthew Allen titled “Theology Adrift: The Early Church Fathers and their Views of Eschatology” posted on <https://bible.org>:

In the two centuries that led up to the edict [of Milan; AD 313], *two crucial interpretive errors* found their way into the church that made conditions ripe for the *paradigm shift* incident to the Edict of Milan. [1] The *second century* [AD 101-200] fathers failed to keep clear *the biblical distinction between Israel and the church*. [2] Then, the *third century* [AD 201-300] fathers *abandoned a more-or-less literal method of interpreting the Bible in favor of Origen's allegorical-spiritualized hermeneutic* [method of interpreting the Bible]. Once the distinction between Israel and the church became *blurred*, once a literal hermeneutic was *lost, with these foundations removed*, the societal changes occasioned by the Edict of Milan caused *fourth century* [AD 301-400] fathers to reject *premillennialism* in favor of Augustinian *amillennialism* (emphases added).

Two of the effects of this theological “drift” have had tremendous influence on contemporary “Christianity”: (1) blurring the distinction between *Israel* and the *Church* and (2) changing the method of scriptural interpretation. But ... notice the *thesis* (the proposition to be argued by his research) that Allen pursues in his

article: “the Edict of Milan caused fourth century fathers to reject premillennialism in favor of Augustinian amillennialism.”

From that point forward, he argues that the paradigm shift caused by the Edict of Milan caused the fourth century “fathers” to reject the notion that Jesus Christ will return before the 1,000-year reign on earth ... and pursue the notion that there is not even going to be a 1,000-year reign!!!

In pursuing his objective, Allen actually unwittingly elucidates elements of “Church” history that demonstrate far more crucial paradigm shifts that change/pervert the true gospel and turn it into a lie (see Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Pet. 2; 1 John 2:18, 19; 2 John 9-11; Jude 3, 4, 8, 10-13, 16-19).

Samuele Bacchiocchi states the following in his doctoral thesis in his work *From Sabbath to Sunday*:

With the exception of a few incidental references to later texts, the documents we shall examine fall within *the first four centuries of our era*. Patristic [“Church Fathers”] testimonies will be examined until this late period, in order to verify the historical validity of the motivations which appear in the scanty documents of *the earlier part of the second century*. This is the period in which Sunday worship moved from a nebulous beginning to an established practice. This being the period in which ecclesiastical institutions are still in embryonic stage, *the student who reads the few available documents with later ecclesiastical criteria, may easily be led astray* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977; p. 14; emphases added).

In this, Bacchiocchi confirms the statements made by Mosheim, Gibbons, and Hurlbut that there are barely sufficient materials from which we can get a clear “picture” of Church history between AD 67 and AD 120. He demonstrates that he is suspicious of the motivations of the so-called “church fathers” in making a specific major theological paradigm shift from observing the God-given commandment to observe the seventh day as the Sabbath rest (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11) to observing the first day of the week as that

Sabbath – which is based primarily on the idea that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, supposedly at sunrise on Sunday morning, is sufficient to overturn a centuries-old commandment of God. Why is this important?

If you use Exodus 31:13-17 as your God-given paradigm and theological principle, then you should be able to understand the basis for questioning the move by the “Patristic testimonies” mentioned by Bacchiocchi. If you insist on following the principle-centered theology of the word of God and follow His insistence that He does not lie (compare Num. 23:19 to Matt. 5:17-19), what would be the basis for rejecting His insistence that the seventh-day Sabbath represents the following:

1. It is a sign (Heb. = owth: a pledge of covenant) – that is: something serving as a guarantee of some event or result. In that sense, the seventh-day Sabbath is prophetic in that it is a sign that guarantees an endless relationship and a “rest” of great importance in the future for which the Lord God set Israel aside for holy purposes (vv. 13, 17; see Heb. 3 and 4 for a discussion of that prophetic nature of the future event).

2. It is to be faithfully observed on the seventh day of the seven-day week (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11) as a perpetual covenant (vv. 14-16).

3. By implication, we have to admit Isaiah 55:11 and Mark 2:27, 28 into the mix: If Jesus Christ is the Lord (Creator and Master) of the Sabbath, then He controls the preservation of that which He created (Mal. 3:6; John 1:1-3; 17:17; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:16, 19; Heb. 13:8; Rev. 1:8). Without any explicitly stated authority from Him, no man has the right and/or authority to change what He committed as His word of perpetual covenant to His people.

Bacchiocchi warned of the effects of shifting paradigms in the sense of theological “drifts” when he wrote that “... the student who reads the few available documents with later ecclesiastical criteria,

may easily be led astray” (emphases added). The so-called “church fathers” represent the proponents of the “*later ecclesiastical criteria*.” If we accept *their* authority above *God’s* stated truth about something like the change in the seventh-day Sabbath observance, then we have been led astray.

Read the following quotation carefully in order to understand this comment more completely:

Sunday [the first day of the week] is a *Catholic* institution, and its claims to observance can be defended only on *Catholic* principles. ...From beginning to end of Scripture *there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first* (*Catholic Press*; Sydney, Australia; Aug. 23, 1900; emphases added).

This statement is one among many that declares that *later ecclesiastical criteria* was an “anomaly” that caused a significant theological “drift.” That *later ecclesiastical criteria* set up the means by which students of theology “may easily be led astray.” This theological “drift” actually began *before* the death of John, the last Apostle to die. Matthew Allen admits that such “drift” took place over a period of about 300 years and that it was facilitated in the fourth century by Constantine, emperor of the Roman Empire, when he stipulates in his thesis that “...two *interpretive errors* on the part of *the post-apostolic fathers* ... set the doctrine of *eschatology* [that is: doctrines concerning death, the end of the world, and the ultimate destiny of humankind] *adrift* from its secure biblical moorings and resulted in an *acute* paradigm shift...” (“Theology Adrift”; emphases added). The term *acute* indicates that it was a *radical* turn from normal that was very serious in nature. Its antonym would be *moderate*.

The Impact of the Two “Errors”

Allen states the *first “error”* as follows: “The second century [AD 101-200] fathers failed to keep clear the biblical distinction between Israel and the church.” Note his explanation of the matter:

A fundamental tenet of dispensationalism is the belief that Israel and the church are distinct peoples of God. Indeed, a simple concordance search of the word "Israel" in the New Testament will lead to the conclusion that the New Testament writers never equated the church with the nation of Israel (emphases added).

The source of this comment about the “fundamental tenet of dispensationalism” is taken primarily from Charles Ryrie’s concept that Israel and the Church ultimately represent “one people of God ... serving one historical purpose.” Ryrie continues to explain: “...but within that broad framework, [the Progressive dispensationalists] retain the traditional dispensational distinction between Israel and the church.” What is that “traditional dispensational distinction”? Simply put, it is the idea that Israel (the Jews) will inherit the earth as per promises made to Abraham and covenanted with Israel (the Jews) ... while the Church (Christians out of all people, nations, and languages) will inherit heaven. In that way, He will have made good on all of His promises to both.

In the first place, a “simple concordance search” will tell you very little more than where in the New Testament the words Israel and Church are found. Such a statement is not even worthy of the word “scholarship.” It betrays the depth of understanding a person has to have about the relationship of words in Scripture and the broader theological implications and meanings behind them.

In the second place, Allen adds that Galatians 6:16 is the only place in the New Testament where his statement about the New Testament writer is arguable ... saying that “the evidence does not support the conclusion that the phrase ‘Israel of God’ refers to the church.” He reveals his lack of understanding about the nation of Israel when he says the following: “...all the sixty five [sic] other occurrences of the term Israel in the New Testament refer to Jews.” That is patently (obviously, plainly) false if you understand the following Old Testament Scriptures: 2 Samuel 2:4, 8-10; 5:1-5; 1 Kings 11, 12; and 2 Kings 16:5, 6; 17:18-24. Also refer to Matthew 10:6; 15:24; 19:28; Luke 24:21; John 1:31, 49; Acts 1:6; 4:36; and Romans 11:1.

From this information, you can understand that *Israel* is made up of the 12 tribes derived from the children of Israel (his 12 sons as named in Genesis 48, 49). Because of their collective rebellion against God, they were reduced to two “houses”: Israel and Judah. “Judah” consisted of Judah and Benjamin, while “Israel” consisted of 10 other tribes. The tribe of Levi was dispersed among all of the tribes, but many of them left the House of Israel when Jeroboam made the “scum” among them to be the priests (1 Kings 12:31). Because of that action, the “House of Judah” came to consist of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi and were collectively referred to as *Jews*.

Read the books of Kings and Chronicles and note how the stories go back and forth between the “Kings of Israel” and the “Kings of Judah.” It is poor scholarship not to be able to see this action in play in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and cited in Hebrews 8:8-13 and 10:15-18 relative to Matthew 26:26-28. Why?

The remainder of Lesson Five will make that very clear to you when we discuss the “lost sheep” imagery and the “remnant theme” from the Old and New Testaments.

The “early church fathers” did, indeed, fail to keep clear the distinction between Israel and the Church. Read Acts 7:38, 51 (*KJV*). Stephen refers to God’s *ekklesia* in the wilderness that did not receive His Holy Spirit because of their resistance and rebellion against it and the Lord God. You will learn of the connection between that *ekklesia* and the one that Jesus Christ is presently building (Matt. 16:18) – which is predicated on Hosea 2:1-20 and Jeremiah 31:27-24.

Allen says that the *second “error”* was that “...the third century [AD 201-300] fathers abandoned a more-or-less literal method of interpreting the Bible in favor of Origen's allegorical-spiritualized hermeneutic.” What was wrong with that?

Let’s refer to a source cited by Allen: Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). Saucy cites four factors that led to the early church fathers’ quick abandonment of the distinction between Israel and the Church. Please pay attention to these factors because they point to *flimsy* human reasoning about the world events of their time relative to Christianity. Think deeply about these factors:

- ❖ In the early antagonism between Judaism and Christianity, Christians refused to support the Jewish revolts against Rome – which led to the Jewish proclamation at the AD 90 Council of Jamnia that the Christians were cursed by God for departing from the standard Jewish faith. [This, of course, was predicated upon Jesus Christ’s prophecies in Matthew 10:17; Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11; 21:12, and John 16:2. See also Acts 4:1 through 8:4.]
- ❖ The early Christians regarded the two destructions of Jerusalem (AD 70 and 132-135) as proof that God had abandoned Judaism and vindicated Christianity. The resulting conclusion was that there was no hope for the future restoration of Israel.
- ❖ In the main, the Jews did not accept Jesus as the Christ, and that gave the Christians no reason to believe that they would ever change their minds. If such a conclusion was deemed to be the truth, then the Jews were the enemies of the gospel the Christians preached.
- ❖ The composition of the Church became increasingly dominated by Gentiles. Because the Gentiles had no Jewish roots, they lost hope of Israel’s conversion – which made it easier for them to create controversy against the Jews and seek a replacement theology.

Saucy’s summation of his arguments is this:

...[T]he basic premise of the early church fathers was that God had permanently cut the nation Israel off as his people as a result of her disobedience and idolatry in the Old Testament and her rejection of Jesus in the New. The faithful of the church age became the “new Israel” of God. They, along with the patriarchs and saints of previous ages, would inherit the promises given to national Israel, and

these promises would be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom (emphases added).

It is amazing how flimsy the arguments on both sides became when set in contrast to the Lord God's claims in Isaiah 45:17-25 and 55:11. Allen follows with this conclusion:

Although Saucy calls the reasoning of these post-apostolic fathers "surely understandable," *it was equally certain error*. The early fathers' willingness to abandon the literal meaning of the biblical text – in this instance in terms of the meaning of Israel and the church – was merely a portense [sic = portent] of things to come with regard to the second major error -- *the systematic allegorizing and spiritualizing of Scripture* (emphases added).

Saucy suggests that a *replacement theology* was *mandated*. Why? Two reasons: (1) If Israel was set aside *forever*, then the theology of the Old Testament did not apply to her anymore; and (2) If the Church was now dominated by Gentiles, all of the theology of the Old Testament had to apply to them, not to Israel. *That being the new paradigm of scriptural "truth, how could there exist any commonality between Israel and the Church?"*

This is where the method of interpreting Scripture changed and was very easily used to deceive those who became "Christians." The new method of interpretation, in effect, *changed God's truth into a lie and/or exchanged God's truth for the lie* (Romans 1:25) by excluding historical Israel from: (1) the *immutable* promises of God and (2) the "Heilsgeschichte" (history of salvation) theme of both Testaments and giving both of them to the "church" ... as opposed to Israel.

Pay close attention to the following information about the new systematic allegorizing and spiritualizing of Scripture paradigm referred to in Allen's work:

- ❖ The early apostolic fathers applied the scriptural texts to their own situations, often without regard for their original contexts.

- ❖ Almost any person or event in the Old Testament could foreshadow the life or work of Christ and the Church.
- ❖ In every passage of Scripture, the more spiritually advanced believer can find a deeper or additional meaning that exists beyond the primary or immediate sense. “The literal sense indicated what was said or done, while the allegorical showed what should be believed” (David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995; p. 108; emphases added).
- ❖ Dockery also points out that Origen did not deny the literal meaning of the text. Rather, he taught that Scripture has three different, complementary meanings: (1) a literal or physical sense, (2) a moral or psychical sense, and (3) an allegorical or intellectual sense (Ibid; p. 110).
- ❖ Frederic W. Farrar (Archdeacon of Westminster; b. 1831 – d. 1903) declared: “When once the principle of allegory is admitted, when once we start with the rule that whole passages and books of Scripture say one thing when they mean another, the reader is delivered bound hand and foot to the caprice of the interpreter...” (*The History of Interpretation*, London: MacMillan and Son, 1886; emphases added).
- ❖ Augustine was highly instrumental in making Origen's allegorical method of interpretation the backbone of medieval interpretation of the Bible.
- ❖ Using Origen's interpretive system as a model, Augustine created a four-fold sense of interpretation that was later adopted by medieval theologians: (1)

literal; (2) allegorical; (3) tropological or moral; and (4) analogical. However, later in life, Augustine emphasized more strongly the literal and historical sense of Scripture.

- ❖ Stanton has even suggested that Augustine came to the view that the historical and doctrinal sections of Scripture should be interpreted by normal literal methods, while prophecy should be interpreted spiritually (Gerald Stanton, *Kept From [sic] the Hour*, Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing, 4th ed. 1991, p. 148).
- ❖ “In an era in which Jews and Christians were engaged in overt hostility over which religion would emerge supreme and victorious, *it was easy for church leaders to adopt a theology that the church replaced Israel*” (Allen’s conclusion; emphases added).

As I said in the introduction, sometimes you run upon mainstream theologians and/or historians who are pursuing a line of reasoning in an argument that, perhaps, unintentionally reveals critical pieces of history that are needed to understand the growth and development of the Church. Their unintentional revelations go against the “grain” of commonly accepted mainstream theological concepts and beliefs ... and are discounted or overlooked in the theologians’ and/or historians’ overall conclusions.” For traditional, mainstream “Christianity,” that is the danger of the theological “drift.”

In the following chapters, we are going to present information that makes it very clear why we disagree with the information shown in this present discussion about theological “drifts.” You would do well to study these concepts thoroughly in order to more completely understand how you can become a more spiritually advanced believer in God’s truth.

Review Questions

1. Write a brief summary of the conclusions drawn by Mosheim, Hurlbut, and Gibbon regarding the early history of the Church. Include information about how they moved away from Scripture to “counterfeit” religious concepts.
2. What specific question about the change in the nature of the Church arises from their comments? Consider 2 Corinthians 11:4 in your answer.
3. What does the term “paradigm” mean? What does it mean when a paradigm “shifts”?
4. What effect does an “anomaly” have on normal accumulations of knowledge? Is this good or bad?
5. How did the “early church fathers” effect theological drift relative to the established pattern set by the apostolic Church?
6. Why is there not sufficient material available to enable us to totally understand how and why this “shift” occurred? (see p. 12).
7. According to Michael Allen, which two critical errors occurred when the “early church fathers” effected their “paradigm shift”?
8. How does Samuele Bacchiocchi’s comment support Mosheim, Hurlbut, Gibbon, and Allen?
9. In what specific way is Bacchiocchi suspicious of the “paradigm shift” caused by the “early church fathers”? Does he have any good reason to be suspicious? Why/why not? Use Numbers 23:19 and Matthew 5:17-19) to support your answer.
10. Was the theological “drift” immediate or gradual? Explain your answer. On whose authority was it based? Explain your answer.

11. How and why can “the student who reads the few available documents with later ecclesiastical criteria be easily led astray”? Why would the “drift” be considered as acute?
12. Why does Saucy determine that a replacement theology was mandated for the “Church”?
13. How did this change the commonality between Israel and the Church?
14. How does the change in interpretation of Scripture make it easy to deceive the believer? How does understanding principle-centered theology help avoid such a thing?
15. Are you convinced, at this point, that Israel was cast off by God forever? If so, are you open-minded enough to continue this study in order to understand why you are in error in your conclusion?
16. How would Allen’s conclusion (p. 24) encourage you to continue to study this problem for God’s revealed truth about it?

Chapter Two

Principle #3: God is not a Liar

Numbers 23:19 is a classic Scripture that lays out a most important principle in God's character: *He does not lie*. There are two possible definitions for this word *lie*: (1) to make a false statement, and (2) to speak deceptively (duplicity). In Numbers 23:19, Moses writes that:

God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

Notice how *lie* and *repent* are set in apposition to one another to assist the explanation. This is interesting because Exodus 32:14 says specifically that the Lord God *repented* of His decision to destroy Israel and make a great nation from Moses' lineage (vv. 9, 10; *KJV*). Read the entire chapter in order to understand the context in which this is revealed.

What should we think of this apparent inconsistency? This kind of problem in Scripture is exactly the kind of problem that requires an understanding of the logical nature of God ... and the correct reasoning we should exercise. Would He be "logical" if He allowed such a glaring contradiction to stand in His word of "truth" (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17)? Somewhere in the design of Scripture, there must be a *logical* explanation for what seems to be such a glaring contradiction (Prov. 14:12).

Where to Begin?

After understanding Principles #1 (God of laws) and #2 (God of holiness) in the introduction article, the most logical place to begin understanding Principle #3 is with the *definition of terms*. My first question would be whether or not the term *repent* in Exodus and Numbers is translated from the same Hebrew word. If it is, then my second question is whether or not there is something in Numbers 23:19 that is remarkably different from Exodus 32:14. Can we rely on the “face value” of the term *repent* in either or both Scriptures ... if we know that God does not lie? Why would Moses say in one place that God does not lie or need to repent, and show in another place that He, in fact, *repented* of something?

At this point, I consult a reputable concordance and its dictionary to find out if the same Hebrew word for *repent* is used in both Scriptures. It is: *nacham* (#5162 in *Strong's*). I then consult a reputable Hebrew-English lexicon (*BDB*) to see if there is a difference in definition between the word's usage in the two references. There is. This is where you can understand how Principle #3 is a legitimate principle relative to understanding all of Scripture ... as well as to how God's word does not contradict itself.

There are numerous situations in Scripture that *seem* to present contradictions; but, indepth searches can give the proper answer. The word *repent* in Exodus 32:14 has to do with *a change of mind relative to a punitive action* that is proposed against others. When the Lord God saw how Israel was acting so soon removed from their exodus out of Egyptian slavery, He was infuriated against them. In fact, He was in the process of “marrying” Israel and giving her a “most-favored nation” status (Ex. 19:5, 6). They had agreed to accept His proposal and become a holy people (Ex. 19:8; 24:7).

His immediate response to her idolatry, resistance, and sexual abandon (which included numerous other previous incidents) was to *destroy* them and give the most-favored nation status to Moses' lineage instead. Moses was an *Israelite* from the tribe of *Levi*, so a covenant with *part* of Israel would be made in order for the Lord God to continue His plan with that portion of Israel. On the surface, nothing *seems* to be wrong about this because it is the Lord God's decision to propose the punitive action.

However, Moses persuaded Him to change His mind (Ex. 32:11, 12; *Modern Language Bible*). So, the Lord God changed His mind. This was not a case where God had sinned or was about to sin (that is, violate His own law and holiness) and needed to confess it and do penance for it. *He decided against His planned punitive action.*

So, Numbers 23:14 must be understood to say that God does not sin or act duplicitously; therefore, there is no need for Him to confess any such transgression and do penance for it. Moses' message in Numbers 23:19 follows the comment about repentance with a verification of God's trustworthiness. It is important to understand the reason to pursue this question because of situations that arise that question God's trustworthiness: "Has He said [it], and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (See also Isa. 55:10, 11.)

In the context of this Scripture, there is no implication that there also has been any other kind of sin on God's part – in addition to lying – for which confession and penance are necessary. Rather, Numbers 23:19 reveals a principle by which we can understand God's logical and righteous character (morally right and justified thoughts and deeds) relative to lying and any other sin that could exist. That principle can be summed up as follows: *Whatever God says is as good as done because He is not a liar who sins in any way at all and needs to repent of such sin.*

He can, however, change His mind about any punitive measures of discipline that He might think to pursue. After all, His grace and mercy are witnesses to this truth. If you are a true Christian, then you have been the recipient of such grace and mercy relative to your own sins. Were it not for His change of mind and being gracious and merciful, we all would suffer the eternal consequences of our sins (Rom. 6:23).

Consider also Isaiah 55:11:

My word ... that goes out of my mouth ... shall not return unto to me void [that is: be devoid of sense or purpose], but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [that is: succeed] in the thing whereunto I sent it (emphases added).

That is the sense of Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to annul the Law, or the prophets: I have not come to annul them, but to cause them to occur as foretold" (author's paraphrase). Such language is a frank demonstration that God is not a liar ... nor is He duplicitous. We will learn in the articles that follow how great a truth this really is and what a great benefit it is to the true Christian. That said, it should be evident that you must pay attention to the conditions under which any given Scripture occurs, as well as the meaning that words have in the context of other similar Scriptures.

The Principle of Immutability

What does it mean to you for God to make a promise and then make an oath that He will absolutely bring that promise to pass regardless of the intervening time between the promise and its fulfillment? Read the discussion of this in Hebrews 6:10-20. Once you have read it, ask yourself how "Christianity" has used the term "New Testament" to change God's promise and oath and tout a different eternal reward for believers. Is this what Paul warns about when he speaks of those who preach another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit (2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15)? He is concerned about those who suppress God's truth and change it into a lie (Rom. 1:18-25).

Read carefully the following specific ideas in Hebrews 6:10-20:

- ❖ v. 12: "[You should be] ... followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (emphases added);
- ❖ vv. 17, 18: "[God swore an oath on His promise] ... to show to the heirs of promise the immutability [unchangeable nature] of His counsel ... by two immutable things [promise and oath], in which it was impossible for God to lie" (emphases added); and
- ❖ vv. 18, 19: "[So] That ... we [that is: New Testament Christians] might have a strong consolation [comfort]

... to lay hold upon the hope set before us ... which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast..." (emphases added).

This is New Testament instruction to New Testament Christians! Why is this promise and oath sworn by the Lord to Abraham so generally ignored? Why change into an allegory the covenant promises found in Genesis 15 about inheriting a parcel of land ... and begin striving to go to heaven immediately upon one's death to live in mansions on streets of gold? What if such an allegory is not God's will? If it is not, then your faith will have been in vain.

There are many promises made to Abraham and the nation Israel in the Old Testament Scriptures that must be fulfilled if the Lord God (Jesus Christ) is the Son of the God of truth (John 16:7, 13-15; 17:14-17; Eph. 1:3). The promises were made to a race of people to whom the Lord God extended His grace by giving them a very high calling in the plan of God to make man in His image (see Gen. 1:26-28; Eph. 1:4-14).

As shown in the "Scriptural Admonitions" above, Jeremiah shows the Lord God's intention, in the future, to enter a "new covenant" with the nation Israel – the "wife" whom He divorced for adultery. Hosea shows that the Lord God intends to take Israel back as His wife forever. You might ask what problem is caused by this knowledge if it can be changed into an allegory by humans. Later in this lesson, we will take a look at how this "school" of thought originated among the post-Apostolic Church ... and subsequently changed many things about the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Let's understand this topic properly so this second lesson about the "covenants" will make more sense to you. After all, if the first covenant was a "marriage" agreement, why should not the "new" covenant also be a "marriage" agreement (see 2 Cor. 11:2 and Rev. 19:7-10)? The problem arises when theologians assume that the "new" covenant will be made with the "New Testament" Church ... and not with the "Old Testament" Church (Acts 7:38). They do not deny that Israel (the race) will be included in the "New Testament" Church by salvation through Jesus Christ. They do not deny that she, along with all manner of Gentiles, will be "married" to Jesus Christ.

What they do deny is that the “New Testament” Church specifically refers to Israel ... and the Gentiles will be the beneficiaries of God’s grace and mercy and salvation relative to the restored relationship between Jesus Christ and Israel ... His True Church (Ex. 12:37, 38, 48, 49).

“Signposts” along the Way

For example: In Genesis 48:15-20, there is a statement that the Israelite tribe of Joseph will be made to be a multitude (v. 4; Hebrew = *melow* > “a mass; a great body of people”). Ephraim (the younger son of Joseph) and Manasseh (the older son of Joseph) were both to grow together into an assembled multitude (v. 16; Hebrew = *qahal* > “a company of nations”). The Hebrew term indicates that they would be fellows, companions, associates.

Ephraim was to become a multitude of nations (v. 19; Hebrew = *rob* > “a multitude of nations, an abundance, a great number”). Manasseh would also become great (v. 19; Hebrew = *gadal* > “strong like a twisted cord; great in importance as in being most imminent or important; to be made to grow large”), but Ephraim would become greater. These are promises stated prophetically by Jacob (Israel) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

You should be able to see in these verses that the word multitude(s) is not the same Hebrew word throughout and has shades of meaning to which we should pay attention. With that in mind, I find the translation of v. 19 in *The Anchor Bible* to be very interesting:

[Manasseh] too shall become a tribe, and he too shall be great. But his younger brother [Ephraim] shall surpass him, and his offspring shall suffice for nations.

In the notes, they say that “shall suffice for nations” means: “Literally ‘shall become a quantity of (= sufficient for) nations,’ i.e., sufficient in numbers to constitute nations...” (“Genesis,” E. A. Speiser, Doubleday & Company, Inc.; 1964; pp. 356, 358; emphases added).

Notice that the word *nations* is plural. According to this translation, “Ephraim” was destined to become “nations,” and “Manasseh” was destined to become a “tribe” (a group of clans descended from a common ancestor). You can see in Revelation 7:6 that Manasseh did, indeed, become a tribe in Israel, along with his brother Ephraim, represented as *Joseph* in Revelation 7:8.

Remember Genesis 48:5, 6 where Jacob (Israel) *adopted* the two boys as his own sons – even saying that any subsequent sons born to Joseph would be counted as *Joseph’s* heirs (v. 6). Ephraim and Manasseh would be *Jacob’s* [Israel’s] heirs. Even though Jacob’s blessing set Ephraim as though he were the firstborn (a double portion), Numbers 26:34, 37 shows that Manasseh numbered 52,700, while Ephraim numbered 32,500. So, Manasseh, *at first*, was the more prominent of the two, but *Ephraim* eventually surpassed Manasseh and became the leader of the House of Israel (see Jer. 31:9).

Remember this idea: the younger *eventually* surpasses the older. This notwithstanding how they originally might have grown together as an assembled multitude (v. 16; Hebrew = *qahal*). When they eventually became independent tribes, Ephraim became more prominent than Manasseh. Some contend that Ephraim became a *commonwealth of nations*, while Manasseh became a *great nation*.

Now, the important question: Can you tell if the Hebrew term *rob* (v. 19 – “a multitude of nations”) suggests a *commonwealth of nations* (like Great Britain) or a *federation of states* (like the United States)? Whatever your answer, the other becomes the *gadal*. Since the United States is *younger* than Great Britain, that could indicate that she is *Ephraim* ... and she is greater and more densely populated – unless you add Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, et cetera to the *British Empire*. That brings up the next question.

How would you otherwise *identify* the Israelitish *race* in our present world? Surely, they still exist as modern, independent nations ... *if God’s will and purpose are still operating today*. Would it be based on the “older” and “younger” concept? How about the “ultimate prominence” concept? Can their individual identities be made so specifically from among our modern national entities? We are going to investigate some of the possibilities of this

“mystery” in this lesson. Pay attention to the difference between the nation of Israel and the House of Israel and House of Judah.

Why should this be of any major concern for modern, “New Testament” Christians? Simply put, God made promises to the “Father of Faith,” Abraham, that were sealed with blood, oath, and covenants that:

- ❖ His seed will be as numerous as the dust, stars, and sea sand (Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 22:17);
- ❖ He and his wife (Sarah) would be the father and mother of kings and nations (Gen. 17:4-6, 15-16);
- ❖ The covenant would be an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7, 8), and
- ❖ The land He swore to give him would be an everlasting possession (Gen. 17:7, 8).

Is God a liar or duplicitous? Isaac was chosen by the Lord God to be Abraham’s heir of the covenant (Gen. 17:1-21). Isaac was the father of Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:19-23; Mal. 1:1-3; Rom. 9:1-16). The Lord God chose Jacob to inherit from Isaac (Gen. 35:9-12). *Why would the Lord God go through all of this activity only to allow later theologians to change the sense and scope of it by allegorizing it so that it does not apply specifically to the nation of Israel?* The covenant falls to Israel as a result of the Lord God’s covenant with Abraham. There is no room here for an anti-Jewish bias.

Although many aspects of the covenant were fulfilled, the actual possession of all of the land promised has not been fulfilled (Heb. 11:8-16 – pay close attention to v. 13). The present-day Jewish state of Israel (House of Judah) is not the fulfillment of these promises. Nevertheless, Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to write:

The promises were made to Abraham and his seed. The Lord God did not say seeds (plural), but seed (singular): ‘And to your seed,’ which is Christ ... If you belong to Christ, then you are [also] Abraham’s seed, and heirs

according to the promise (Gal. 3:16, 29; author's paraphrase; emphases added).

Why does Paul show that the focus of the promise is not the plural multiplicity of seed ... but applies to the singular seed, Jesus Christ? This concept will enable us to understand the "signposts."

Read Romans 8:14-17 where Paul asserts two most important ideas:

- ❖ If you are led by the Holy Spirit, then you are a child of God (see also v. 9); and
- ❖ If you are a child of God, then you are a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.

Joint-heir to what? *The land the Lord God promised Abraham and his Seed!* Not only the land between the Nile and Euphrates Rivers specified in Genesis 15:18-21, but the entire earth as specified in the original agreement made with Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-28 (see also Rom. 4:13). Revelation 21:7 seems to go even beyond the earth when it says that those who "overcome" will inherit all things (read also John 1:3, Col. 1:16, and Rom. 8:15-17). This "entire earth and beyond" application is included in order to bless "all nations" through Abraham's "seed" ... who was born into the human life as an Israelite Jew (Heb. 2:14-16; Gen. 17:18-21; 35:9-12).

This, of course, is born out in prophecies galore. For example, read Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14, 19-27; Zechariah 14:1-9; and Luke 1:26-33 (compare the references in Luke 1:32, 33 to the throne of David and House of Jacob with Jer. 33:20-26). Revelation 5:8-10; 11:15; 19:11-21; and 20:1-10 all reveal that Jesus Christ is going to conquer the governments of this world system and set up an everlasting kingdom over which He and the firstfruit saints will rule. When He and His firstfruit saints take possession of their inheritance, then shall all of the promises to Abraham be fulfilled. Isaiah 9:7 says that His government will increase (which includes an increase in population that will reach great ages; see Isa. 65:17-

25) ... and that certainly opens the possibility that *the entirety of the universe* is subject to future inhabitation by humanity.

In the meantime, can we identify, with any certainty, those multiple physical “seeds” known as Israel, Joseph, and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh? Just as surely as the promises were made, the “seeds” (descendants) of these people *must exist today* in order to be the continual recipients of the land and physical blessings until Christ comes. In fact, Jesus Christ knows exactly who they are and where they are. *The inclusion of the Gentiles in the blessings of Abraham does not negate the “marriage” covenant between Israel and the Lord God.*

The objective of this entire Lesson Five, therefore, is *to make the connection between all of God’s covenant promises with Abraham and Israel and the mission of Jesus Christ.* To those who teach that so much of the Old Testament has been done away with through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, it is a riddle they would rather not discuss for fear of unraveling so many centuries of their traditional teachings and making their so-called “Church Fathers” look like idiots and liars because they decided to change all of His promises into a lie.

The exposition of Jesus Christ being the “Lord of the Covenants” and how His covenant with Abraham has been renewed again and again will be continued. Please read all the Scriptures cited and make notes of the points being made about them.

By the time we complete this lesson, you should be able to “connect the dots” between the Old and New Testaments (Covenants), as well as understand Paul’s firm conviction as expressed in Galatians 3:27, 29:

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the *promise* (emphases added).

Which *promise* is that? Continue studying this closely, and you will see and understand. *God is not a liar.* May He bless your understanding.

Review Questions

1. Why is it important for the true believer to understand Principle #3? In which two ways is God not a liar?
2. Explain the word duplicity in interpreting Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, and James 1:17.
3. Explain why Exodus 32:14 is not a contradiction of Principle #3.
4. How are Christians the beneficiaries of God's repentance in the true sense of Exodus 32:14?
5. Explain why Isaiah 55:11 helps us understand Matthew 5:17 and Luke 24:44. Does this help you understand why God's Law was not annulled because of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?
6. Briefly explain the principle of immutability as explained by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 6:10-20. How does that help you understand that God has not cast off Israel forever?
7. Does it make sense to abandon Paul's explanation of Exodus 15 and consider it to be only an allegory? Why/why not?
8. Explain God's promises in the Old Testament relative to race and grace. How did the "early church fathers" ignore these things relative to God's true Church?
9. Why does Paul show that the focus of the promise is not the plural multiplicity of seed ... but applies to the singular seed, Jesus Christ? How does this enable us to understand the "signposts" that identify Israel? Why should this be of any major concern for modern, "New Testament" Christians?
10. Briefly explain the following statement: *The inclusion of the Gentiles in the blessings of Abraham does not negate the "marriage" covenant between Israel and the Lord God.* How does

that apply to the New Testament Church (consider Hosea 2:14-20, Jeremiah 31:22-34, and Matthew 26:26-28).

11. Answer the following question: *Why would the Lord God allow later theologians to change His promises by allegorizing them so that they do not apply specifically to the nation of Israel?* Use the logic of the third piece of principle-centered theology as the basis for your answer.

Chapter Three

The Covenant Relationship

It is important for those who want to understand the Lord God's relationship to Abraham, Israel, and the *New Testament Church* to understand the concept of the covenant relationship. There is a difference in type between the covenant made with Abraham and the one made with Israel. There is a qualitative difference between the covenant made with Israel and the covenant that is being made with the Church (Heb. 8:6).

To be honest, there seems to be very little interest in or respect for the Abrahamic covenant among mainstream Christian groups. And ... they are generally out-of-touch with the covenant He made with Israel. It is as if the covenant with Israel has disappeared from notice in their day-to-day theology – or, was, perhaps, assimilated into the better promises under Jesus Christ in the New Covenant concluded with His Church, which is generally considered to be totally different from Israel, the race. Their concept of the New Covenant demonstrates this.

In this study, we are going to take a look at the covenant relationship in order to understand how it is applied to Abraham, Israel, and the Church that Christ is presently building. One might safely assume that there are overarching principles that are important for all three covenants. If so, what are they and how do they fit into the New Covenant revealed in Jeremiah 31:31-34? If you misunderstand the difference among them, then you misunderstand the significance of the “marriage” covenant with

Israel and with the Church. If you misunderstand that, then it is less likely that you will understand the significance of the connection between the Old and New Covenants.

Covenant Relationships Require Faith

The Lord God is a covenant God who speaks covenant words to a covenant people. In doing so, He consummates a covenant relationship in a significant, decisive, prophetic covenant act ... with an eternal destiny being determined in advance. What does this mean? Covenant is an agreement reached whereby the relationship between the parties will be governed by certain demands mutually accepted by the covenant partners. It is fateful. Why is it fateful? Because the outcome of the relationship required by the covenant hangs in the balance – the destiny (that is: the seemingly inevitable succession of events) of the relationship between the covenant partners is decided by how they fulfill their agreed upon roles in the covenant.

Whether it is Abraham, Israel, or the Church, each expects to derive certain present and future benefits from their relationship with the Lord God/Jesus Christ (one-and-the-same Being). Even the Lord God Himself expects to derive certain benefits for Himself. The expectations that each partner has demands a certain amount of faith that each can/will deliver whatever they have agreed to deliver. Failure to live up to the expectations is a breach of the covenant and constitutes a breakdown of faith (see Rom. 9:25-33).

Notice, for example, Genesis 15:1-7. The Lord God has explained to Abram that He will bless him with a son from his own sperm (v. 3). The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint ... often referred to as the LXX – the 70), written in Alexandria, Egypt in 285 BC by 70 Jewish scholars, uses the term sperma. He then explains to Abram that the sperma (“seed”) that flows from that offspring will amount to an innumerable multitude. Abram believes what he is told, and the Lord God counts that belief as righteousness (v. 6; Rom. 4:3).

That means that the Lord God considered Abram’s faith as being consistent with the relationship that should exist in the covenant. Paul says in Romans 4:17 that Abram believed that what the Lord

God promised was *as good as done*. *That* is the essence of *faith* (Heb. 11:1). But ... God must also have faith that the one with whom He concludes a covenant will live up to the demands of the covenant. Israel's failure to do so threatened the covenant relationship.

Now notice Genesis 15:7-20. The Lord God promises to give Abram a large piece of territory between the Nile and Euphrates Rivers as an *inheritance*. This is more unbelievable to Abram, so he asks: "By what *means* shall I *know* that I shall inherit it?" In this, Abram is asking for *more than the promise* so that he can exercise appropriate *faith* in the expected future benefits of that inheritance. Fathering a child is more immediate than a future inheritance. This is where the *promise* and *oath* occur that Paul discusses in Hebrews 6:13-20. Abram already has the *promise*. The Lord God is about to engage in the *oath* part of Paul's discussion. It comes in the form of *a sacrificial ritual*.

This *sacrificial ritual* is the manner in which the Lord God represents the *means* by which Abram can *know* the validity of the *promise*. How so? This apparently well-known ritual represents an oath by which the participants agree that, *if the future benefits do not come to pass*, the one who fails to deliver will suffer the same fate as the sacrificed animals. The Lord God has to deliver on His promises, and Abram has to live his life in complete faith that the covenant will be delivered as stated. If the Lord God is not a liar – and if Abram also is not a liar – then neither has anything to worry about. Read Jeremiah 34 and note in particular vv. 18, 19. This is an example of how Judah transgressed a similar type of covenant oath.

It is no small matter of importance that the *smoking furnace* and *burning lamp* pass through the body parts of the sacrificial animals. *Abram is in a deep sleep* (v. 12). Neither of these two elements is clearly explained in subsequent Scripture; so, it would be sheer speculation to venture to explain their significance ... however important they might otherwise be to the *promise* and *oath* that sealed the covenant. That comment does not mean that *nothing* of importance can be gleaned from the presence of the smoking furnace and burning lamp in this sacrifice.

I can understand comments made by various commentators about the *smoking furnace* representing the future afflictions of Israel in Egypt – and, possibly, the "fiery altar" upon which Israel's

enemies will be destroyed so she can leave Egypt and enter the “Promised Land.” I can understand the speculation that it probably consumed the sacrificial animal parts in order to testify of the Lord God’s acceptance and His ratification of this covenant. I also can understand the claim that the *burning lamp* represents the “light unto our feet” (from Psa. 119:105) provided by the word of God and that it assures us that what is promised is as good as done. There is much commentary that I can understand in the realm of *possibility*. But ... I cannot accept it as scriptural *fact* and *certainty*.

I can accept as fact and certainty that *the Lord God was the only one who passed through the sacrificial animal parts*. As I said above: Abram was asleep – in *a deep sleep*. That means that he was unaware of what was taking place. And ... I think that Paul, in Hebrews 6:11-13, provides the answer to my thought. Paul is about to discuss this very incident, which he prefaces his thoughts with this very astute observation:

We desire that every one of you should show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end: That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. *For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no [one] greater, He swore by Himself* (emphases added).

This idea is repeated in Genesis 22:16, Isaiah 45:23, Jeremiah 22:5, and Jeremiah 49:19. The gist of the idea relative to Genesis 15:17 is that Abram was *incapable* of producing the *eternal* aspect of the covenant; but ... *the Lord God was not*. Therefore, it was *inconsequential* whether or not *Abram* walked among the pieces. If the Lord God says it, then it is as good as done (Isa. 55:11). Why is that important to us?

Paul shows in Hebrews 6:17, 18 that the Lord God was *more willing* to show to the *heirs* of the promise the *immutable* nature of the promise (that is: it *will not* change because it *cannot* change). That is the element of *security* that the Lord God added to the covenant that was based on His promise. So, the *promise* and the *oath* are a *double witness* (a sign of *inevitability* and *confidence*) signifying the Lord God’s inability to *lie* about what He was doing

for Abram and his descendants. It opened the door for the heirs of the covenant to have solid, unequivocal faith and hope in the promise. All of that most certainly includes the Church as a recipient of promises to Abraham in which they can have absolute faith and hope (read vv. 18-20). Paul was writing to Christians.

We can see in 1 Kings 19:10, Amos 3:2, and Hosea 1 through 3 the outcome of faithlessness in the covenant relationship on the part of the House of Israel (remember 1 Kings 11 and 12). The Lord God explained the case He had against the wicked House of Israel and His determination to punish them for it (Lev. 26:14-46; Deut. 28:15-68). It had to be made clear to them that this God was not like the gods of the pagans and could not be controlled by the people like the pagan gods were. The House of Israel's sinfulness demonstrates to the Lord God that she *cannot be trusted* in the covenant relationship. He cannot have faith in those who do not reciprocate in faith and holy action. This problem is also with the entire nation of Israel (Israel and Judah) ... but in 1 Kings 19:10, Amos 3:2, and Hosea 1 through 3, it becomes acute with the House of Israel.

We see an example of this problem in Matthew 7:21-23. Here, people of so-called "faith" are doing numerous things in Jesus' name ... and expect that He should reward them accordingly. The problem with this is simple: *They are not doing those things according to the will of God the Father*. Please note that these are the words of Jesus Christ – they are not my words. I understand them and agree with them. But, they point to a greater problem with the people that demands some discussion in this matter of covenants ... old and new.

Misplaced Faith

What happens if you have great faith ... but it is faith in the wrong thing? Would you be given the thing in which you have misplaced faith? Relative to the Lord God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this misplaced faith has actually happened on a grander scale than is readily recognized. In order to understand the point of that claim, it is important to understand a means by which mainstream Christian theologians have changed God's truth into a lie in this matter. It is done by interpreting many

of the Lord God's promises and actions in the Old Testament as allegories. It seems right, but is it (Prov. 14:12)?

Read the following carefully:

Allegorical interpretation [of Scripture] states that biblical narratives have a second level of reference that is more than the people, events and things that are explicitly mentioned. One type of allegorical interpretation is known as typological, where the key figures, events, and establishments of the Old Testament are viewed as "types" (patterns). In the New Testament this can also include foreshadowing of people, objects, and events. According to this theory, readings like Noah's Ark could be understood by using the Ark as a "type" of the Christian church that God designed from the start (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory>; emphases added).

Why do I interrupt this lesson with a discussion about misplaced faith and the misuse of the allegorical approach to Scripture? I freely admit that Paul used an allegory to teach a lesson in Galatians 4:21-31 (note especially v. 24). But ... he did not change God's truth into something not mentioned at all in His promises. Nor did Jesus do so in His parables.

Note the comment below from *The Matthew Henry Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961; p. 31):

The land granted [Gen. 15:7, 18-21] is here described in its utmost extent because it was to be a type of the heavenly inheritance, where there is room enough: in our father's house are many mansions (citing John 14:1-3; emphases added).

Here, Matthew Henry actually changes an element of the Lord God's land covenant with Abram to a promise about going to heaven ... not about actually inheriting all of the land he has walked upon and observed (see Gen. 13:14-18). Why is it necessary to deny the literal nature of the Lord God's promise? What does this do to the claim Paul makes in Hebrews 6:13-20 about the immutability of

the Lord God's *promise* and *oath*? Was Abram's question in Genesis 15:8 about *proof* that he was going to inherit the *actual land* of Canaan, or was it about proving to him the *allegorical* inheritance of going to *heaven* instead? We must be very careful about our interpretations of God's word!

It is from such *changes* that the entire fabric of the Lord God's promises, oaths, and covenants gets *entirely* changed to something other than what He actually promised. Much of this was born out of the theology of those known as the "early church fathers." Re-read the following excerpt from Matthew Allen's research paper titled "Theology Adrift: Early Church Fathers and their Views on Eschatology":

The second century fathers failed to keep clear the biblical distinction between Israel and the church. Then, *the third century fathers* abandoned a more-or-less literal method of interpreting the Bible in favor of Origen's allegorical-spiritualized hermeneutic. Once the distinction between Israel and the church became *blurred*, once a literal hermeneutic was *lost*, with these foundations removed, the societal changes occasioned by the Edict of Milan caused *fourth century fathers* to reject premillennialism in favor of Augustinian amillennialism (<https://bible.org/article/theology-adrift-early-church-fathers-and-their-views-eschatology>; emphases added).

Allen's main point in his research is to demonstrate how theological paradigms were moved in several stages from dispensationalist premillennialism to non-dispensationalist amillennialism. In doing so, he used the elements of "church" history involved in that process. As these "church fathers" focused their attention on such matters, "the clear distinction between Israel and the church" became "blurred." How? By exchanging "a more-or-less *literal method* of interpreting Scripture in favor of Origen's *allegorical-spiritualized* hermeneutic [that is: method of interpretation]" (Ibid.). What does this mean? I will now demonstrate further how that paradigm shift also shifted the central focus of the "true faith."

(On our website, you can read my article about dispensational theology in the July through September 2017 issue of *Spirit and Truth*, pp. 6-11.)

Allen uses Justin Martyr's arguments with Trypho to demonstrate the transfer of "covenants" away from Israel to the Church. I will not get into the "weeds" of this matter; rather, I will summarize it to an understandable level. Justin's argument was that Jesus Christ "begat us [that is: the Gentiles] unto God" to make us the "true sons of God" who "keep the commandments of Christ." Justin Martyr was a Gentile ... as were most of the "early church fathers." His comment about "the commandments of Christ" has nothing in common with the Law of the Old Covenant. Some believe that the Sermon on the Mount replaced the Old Testament Law which, by the way, were the legal underpinnings of the "marriage" agreement (see Jer. 31:31-34 for a reference point for the legal underpinnings of the new "marriage" covenant with Israel).

Allen, then, uses information from Robert L. Saucy's work *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) to reveal the following:

According to Saucy, Justin Martyr's statements were "the capstone of a developing tendency in the church to appropriate to itself the attributes that formerly belonged to historical Israel." Saucy states: "With Justin's statement, the developing theology of replacement was complete. There was no longer any place for historical Israel in salvation history. The prophecies addressed to this people henceforth belonged to the church" (Ibid; emphases added).

In this line of reasoning, it is patently apparent that no Old Testament "significant, decisive, prophetic covenant act" concerning either "House" in Israel has any place in today's Christianity. As far as the "fruit" of that theological paradigm goes, one now can throw on the garbage pile and burn the Lord God's promise and oath to the House of Israel that He will punish her, clean her up, and take her back to be His "wife" (Hos. 2:14-20). One can now disregard the Lord God's assertion in Isaiah 55:11 that

His prophetic word will accomplish the purpose for which it is sent forth. In effect, the Law and Prophets are now annulled ... replaced.

In this process of *invalid* theological arguments and posturing, one can actually make God to be a liar so that one's *theology of replacement* can be accepted as valid. In so doing, one can make it possible for "Christian" folk to believe in something that will *never* be realized because the paradigm *shift* causes *a misplaced faith!* One can, in effect, do away with God's law and prophecies as pertaining to all of Israel and abscond with them by sleight of hand and become the *counterfeit* arbiter of God's truth (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15). ***Really?***

In this, I consider Allen to be a messenger whom I do not wish to "shoot." His article reveals much information that is useful to our present study ... but Allen might not have been aware of *our* arguments about this situation. I do not imagine that he would agree with them, but I do not intend to fault him with the *centuries-long development* of the problems he exposes. He asks some very interesting questions ... and answers them with the information he has acquired from his various sources ... flawed as it might be.

Again, he attributes to Saucy information that tells us why "the early church fathers so quickly abandoned the distinction between Israel and the church." Here, I repeat for our consideration the four factors that Saucy posits:

- ❖ There was an increasing antagonism between Judaism (the House of Judah) and early Christianity that was made harsher and more irritable because the Christians would not support the Jewish revolt against Rome. At Jamnia in AD 90, the Jews proclaimed that all who separated themselves from the standard Jewish faith were *cursed* (Saucy, p. 213).
- ❖ Between AD 70 and 135, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple ... and expelled the Jews from Jerusalem. As a result of these actions, the "early Christians ... *abandoned* any hope for the restoration of the nation of Israel" (Ibid; p. 215; emphases added).

- ❖ The Church realized that the Jews were not going to accept Jesus as the Christ, so they gradually began to consider them to be enemies of the gospel related to Him “” therefore, unsalvageable (Ibid; p. 216).
- ❖ As the Church became more dominated by Gentiles and the Jews became more hardened against them, the hope for the prophetically-based conversion of all of Israel began to be set aside as a matter of faith. This “made it easier for the increasingly Gentile church to polemicize [dispute; argue] against Judaism and to seek a replacement theology” (Ibid; p. 217; emphases added).

What conclusion did Allen draw from this information? Let me preface this with the observation that it is possible to have legitimate evidence, but it is also possible to draw wrong conclusions from it. The concept of a replacement theology is a case in point. Read Allen’s following conclusion drawn from a quote in Larry V. Crutchfield’s article “Israel and the Church in the Ante-Nicene Fathers” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, a quarterly theological journal published by the Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas:

In sum, the basic premise of the early fathers was that God had permanently cut the nation of Israel off as his people as a result of her disobedience and idolatry in the Old Testament and her rejection and crucifixion of Jesus in the New. The faithful of the church age became the "new Israel" of God. They, along with the patriarchs and saints of previous ages [before the nation of Israel was formed], would inherit the promises given to national Israel, and these promises would be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom (July-September 1987, p. 256; emphases added).

“Truth” and “Error”

Crutchfield’s historical perspective about the Ante-Nicene Fathers is true in many ways. Well-known and respected scholar, Samuelle Bacchiocchi, published his doctoral thesis (*From Sabbath*

to Sunday; 1977) at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. In his efforts to discover the biblical and historical reasons for substituting Sunday-keeping as opposed to seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, he had to investigate numerous elements of Church history – including what he called “Anti-Judaism in the Fathers and the Origin of Sunday” (Chapter VII, pp. 213-235).

In that chapter, he discusses *Ignatius*, *Barnabas*, and *Justin*. I will “sift” the material for you and deliver the most important conclusions drawn by Bacchiocchi. He begins by saying that the writings of these three “fathers” constitute the *major source* of information for the first half of the second century. These are some of those “second century fathers” whom Allen exposed as having “failed to keep clear the biblical distinction between Israel and the church” ... as though there exists a reason to maintain such a distinction (p. 26 above). For every effect ... there is a cause.

Ignatius

Based on the writings of Irenaeus, Bacchiocchi identifies Ignatius as the Bishop of Antioch during the time of Trajan (AD 98-117). Ignatius was concerned about the “Judaizing tendencies” of Christians in his territory who were observing Jewish institutions, like the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath, in the same manner as the Judeo-Christians in Jerusalem and Palestine. Bacchiocchi cites Ignatius’s *Epistles to the Magnesians* (ch. 8:1, 2):

For if we are still practicing *Judaism*, we admit that we have not received God’s favor. For the most divine prophets lived in accordance with Jesus Christ (emphases added).

Bacchiocchi takes this comment as proof “that the separation from Judaism was in progress, though the ties had not yet been severed” (p. 213). This suggests two things: (1) There were Christians who still observed the seventh-day Sabbath (read Matt. 5:17-19); and (2) there were Christians who *forsook* the seventh-day Sabbath in favor of Sunday-keeping ... which act was not based on any kind of *divinely-ordained* command by God or Jesus Christ.

The absence of any explicit command by God to change the Sabbath rest to the first day of the week should demonstrate that the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not enough to change one of the 10 Commandments. If the Christians had continued to observe the feasts of Leviticus 23 (see 1 Cor. 5:6-8; 11:23-29), they would have found in them all of the truth about the resurrection of Jesus Christ they needed ... and Exodus 20:8-11 would not have required a change to the first day of the week. I agree with Kenneth A. Strand's comment in his *Three Essays on Early Church History* (1967; p. 45): "Surely Ignatius knew that the Old Testament prophets observed the seventh day of the week, not the first!"

Ignatius's call for Gentile Christians to differentiate themselves from the Jews and how they observed their religious concepts amounted to a major paradigm shift in theology. If Ignatius was going to be successful in his attempts merely to observe the seventh-day Sabbath without the decidedly "Jewish" flavor, then a major paradigm shift still would have to take place (for example: see Matt. 15:1-9). His action was the beginning of what is above called the theology of separation.

As you add into the mix the Roman persecution of the Jews, that separation becomes a matter of survival for the Gentiles. You can understand from Acts 15:5; 24:5; and 28:22 that early Christianity was considered to be a sect of Judaism. If the Romans were carrying out programs for persecuting the Jews, then the Gentile Christians felt the need to divorce themselves from any appearance of being "Jewish." *That would affect their theology and the manner in which they pursued the demands of their theology. An anti-Jewish bias was easily assumed as a means of survival. Unfortunately, the theology would have to steer away from Jewish faith in covenants, laws, rituals, customs, traditions, *et cetera, et cetera*. That would also be true if the Old Testament was considered to be "Jewish" Scripture.*

Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas appeared among the Gentile Christians somewhere between AD 130 and 138 ... probably in Alexandria, Egypt, a hotbed of conflict between Jews and Christians. The

Apostle Barnabas did not write this epistle. Bacchiocchi deems it important for two reasons: (1) It contains "...the first explicit reference to the observance of *Sunday* denominated as the "eighth day"; (2) "It reveals how the social and theological polemics and tensions ... played a key role in the devaluation of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday by many Christians" (Ibid; p. 218). Was *Barnabas* interested only in changing the day of worship? No.

Bacchiocchi reveals that this change of the day of worship was not the primary focus of *Barnabas*. As a matter of historical and religious fact, "A careful reading of the *Epistle of Barnabas* reveals that the author purposes to demonstrate the total repudiation, on the part of God, of **Judaism** as a true religion" (Ibid; p. 219; emphases added). While that repudiation by God had been shown in Scripture because of Judah's sins, *Barnabas* put forth a more clever argument:

- ❖ He defames the Jews as a people by claiming that they were: "wretched men" deluded by an evil angel (9:5; 16:1), abandoned by God because of their idolatry (5:14), cursed for killing God's prophets (5:12), and found guilty of being Christ killers (7:9).
- ❖ He claims that the sacrificial system, covenant, circumcision, Levitical laws, the Sabbath, and the temple "... do not **literally** apply to the **Jews**, since they have a deeper **allegorical** meaning which finds its fulfillment in Christ and in the spiritual experience of the Christians" (Ibid.).
- ❖ He empties Judaism's "religious beliefs and practices of any historical validity by allegorizing their meaning." His claim is that the covenant "... is ours, but [the Jews] lost it completely just after Moses received it (Ibid.).

Jules Lebreton and Jacques Zeiller write in their work *The History of the Primitive Church* (1949 vol. I, p. 442) that the allegorical method and the extreme attitude of the writer testify "not indeed to the deep thought of the Church, but, at least, to the danger which Judaism constituted for it, and the Church's reaction to the

danger” (Ibid; p. 220). Lebreton is cited as calling the *allegorical exegesis* of *Barnabas* a “weapon” and saying that *Barnabas* was only following the example of numerous Jews who also used the *allegorical method* to explain the law (p. 441; Ibid; p. 221).

It is apparent that these “early Christian fathers” have very little concept of how the covenant and the laws attached to it were given to *all of Israel* ... not just to the *Jews*. Nor do they understand the importance of Stephen’s statement in Acts 7:38 that the nation of Israel *was* the *Church in the wilderness*. Lacking this understanding of the make-up of the nation of Israel causes many unnecessary errors in scriptural understanding ... many of which we will study in this fifth lesson.

Justin Martyr

The major feature of Justin Martyr’s “theology” was his lack of understanding regarding the reason why the Lord God gave *Israel* His laws (Gal. 3:23-25). Bacchiocchi points out the following:

Justin [b. 100 – d. 165] ..., being of Gentile origin, *ignored* the moral and corporal value of the Mosaic legislation, and regarded the law [as being] “an *unimportant* portion of the Scriptures, a *temporary addition* to a book otherwise universal and eternal, *added because of the special wickedness of the Jews*” (Ibid; p. 224; emphases added).

The quoted (“an unimportant ... Jews”) part of the above excerpt was taken from James Parkes’s work *The Conflict of the Church and Synagogue* (1934; p. 101). On p. 84 of Parkes’s work, he observes:

The whole of the epistle of *Barnabas* is an exposition of *the Church as the true Israel*. It is heresy even to try and share the good things of promise with the Jews [according to *Barnabas*]. In tones of unusual gravity, and with a special appeal, the author warns his hearers against such misplaced generosity. (Ibid; p. 219; emphases added).

Justin considered the observance of the Sabbath to have been a “sign” [like a “scarlet letter”] that God put upon the Jews because of their wickedness. If that was the case, then you can deduct from that comment that God, before the creation of the orderly universe, anticipated there would be “Jews” in the future who would be possessed of a special “wickedness” for which He would create the seventh-day Sabbath to be their “mark of the beast” (see Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13-18; Isa. 58:13, 14; 66:22, 23; Mark 2:27, 28).

Why, then, would the Lord God choose, at the same time, to become a human being from the lineage of Abraham, the nation of Israel, and the tribe of Judah (Heb. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Matt. 2; Luke 1:26-33; John 1:1-3, 14; Rev. 11:15; Zech. 14:9)? The ante-Nicene “fathers” (that is: those Church leaders before the Council of Nicaea was held) were so determined to separate themselves from Judaism that they adopted a method of literary interpretation (the allegorical method) from the Greeks that buttressed their theology of separation (read Deut. 12:29-32 re: imitating the pagans).

Justin argued that: (1) the Christians he taught worshiped the same God of the Old Testament that Enoch and others worshiped; (2) they [the early patriarchs and prophets] were uncircumcised and did not observe the Sabbaths and other religious rites; (3) Moses imposed those laws later at God’s direction because of the Jews’ gross sinfulness; and (4) God wills that each succeeding generation of mankind should worship Him in unity of spirit and doctrine. In essence, God was forced to impose the law upon the Jews ... and make it disappear as soon as He had accomplished the educational and disciplinary purpose for which He did such a thing (Ibid; p. 225).

As these arguments have passed down to mankind from generation to generation, we have been beset today with 32,000+ different denominations of “Christians” who do not agree with one another about some of the most basic scriptural concepts. The theology of separation aimed at the Jews has actually come around to also become a theology of separation of “Christian” against “Christian”! What kind of educational and disciplinary lesson do you suppose God might have in mind for the sinful “Christians”? Why would Jesus Christ enter His ministry with the pronouncement that He did not come to destroy the Law (Moses’ writings from

Genesis to Deuteronomy), but to fulfill it? Read carefully Matthew 5:17-19 before you answer that question. Also read Luke 24:44 to understand that sections of the Psalms are also prophetic. Is God a liar? “Truth” and “error” hang in the balance.

Conclusion

The point of this discussion is to make you aware of the fact that you can have a misplaced faith if you do not allow God to lead you to understand His truth (1 Cor. 2:6-16). It is of utmost importance that you understand the covenant relationship: God’s promise and oath are immutable.

In order for you to be accurate in the information you are studying, read Genesis 17 with the understanding that Abram was not a Jew. Pay special attention to vv. 9-14. Why did the Lord God require circumcision of Abram and the males of his household? What happened to those males who declined to be circumcised? How soon after birth was the circumcision to take place? Were all adult males required to be circumcised once the covenant was in force? How does this match Justin’s claim about such religious rites being part of a “sign” to identify the Jews as gross sinners and none before Moses having been circumcised? Those people were not Jews!

Now, why should anyone assume that Jesus was wrong in His statement in Mark 2:27, 28: “The Sabbath was made for man [that is: for mankind], not man [that is: mankind] for the Sabbath”? If Genesis 2:1-3 is God’s truth, then the creation of the seventh-day Sabbath followed the previous six days of creation. It was not first implemented under Moses. Notice in Genesis 2:3 two important factors involved in the creation of the seventh day: (1) God blessed it, and (2) He sanctified it. The blessing is the act of making it holy and endowing it with divine favor ... an act not accorded to any of the first six days. The sanctification is the act of setting it aside for holy purposes. Why is this turned to be punishment of the Jews?

According to the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:8-11, it is described as being “the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” In v. 9, we are told that the first six days of the week are for the purposes of our work and personal pleasures. Verse 10 tells us that we are to avoid

work and personal pleasures during the seventh-day Sabbath. As a matter of fact, Exodus 16:4, 5 show the Lord God requiring Sabbath observance by all of Israel before the 10 Commandments were given, Notice v. 4. Why did He distribute the manna “at a certain rate every day”? How did they avoid gathering the manna on the seventh-day Sabbath? None of that information supports the claims of *Barnabas* or Justin. Both have used the “sleight-of-hand” used by deceivers (2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Eph. 4:11-16).

With all of that information before you, why would anyone assume that there were no holy people before Moses who observed the seventh-day Sabbath? Why do members of the true faith go all the way back to, at least, Abel (Heb. 11:4)? How did Abraham obey God’s *voice*, *charge*, commandments, and laws if none of that included the Lord God’s seventh-day Sabbath rest that was created the day after the creation of mankind?

Follow the lineage of Seth (Gen. 4:25, 26). Why is that lineage mentioned ... as opposed to other lineages that were extant at the time? Why, almost 1,600 years after Seth, are there two basic groups of mankind: sons of men and sons of God (Gen. 6:1, 2)? Were there different “denominations” of religious people at the time? Does the Lord God’s choice of Noah and his immediate family (eight people) to survive the flood signal that there were fewer “sons of God” than there were “sons of men”? Why would that be true?

You must think about the importance of the covenant relationship because it is in that relationship that mankind will be made holy and endowed with divine favor (Gen. 1:26-28; Lev. 19:2; Jer. 31:31-34). Israel was chosen to be the “preachers of righteousness” to the world (Deut. 4:1-4; 5:1-29). You must be concerned about the true faith because you can be led astray if you are not careful (2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15; Matt. 7:21-23).

Review Questions

1. Define what a covenant relationship means.
2. Explain what part faith plays in the covenant relationship.

3. Why is Abraham called “the father of faith” relative to the covenant relationship?
4. What happens if you have great faith ... but it is faith in the wrong thing? Would you be given the thing in which you have *misplaced* faith? Explain.
5. Explain how mainstream Christian theologians have *changed* God’s truth into a lie in this matter by interpreting many of the Lord God’s promises and actions in the Old Testament as *allegories*. Why does this constitute *misplaced faith*? (Use Matthew Henry’s comment about the *land* grant in Genesis 15:7, 18-21 as a source.)
6. What does Hebrews 6:13-20 teach us about what God promised Abraham? What effect does the *immutability* of God’s promise and oath have on the *allegorical method* of interpretation?
7. What is *eschatology*? What effect did the theology of the “early church fathers” have on Israel’s standing in scriptural eschatology (p. 48)?
8. Explain Bacchiocchi’s purpose for saying that the writings of Ignatius, “Barnabas,” and Justin Martyr constitute the *major sources* of information for the first half of the second century. What was Bacchiocchi trying to prove in his research? Why did he use these three sources to make his point?
9. Briefly explain how the writings of Ignatius, “Barnabas,” and Justin Martyr *contradicted* Jesus Christ’s instructions in Matthew 5:17-19 and Luke 24:44.
10. Based on what you have read in this lesson, briefly explain the concept of the *theology of separation*.
11. What is the most apparent result in our “Christian” world today of the *theology of separation*? How does one go about justifying that kind of theology in the face of Ephesians 4:1-16? Explain the “sleight of hand” comment. Explain Matthew 7:21-23 and 15:1-9.

Chapter Four

Israel's God-given Destiny

Isaiah 54:5 refers to the Lord God as Israel's *maker* and *husband*. This indicates that He *created* her *specifically* for the purpose of making her His "wife." In this chapter, you will learn how this "marriage" took place, its significance to the Old Covenant (testament), and how it leads to Jesus Christ and the New Covenant (testament). This chapter must be studied *before* you study Chapter Five. Understand this thoroughly: Both covenants are *inextricably* tied to God's Kingdom being established *on the earth*. Be prepared to change your biblical paradigm and to learn wonderful truths revealed centuries ago by God.

The God-given Destiny of Israel (the *Race*)

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*? What relationship exists between Israel and the New Testament (Covenant) Church – both of whom are shown in Scripture to be the Lord's "wife"? All of this is part of Israel's *divine destiny*.

In Exodus 19:5, 6, we read that *Israel* (the *race*) received the distinction of being God's peculiar treasure *above all peoples on the earth* – a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This indicates that

the Lord God was, at that time, intent upon *creating* His *Kingdom* on the earth. In fact, *Israel*, the Lord God's special *creation*, was in the unique position to become that Kingdom. The Lord God (the One who became *Jesus Christ*) was about to enter a "marriage" agreement with Abraham's designated "seed."

Not many in mainstream "Christianity" are aware of this concept due to the centuries of theological *obfuscation* (chaos and confusion; see 1 Cor. 14:33) that has occurred as "Christianity" has divided itself many times over into 32,000+ denominations who do not agree theologically or doctrinally with one another about the various issues of scriptural themes. Obviously, then, there is much "theology" that remains *unsettled* to this day. And the "chasm" is getting wider and deeper.

Would you infer (that is: conclude from the *facts* or *premises* presented) from this "marriage" agreement between the Lord God and Israel that other nations were *excluded* from this peculiar distinction? Understand this: While this was an *exclusive agreement* between the Lord God and Israel, the Lord God *did not exclude other nations* from receiving the *salvation* He offers to mankind. *It was His intention that the whole nation of Israel would become His very intimate partner (in effect, His "wife") in dealing with the nations of the world regarding that salvation and His way of life.* In fact, *Israel* was specifically chosen by the Lord God to be His *messengers* and *teachers* so the "nations" could learn of His thoughts and ways (Deut. 4:1-20; Matt. 25:34; John 3:16-21; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Paul alludes to this in Galatians 3:8. Notice that Paul specifically says that the *gospel* (presumably, about the *Kingdom of God*) was preached to Abraham by the Lord God. This, no doubt, was passed on to Abraham's descendants. *Israel* did not carry out their God-given responsibility to teach other nations God's truth about the coming Kingdom (Rom. 10). They settled, instead, for *self-righteousness* and a large assortment of pagan idols and religious practices (Rom. 1:21-25). Read the Lord God's description of Israel in Isaiah 1:1-9, 18-20.

How do we know it to be true that Abraham was taught "the gospel"? This can be proved very easily by reading Genesis 22:18. In God's covenant with Abraham, by whom would *all the nations of the earth* be blessed? It would be through the "seed" of Abraham.

Genesis 16:21 shows that the Lord God appointed Isaac to be the “seed” involved in that covenant – not any other of Abraham’s sons with Hagar and Keturah (see Genesis 25:1-6). Paul verifies this point in Galatians 3:8.

Was Abraham an Israelite? No. It is explicitly stated in Galatians 3:8 that:

Scripture foresaw [that is: prophesied] that God was going to justify the pagans and proclaimed the Good News [gospel] long ago when Abraham was told: “In you all the pagans will be blessed” (*The Jerusalem Bible*; emphases added).

Please notice that this is called “the gospel” and that it was to become a reality through the “seed” of Abraham. The Israelites are the seed of Abraham – but Abraham himself was not an Israelite because Jacob (Israel) was his grandson. But ... Abraham also was not counted among the pagans as far as his religious beliefs and practices were concerned (Genesis 26:5). The “gospel” message was also inherited by Israel when they inherited from Isaac the covenant the Lord God had made with Abraham (Rom. 9:1-5).

In Mark 1:14, 15, what did Jesus preach that is called “the gospel”? This is a message to all of humanity that God intends for them to be included in the coming Kingdom of God. That Kingdom has not yet been established on the earth (see Zech. 14:9, Matt. 5:9-13, and Rev. 5:10). Jesus came “to His own” – that is: Israel (John 1:11, 14), but they did not accept His “gospel.” Only a small “remnant” of Israel actually accepted His “gospel.”

The disciples revealed that they had knowledge of the gospel of the “Kingdom of God” relative to Israel when they asked Jesus Christ, before His ascension to the right hand of the Father, if He was going to: “... at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6; emphases added). This implies that Israel, at one time, had, possessed the Kingdom in one form or another ... and will eventually become that Kingdom. But ... it also implies that Israel had subsequently lost it. Acts 1:7, 8 is His reply – a reply that signals that such an event is definitely in the future for Israel. In the meantime, the “faithful remnant” will be responsible for preaching

that gospel to the “nations” (that is: to all of Israel and the Gentiles; see also Matt. 28:18). That Kingdom is going to rule all of mankind once it is established.

The Exodus from Egypt is a “shadow” of this very thing! How so? Exodus 12:37, 38 shows that “... a mixed multitude ...” left Egypt *with the Israelites*. Revelation 7:9 suggests that such will also be the case when the *firstfruits* of Israel will be accompanied by the *firstfruits* of a “mixed multitude” that are to be resurrected from the dead or changed *at the return of Jesus Christ*. The *Gentiles* involved will become part of the “ruling realm,” with Israel, of the Kingdom of God under Jesus Christ. This demonstrates that Gentile converts also will be inheritors according to God’s blessings and covenant with Abraham and his “seed.”

The Interpreter’s Bible says:

If the *mixed multitude* is to be understood historically it *most probably* consisted of non-Israelite *Semitic* [that is: the descendants of Noah’s son Shem – see Genesis 10:21-31] elements in Egypt” (“Exodus,” vol. 1, p. 926; emphases added).

You should get the idea that *no one* before Jacob’s children came on the scene were *Israelites*; therefore, most definitely not *Jews*. It is true that there existed *Shemites* and *Hebrews* (see Gen. 10:1; 11:10, 16), but all Shemites and Hebrews *are not* Israelites – in the same way that all Georgians are Americans, but not all Americans are Georgians. Esau, Jacob’s brother, was a Shemite and Hebrew, but he was not an Israelite. Also, this “shadow” in Exodus 12:37, 38 did not have to contain at least one person from every nation of the known earth at that time. It merely had to have a representation of non-*Israelite* people. Even in this case, the Shemites and Hebrews were counted as *Gentiles* because they were not *Israelites*.

This is most probably why God instructed Moses to apply His laws equally to “... the *stranger* that sojourns [that is: lives temporarily] among you ...” (Ex. 12:49; emphases added). This *mixed multitude* went to the promised land with Israel, and many, more than likely, converted to Israel’s religion and possibly intermarried into the Israelite nation. In that way, a portion of them

gradually became Israelites. What does this portend for other Gentiles who will be part of the “ruling realm”?

In effect, this was one method of “grafting” Gentiles into the “holy root” (Rom. 11:16-25). To understand this comparison from the New Testament perspective, read Revelation 7:1-10 and note the mention of “a great multitude” in addition to the symbolic 144,000 Israelites ... 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel that are named (inexplicably, the tribe of Dan is not named). This comes at the point of the pending “exodus” of all of mankind from the “world powers” led by Satan the Devil (2 Cor. 4:4).

Exodus 2:15-20 and 3:1 show that Moses married a Midianite woman ... not an Israelite. If you check Genesis 25:1, 2, you will see that Midian was one of Abraham’s six sons with Keturah, the woman he married after Sarah died. That means that Moses’ father-in-law was a distant relative who was both a Shemite and a Hebrew (read Gen. 11:10-32 to understand this). The Hebrews (Eber; Gen. 11:17) were descended from Shem (v. 10). These “non-Israelite Semitic” people are the kind of people to which *Interpreter’s* refers in its commentary. Pay attention to the phrase “most probably” because it signals that it is most reasonable to believe, but it has not been proved to be fact. Jethro, apparently, was not considered as being a pagan. In Exodus 3:1; 18:1, he is called “the priest of Midian” ... which indicates that he held a religious office.

Being a descendant of Abraham, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Jethro worshipped and served Yahweh Elohim (the Lord God). You can see in Exodus 18 that he worshiped and offered sacrifices to the Lord God (vv. 9-12). In vv. 13-26, he gave Moses advice about how to set up a system of judges who could assist Moses in settling disputes among the Israelites – and told Moses to act upon his advice because it was of God (v. 19). Jethro’s thoughts and actions were not those of a pagan. And ... he apparently understood the great thing that the Lord God was doing with Israel.

In Genesis 26:1-5, the Lord God repeated this promise about the “nations” when the covenant was transferred from Abraham to Isaac. Why did He do that? Notice that the Lord God refers to a multiplicity of Abraham’s seed in these references. It was to be the unusual distinction of this multiplicity of Abraham’s seed that they would be a blessing to all other nations – sometimes because of the

multiplicity's national character, sometimes in spite of it. The Lord God repeated this promise to Isaac because Abraham had been His faithful servant. *It was the Lord God's will that His plan should be carried out through Isaac's "seed," which commission would later be inherited by Jacob and his subsequent descendants* (Gen. 35:9-12).

What did God mean in Genesis 17:1-8 when He commanded Abraham to walk before Him and be perfect? Was this a necessary part of His covenant agreement with Abraham? If so, would He have expected any less from the nation Israel after they inherited the covenant and its promises and blessings from their father Jacob? Leviticus 19:2 answers that question very succinctly: "You [the 12 tribes of Israel] shall be holy because I, the Lord God, am holy" (emphases added).

It should be obvious that holiness cannot be represented by unholiness – a point inherent in Paul's comment in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. How can an unholy people teach other nations about God's holiness? It is ludicrous to think that such a thing is possible: It is an unequal yoke. Israel was responsible for being a holy people (Ex. 19:5, 6). The "yoke" was unequal enough due to Israel being flesh-and-blood humans and the Lord God being self-sustaining spirit. Being holy as the Lord God is holy at least would have improved that "inequality" measurably.

In Genesis 28:10-15, the Lord God shows His intention that Jacob was to be the inheritor of the covenant and follow the same path as his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac. Notice that the last part of v. 15 is directed toward Jacob: "*I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you*" (emphasis added). That would be until Jacob's death when the covenant would be passed on to Jacob's children. It is thereafter relevant to the 12 tribes of Israel because they are, in effect, Jacob/Israel. By extension, the Israelites also represent Abraham (see Matt. 1:1-16; John 8:30-47).

This was Jacob's conversion experience – when he finally understood the God-given destiny he and his family had been given. Later, the Lord God confirmed that He had changed Jacob's name to Israel (compare Gen. 32:24-28 to 35:9-12) and intended such a destiny for him and his descendants. That God-given destiny was set into motion to be accomplished when "... I have done that of

which I have spoken to you.” That point has not yet been reached ... but this was the point at which His name was placed upon Israel.

Do you suppose that there is a connection between that statement to Jacob in Genesis 28:15 and Jesus Christ’s promise in Matthew 28:20 to His Israelite Jewish disciples: “I am with you always even to the end of this present age” (BAG, p. 27)? Why would there not be a connection? At this point, fulfillment is still pending (see again Isa. 55:10, 11). Despite Israel’s extraordinarily horrid spiritual mind-set, the Lord God sees a time when that will be corrected.

Notice also Jesus’ commission to His Israelite Jewish disciples to go to the “nations” with the gospel of the Kingdom (v. 19). These are some of the “dots” that you should be able to see in order to connect them for true understanding (Isa. 28:9, 10). The “dots” are very important in deciphering God’s truth and distinguishing that from what is popularly taught in Christ’s name (Matt. 24:4, 5; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15).

The Birthright and Scepter Inheritances

Genesis 32:24-28 and 35:9-12 show that the Lord God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. Genesis 48 and 49 show that Israel (Jacob) passed on the maintenance of the Abrahamic covenant to Joseph, his firstborn son with Rachel, before he died (see Gen. 49:22-26). Reuben, Jacob’s older firstborn son with Leah, was disqualified because he had sexual relations with Jacob’s other wife, Bilhah (Gen. 35:22; 1 Chron. 5:1, 2). The “birthright” in 1 Chronicles 5:2 refers to the inheritance of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Judah became the tribe through whom the ruling class of Israel was chosen (kings, princes, *et cetera*; see Genesis 16:6, 16; 49:8-12), but Joseph inherited the double-portion status of the firstborn in charge of the covenant. Notice Genesis 49:10 where Jacob speaks of “Shiloh.” That word means: “The one to whom it belongs” – that is: The Scepter and the administration of God’s Law belongs to the chosen royal class in the tribe of Judah until Shiloh comes. This is a reference to Jesus Christ when He is finally crowned “King of kings and Lord of lords” (see Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 19:16).

Does this covenant now follow the Israelites – the multiple seed? Yes. And ... despite their unfaithfulness, that responsibility has

never changed because it will be restored to her when she is repentant of her many sins, cleaned up, and remarried to Jesus Christ, the Lord God (Hos. 2:14-20; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:16, 17). His declaration in Hosea that she is “not my people” is followed by the prophecy that He will punish her and bring her to repentance in order to take her back as “His people” and “remarry” her forever (Hos. 1:1-11; 2:1-23; 14:1-9). The Lord God’s commitment to truth hangs in the balance here. He is not a liar.

This is prophecy for the future (Isa. 55:11; Matt. 5:17). *It most definitely involves the True Church presently being built by Jesus Christ.* Compare Matthew 16:18 to Acts 7:38. Compare Jeremiah 31:22-31 to Matthew 26:26-28 and Hebrews 8:8-13; 10:16-18. This indicates the path of prophecy regarding the Lord God’s (Jesus Christ’s) remarriage to Israel after she will have been “Christianized” through repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Read Romans 11 very carefully ... especially noting v. 29. And ... we should not change His truth into a lie by denying the truth He reveals to us about this matter (Rom. 1:25). God is not a liar. If you do not believe that fundamental fact, then you need to start all over your studies into this matter.

You should understand that the Birthright inheritance is the inheritance of the responsibility over the contents of the Abrahamic Covenant. The Scepter inheritance establishes the family line that will lead to Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16). Paul alludes to this in Galatians 3:16, 26-29; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 2:16 (KJV). It is in Jesus Christ that both the Birthright and Scepter inheritances are to be joined when He sets up God’s Kingdom on the earth (compare Dan. 2:44, 45 to Dan. 7:13-27). He is, after all, Shiloh. If all things were made by Him and for Him, then it is self-evident that all things belong to Him (Phil 2:9-11; Col. 1:16; Psa. 24).

The Problem with the People (Hebrews 8:7, 8)

After Israel’s Exodus from Egypt, does Moses draw a distinction between those Israelites who obeyed the Lord God’s commands and those who did not? Refer to Deuteronomy 4:1-4 and learn what

happened to those who obeyed and those who did not (vv. 3, 4). Verse 4 explains that those who *did not obey* were *disqualified* from inheriting anything related to the covenant. They were the ones who were denied entrance into the “Promised Land.” They *died* in the wilderness. Perhaps they will be given some consideration of grace if they are among those resurrected in the prophecy in Ezekiel 37. It is definite that they will not be part of the “ruling realm” who will support Jesus Christ as kings, judges, lords, and priests when He establishes God’s Kingdom after His return (Rev. 5:10; 20:4-6).

Now, compare Deuteronomy 4:5-9 to Isaiah 2:1-5. The 10 Commandments given to Israel at Mt. Sinai were the means by which the Lord God intended to teach Israel His *holiness* (see Rom. 7:12, 14; Gal. 3:23-25). They were the *legal* bases for the Kingdom’s government and the “marriage” covenant. Paul says that the rebels did not learn them according to *faith* (see Rom. 9:31-33; Matt. 7:21-23). They are established more firmly by faith (Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12).

What effect was Israel’s *faithfulness* supposed to have had on other nations? Do you get the idea that Israel was to be a “light unto the world” (Matt. 5:14-16)? The “Sermon on the Mount” was, after all, directed at Jesus’ Israelite Jewish audience. Do you get the idea that *Israel* was supposed to preach and teach God’s thoughts and ways to others? Paul suggests that such is true ... but *there was a problem with the people* (Heb. 8:8). Isaiah 1:1-9 specifically addresses that problem, as well as the Lord God’s solution to the problem (v. 9 – the “remnant” ... which we will study in Chapters Seven and Eight).

The Terms of the Lord God’s Divorce from Israel

Read Jeremiah 3 and Ezekiel 16, and pay attention to the *exclusivity* involved in the covenant between the Lord God and Israel. To what did the Lord God compare Israel’s transgressions of the “marriage” covenant He had with them? Transgressing the *exclusivity* involved in this covenant, by worshiping other gods and adopting pagan religious practices, amounted to committing *adultery* against Him – punishable by *death* (see Lev. 20:10; 1 Cor.

6:9, 10; 1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23) or, at the merciful least, by being put away by divorce.

In Matthew 19:3-12, what did Jesus tell the Pharisees about a man being allowed to divorce his wife for “every cause”? Had God, *in the beginning*, allowed for the possibility of divorce? Jesus’ answer is interesting. He said that *in the beginning* God did not allow for divorce because no one was supposed to cause the marriage relationship created by God to be broken apart (see Gen. 2:21-24 and Matt. 19:4-6). It was to be undergirded by faithfulness – fidelity. One would rightly conclude that God originally willed that death ended the marriage ... not divorce.

In Matthew 19:7, Jesus was asked the following question: “Why, then, did Moses command them to give a bill of divorcement, and put her away?” (Deut. 24:1-4; emphases added). E. P. Gould defines the expression “the hardness of your hearts” as meaning “the rude nature which belongs to a primitive civilization” (*International Critical Commentary*, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark”; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1905; p. 184). A primitive civilization is one that is at its beginning stage of development – more self-taught than having been taught by others. Moses was called by the Lord God to deliver Israel from slavery and to “civilize” her by teaching her His thoughts and ways.

The Lord God made serious efforts to teach Israel through Moses. *They refused to listen to Him*. The Lord God, according to Matthew 19:8, evidently decided to make some adjustments to the expectations contained in His higher laws, *after He had taught Israel His laws*. Why? Because of human weakness. This is what Paul calls “winking” at mankind’s ignorance in times past (see Acts 17:30 and Psa. 103:8-10). What does this tell us?

Hebrews 8:7, 8 says that God found fault with the people ... not with the covenant itself. Pay close attention to that because it plays an important part in understanding the New Covenant that we will discuss later. We have to consider Jesus Christ’s demand for repentance in Mark 1:15 because it was addressed specifically to Israel at that time (see Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:21-24). This was Peter’s answer to the people of Judea and Jerusalem (Israel of that time) on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40). Note his instruction in v. 38 to

“Repent and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (see Joel 2:27-29). What does that mean?

Paul covers this in Romans 6 and 7. In Romans 6, Paul compares baptism to a symbolic death and resurrection in Christ (vv. 3-7). The key to understanding this analogy is found in the expression at the end of v. 4: “We also should walk in newness of life.” So, Peter’s instructions to those Israelite Jews in Acts 2:14-40 was part of the fulfillment of Hosea 2:14-20: An invitation to the Israel of that day to be cleansed, purified, and reconciled to her “Husband” in a new life (2 Cor. 5:17). How is this supposed to work?

In Romans 7:1-4, Paul says that the death of the marriage partner frees one to re-marry. Does this suggest that divorce does not free one to marry another person? When God created the marriage institution, He did not intend for there to be any such thing as divorce. *Human weakness, however, prompted Him to make allowances for it under specific circumstances* (Deut. 24:1-4). Paul re-visits the question in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11 as a command from Jesus Christ (remember that this is instruction to true Christians): If true Christians divorce, they are to be reconciled to one another or remain unmarried. Why? Otherwise, they commit adultery against their former marriage partner. *Theirs is an exclusive relationship in Christ that must be honored until one of them dies* (see Ephesians 5:1-33). It is evident that Jesus Christ did die and was resurrected to spirit life (see John 17:5). Therefore, Israel is free to marry whomever she chooses. It also implies that He is free to do the same.

So, the analogy presented by Paul in this discussion makes it clear that re-marriage is a viable choice after the death of one’s spouse. In this analogy, he is speaking specifically of a metaphoric “marriage” to sin ... not to law. In order for Israel to be in a position to re-marry the Lord God (Jesus Christ), *she will have to go through the process by which she can die to her sins and become a new creation ... which ultimately will result in her being changed from flesh to spirit. Note this: It is not wrong to properly use metaphors, symbols, types, and the like. It is wrong to change God’s truth into a lie.*

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the seal by which she will be identified as belonging to Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13, 14; Jer. 31:31-

34). It will be the down-payment (a pledge that secures a bargain) that guarantees that she will be fully reconciled to Him and become capable of being equally yoked to Him by being reborn into the same self-existent, eternal spirit of which He is composed (John 3:3-8; 1 Cor. 15:50-54). After all, as Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 15:50, flesh-and-blood cannot be part of the “ruling realm.”

The “Exclusion” Clause

According to Matthew 19:9, are there any circumstances in which true Christians are allowed to divorce and remarry? This exclusion clause centers around the meaning of the term fornication. In all other situations, to divorce and re-marry would be adulterous; but, if one of the marriage partners commits fornication, *the other is free to divorce and re-marry*. It is not mandatory, but it is permitted. The offended party can forgive and forget; the offender can be deeply repentant and change the behavior. The persistent, unrepentant attitude would be a signal that forgiveness will not be warranted. Israel was persistent and unrepentant in her adultery against the Lord God. But ... was that fornication?

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

Porneia is the word from which we get the term pornography – which does not merely describe pictures of women showing their bare breasts and naked bodies. Pornography is also graphic – it consists of words and images of every kind of sexual sin imaginable among humans. The pagan religions to which Israel fell prey were based on pornographic concepts. Committing adultery “... with their idols ...” (Eze. 23:37) can very easily mean that they used idolatrous images as sex toys. Read 2 Kings 23:1-25 to get a sampling of what Israel was constantly doing under the cover of “religion.” Take notice of the list of the various parts of the pagan religious system that were destroyed by King Josiah. See also

Jeremiah 19:5; 32:35. It is obvious from these descriptions that too many Israelites were caught up in sexual perversions of all sorts in the name of *religion*. Therefore, they were not *irreligious* people.

Which three types of unlawful sexual behavior were used in these pagan religions? They practiced all manner of sexual perversions: *homosexual* (same gender), *heterosexual* (opposite gender – outside of marriage and including *incest*), and *bestial* (with animals). It was based on the concept that the *orgasm* spiritually united the practitioners with Ba'al and his consort Aphrodite (*aphrodisiac* – something that excites sexual desire – comes from the same word family). The *orgy* – unrestrained indulgence in alcohol, drugs, and sex – was the primary medium of expressing this “worship.” It was not uncommon for *incest* to take place – or, for abortions and infanticide to take place because of unintended pregnancies. Leviticus 17-20 is a description of the pagan practices that the Lord God warned Israel to avoid.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 says that discovering such an “uncleanness” in one’s marriage partner constitutes grounds for divorce. In such cases, are both partners free to re-marry? Is *re-marriage* an option if they have married and divorced new partners? Would it be fraudulent? Our modern-day, no-fault-divorce, marriage-go-round is an absolute abomination to a holy and righteous God (see Mal. 2:16)! The Lord God’s longsuffering attitude toward the nation of Israel is a testimony of how much He hates divorce – yet, *He* went through one when Israel (both Houses) refused to change their adulterous (*porneia*) ways. (Add the book of Malachi to your reading list.)

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

Suppose a marriage partner did not know about his/her mate’s sordid sexual past when s/he married him/her – and would not have married him/her had s/he known. Would there be grounds for

divorce if s/he ever found out? *Absolutely!* An example of this would be this: If a man found out that his wife had willingly had sexual relations with her father and aborted children born to them. Another example would be: If the wife found out that her husband had sexual relations with animals before they married.

The human heart is described in Jeremiah 17:9 as being “... *deceitful* above all things and *desperately wicked* ...” (emphases added). That deceitful, desperately wicked heart will keep secrets and defraud others as a result. After the experience in Eden, God made allowances based on *human weaknesses*. This implies that He extended *grace through the pending sacrifice of Jesus Christ*.

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

Conclusion

This sets the stage for our continuing discussion about the divine destiny of Israel and how she will move from the “Old” Covenant to the “New” Covenant. The information will probably be somewhat unfamiliar to you. However, I want you to follow the Scriptures and ask God for His spirit of understanding. What you are about to study is an amazing story about a deep and abiding love supported by the character of a Being who is not a liar. He is, after all, the “Lord of the Covenants.”

Review Questions

1. What happened to *Abraham’s* covenant with the Lord God when Abraham died? What is significant about the information in Genesis 26:1-5?
2. Is there any indication that the Lord God had laws that governed holiness, blamelessness, and love ... even if they were not expressed

in the form of something like the 10 Commandments? Did the Lord God expect Abraham and his “seeds” to be holy?

3. How does *Jacob* become the inheritor of the covenant (refer to Gen. 28:1-15)? In relationship to that information, what are the implications of Genesis 32:24-28 and 35:9-12?

4. What is significant about the Lord God changing Jacob’s name? To what is Jacob’s name to be changed and what does it mean?

5. From the information given in Genesis 48, 49, how does the *nation of Israel* come into possession of the Abrahamic Covenant? How do they begin to fulfill the Lord God’s promise about a *multiplicity of seed*?

6. In Exodus 19:5, 6, why were other nations *excluded* from the “marriage” agreement between the Lord God and Israel? What role was given to Israel as the Lord God’s “wife” (refer to Deut. 4:1-13)?

7. Were the other nations *excluded* from the *salvation* that the Lord God intended for mankind? Why/why not? Use Genesis 22:18 and Galatians 3:8 to frame your answer.

8. Who are the “Jews”? Was Abraham a “Jew”? Explain your answer. Use 2 Kings 15:32 and 16:5, 6 to help in your answer.

9. What is significant about Revelation 7:1-10? What comparison can be made to Exodus 12:37, 38?

10. Were there “Gentiles” in Abraham’s family? How would you explain that answer? Is there scriptural proof that some “Gentiles” were relatives of the Israelites? Explain.

11. How did *Joseph* qualify to be the inheritor of the Abrahamic Covenant ... instead of *Reuben*?

12. What is the difference between Joseph’s inheritance and Judah’s? Use 1 Chronicles 5:1, 2 as a clue.

13. What is the difference between the Birthright inheritance and the Scepter inheritance? Will these two inheritances ever come under one head? Explain.

14. To what did the Lord God compare Israel's transgressions of the "marriage" covenant He had with them? Use Jeremiah 3 and Ezekiel 16 as resources.

15. Using the information from question #13, how does it help explain Hebrews 8:7, 8? What was the problem with the people? How does this show that the problem was not with the "terms" of the "marriage" covenant itself? Why does it indicate the need for a new covenant?

16. Was the Lord God justified in divorcing Israel? On what grounds was He justified? On what grounds would He be justified if He re-marries her?

17. Explain the concept of fornication mentioned by Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:9.

18. Name the three types of porneia used in pagan religions. Use Leviticus 17-20 to frame your answer.

19. Even though God did not originally allow for divorce, on what grounds did He later allow it? Use Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jeremiah 3:6-11, Ezekiel 16, and Hosea 8:8-14 as resources for your answer.

20. How do Acts 2:38-40, Romans 6:1-7, and 7:1-4 explain Hosea 2:14-20 regarding the Lord God's pledge to clean up Israel and remarry her? Does this imply that she will be Christianized? Why is that important?

21. How would you use that same information to explain Romans 11:25-36?

22. Will Jesus Christ re-marry Israel? Explain this using Matthew 16:18 as part of your "proof."

Chapter Five

Why the Lord God made a Separate Covenant with Israel

Read very carefully Isaiah 42:5-7. For what reason did the Lord God enter into this exclusive relationship with Israel? Verses 6, 7 explain that the Lord God set the condition that He would be Israel's only God – as opposed to Israel also being free to mix and mingle with the gods of the pagan nations. But ... He did not intend for Israel to stand as a barrier against the Gentile nations having access to Him in order to learn His thoughts and ways and achieve the salvation that He intended for all the world (John 3:16). “Light” in this context means “enlightenment – truth; knowledge.”

This begs the question: Why did the Lord God enter into a covenant with Israel that is separate from the covenant He made with Abraham? Why would His covenant with Abraham not be sufficient to achieve His goals for all of mankind? Simply put: It had to do with the establishment of the Kingdom of God: territory, inhabitants, laws, and rulers (Gen. 1:26-28). As inheritor of the covenant, Israel also inherited the land promise. As Scripture reveals, it was the Lord God's choice to achieve His goals through a specific race of people. Get your wisdom about this from Jeremiah 18:1-6 and Romans 9:1-21: The potter uses his clay as he wishes.

The objective of this lesson is to demonstrate how the two covenants converge into the establishment of the “New” Covenant (Matt. 26:26-28). This “mystery” is more than Jesus establishing an

amorphous group of people called the “Church” (Matt. 16:18). It is about Him setting up His “Kingdom” and making *Israel* His “wife” ... *again*. Israel is His *ekklesia*. Few understand this “mystery.” That knowledge is being made available to you through this Lesson Five of the Bible Study Course.

Why “Marry” Israel?

The Lord God intended for Israel to be that proverbial “light on a hill” that would teach God’s truth to the world so the world would have access to the salvation and redemption He offers, as well as access to His Kingdom as fellow citizens with Israel. In Matthew 5:13-16, the “multitudes” (v. 1) to whom Jesus Christ is addressing His remarks are the Israelite Jews. *This is His gospel – that is, His good news – to whoever among Israel believes in the Christ.* By its very nature, it will *ultimately* include the Gentiles in the salvation needed for them to be citizens of the Kingdom.

This is the heart and core of Paul’s discussion about Israel in Romans 10 – a discussion he set up in Romans 9:33 by quoting Isaiah 28:16:

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste [*MLB* = “will not be hurried”].

This comment is in the context of a larger problem Israel was to face because of her “covenant with death and Sheol” because they had made “lies our refuge, and under falsehoods we have hid ourselves” (Isa. 28:15). They were about to be invaded and severely punished for their sins (vv. 17-29). Paul uses this context in Isaiah 28 to frame his comments about salvation through Jesus Christ in Romans 9, 10. Notice the attention he pays to Israel in his comments.

Romans 10:11-21 tells about the salvation that God makes available through Jesus Christ. Does this Scripture also make it plain that it does not pertain *only* to Israel? Make note of the term *whosoever* that Paul inserts in vv. 11-13 (refer also to John 3:14-21). We must also remember that it was God’s plan to create man in His

own image and give them dominion over His creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Romans 10:11-13, therefore, represents the “good news” (the “gospel” of the Kingdom) that *Israel* was supposed to spread out all over the inhabited world as a *witness* of God’s intentions. That should be made clear in vv. 14-21. I can draw such a conclusion based on the Lord God’s comments in Deuteronomy 4:1-13.

This “marriage” between the Lord God (the One who became *Jesus Christ*) and Israel was consummated in order to have a “family” upon the earth who was specially chosen and sanctified for spreading the good news (“gospel”) of the Kingdom of God. Many who do not understand the sense of that apparently have no problem with Jesus Christ “marrying” an *amorphous* “Church” – as opposed to *Israel* (the *race*) – when He returns (Revelation 19:7-9).

Either way, Scripture reveals that Jesus Christ will have a “wife” who is to be intimately involved with Him in spreading the knowledge about His coming Kingdom ... a kingdom that has been prophesied since before the creation of the orderly universe (Eph. 1:4; Matt. 25:34). As Ephesians 1:3-14, Philippians 2:5-11, and 1 Peter 1:18-20 point out, this plan was conceived of and set into motion *before* the creation of the orderly universe.

If you read the genealogies of the first generations of humans from Adam to Noah in Genesis 5, you will see that the Lord God *chose* (or, *created*) a lineage of people (a *race*) who would be His representatives in that endeavor. If you continue to read Genesis 10:1-32 and 11:10-32, you will see how that lineage goes straight to *Abraham*. From there you can read about how the Lord God made His covenant with Abraham ... and that covenant was passed on from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob (Israel) to the 12 families of Israel.

All of this included the Lord God’s *choice* to be born into the lineage of *Abraham* and *Israel* and *Judah* (see Heb. 2:16). You can also read His mother’s lineage in Luke 3:23-38. Matthew 1:1-16 is Joseph’s lineage. Luke 3:23 (*KJV*) shows that people *thought* Jesus was Joseph’s son. He was not.

Adam Clarke says that Luke 3:23 should read that Joseph was “the *son-in-law* of Heli,” not “the son of Heli.” Heli was *Mary’s* father. You can see in Matthew 1:22, 23 that this birth was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14. Joseph’s lineage in Matthew 1 would have confirmed Jesus’ pedigree back to David if Joseph actually had

been His father. The main difference between the two lineages is found in the descendants involved in Matthew 1:6 as opposed to Luke 3:31: Joseph was descended from David's son Solomon, while Mary was descended from David's son Nathan. *All this information must be considered during this study in order for you to properly understand the conclusion that will be drawn from it.*

So, why did the Lord God “marry” Israel? Why didn't He “marry” Abraham? Or Isaac? It is evident from scripture (Heb. 2:16) that He was choosing the pedigree (the genealogical tree) of the people who would be the fulfillment of the promise of a multiplicity of “seed” ... a people who were descended from a great man of faith. No matter what problems with them He might encounter along the way, His ultimate goal was to make of them a people who will be holy, blameless, and loving (Eph. 1:4, 6) ... and, thereby, capable of teaching the rest of mankind God's truth.

Three Fundamental Questions about Knowledge, Belief, and Obedience

In this same Romans 10 context, three basic questions arise that relate directly to Israel:

- ❖ Did Israel know the gospel?
- ❖ Did Israel believe the gospel?
- ❖ Did Israel obey the gospel?

However, these questions also apply to anyone who wants to know God's truth and be covered under the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for salvation purposes. But, you can see in v. 18 that Paul uses Psalm 19:4 to make a contrast between Israel and the heavens that declare the glory of God. He began his letter to the Romans by showing how mankind has suppressed God's truth despite the evidence of God's existence that is found in the things He has created (Rom. 1:18-25).

Make no mistake about his comment because it is couched in his comment in Romans 2:9, 10: “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentiles” (emphases added). That comment is a very important part

of Paul's theological focus. Why? Consider John 4:22 as part of your answer because Jesus Christ, the Savior, was born as a Jew. This was His choice ... according to Hebrews 2:16. The particular part of the Jewish line of which He became a part was the House of David ... the line that would deliver Shiloh to the world (Gen. 49:8-10). Second Samuel 7 reveals the everlasting covenant the Lord God made with David to preserve His "House." You can compare that to Jeremiah 33:19-26. Why use this prophetic declaration regarding David? It demonstrates a matter that was settled forever through Jesus Christ.

The Jews were the "remnant" of the nation of Israel who were most evident during Paul's day and age. It is also evident that the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" were being reached through Peter, James, and the other Apostles (see Gal. 2:7 and James 1:1). According to that information, one must be impressed that the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" were also being converted and made part of the "New" Covenant Church (ekklesia).

Paul understood very well how the Gentiles also were to be included in God's offer of salvation to mankind (see Rom. 10:12, 13; Acts 10). He understood, as well, how the nation of Israel was originally chosen by the Lord God to be the instrument through whom the gospel of the Kingdom of God was supposed to be preached (Deut. 4:1-13; Rom. 10:14, 15). That being true, Matthew 16:19 applies directly to the nation of Israel because the first members of that body (the ekklesia) were the Jewish disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, who was also a Jew.

Both Jesus Christ and Paul explicitly proclaimed that entrance into the Kingdom requires salvation through Jesus Christ (see John 3:3-8 and 1 Cor. 15:50-54). Consider also Matthew 28:19, 20 as an indicator of this because Jesus Christ was an Israelite and the Great Commission was given to His Israelite disciples. If you forget or ignore the fact that Israel was given the Great Commission while being led to the "Land of Promise" (Deut. 4:1-13), then you will miss the significance of Matthew 28:19, 20.

How broadly was God's "good news" spread by Israel? Paul addresses this issue in Romans 10:14-16. The Lord God, no doubt, understood the necessity of having His people go to others to preach and teach the concepts of the Kingdom of God and how entrance

into it is to be achieved ... even apart from being an Israelite. The long history of the knowledge about the coming “Savior Seed” was not hidden in a dark and remote corner of creation. We have studied this in previous lessons about the prophecy in Genesis 3:15.

In Romans 10:14, 15, Paul discusses the necessity of having preachers who will go out to the world to teach and preach God’s truth. He cites Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring good tidings of good things.” It is evident that there was no shortage of preachers of righteousness going out to Israel and the world to proclaim the true gospel (v. 18).

Paul puts his finger on the “carotid artery” of the matter when he declares in v. 16 that: “They have not all obeyed the gospel” (emphases added). You can assume “the Jews first and also the Gentiles” in that comment, but it is aimed primarily at the entire nation of Israel because they were the first ones who were commissioned – as a part of their “marriage” covenant with the Lord God – to take the message to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the Gentiles also are included among those who did not obey the gospel.

Read Romans 10:19-21. Paul implies that Israel was well aware of her responsibility in this matter. How much plainer could Moses have been in Deuteronomy 4:1-13? In Romans 10:16, Paul cites Isaiah’s question from Isaiah 53:1 (see also John 12:38): “Who has believed our preaching?” Notice that in v. 19 Paul refers to “... them that are no people and ... a foolish nation...”? Of whom is he speaking? It is evident that he is speaking of the Gentiles. What is to be done in regard to them? Israel will be provoked to jealousy by them (Rom. 11:11). Jealous of what? God’s calling to salvation!

Israel’s disbelief prompted the Lord God to consider another means by which she would begin to pay better attention to her peculiar calling (Ex. 19:5, 6): He would begin calling out a non-Israelite people – people not originally called out to undertake the evangelization of the Gentiles – to participate in the preaching and teaching of the gospel in order to provoke Israel to jealousy (see Rom. 11:1-15). We see that calling being enacted in Acts 10.

What did Isaiah (65:1-7) say was wrong with Israel? As you also have read in Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16, and Hosea 8, the House of Israel became a common whore among the nations of the world who paid

her lovers (Ezekiel 16:33, Hosea 8:9); so, the Lord God divorced her – and that divorce certainly later included the House of Judah. *Some contend that He divorced only the house of Israel.* However, Matthew 23:38 quotes Jesus Christ as telling “Jerusalem” (that is: the house of Judah) that her “house is left unto you desolate.”

The Greek word heremos means that Jerusalem is to be abandoned and laid waste. The house of Judah might very well exist within part of the national territory ... in addition to being scattered all over the world just as the house of Israel had been. That abandonment and destruction amount to a type of divorcement that will also require a new covenant predicated on her repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as her Lord, Savior, Redeemer, King, and “husband.” Now read Matthew 23:37-39 for a fuller picture.

Jesus Christ fully cast aside the house of Judah in AD 70 when Titus came against Jerusalem and the Temple (refer to Jer. 7:1-16 and Matt. 24:1, 2). According to Josephus, Titus ordered that Jerusalem and the Temple were to be completely demolished (*Wars of the Jews, Book VI*). About AD 130, Hadrian decided to rebuild Jerusalem as a gift to the Jews. Because of continued simmering problems with the Jews, he changed his mind and built a new, secular Roman city there and called it *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*. This, in part, led to the Bar Kokhba War (132-136). The Jews ultimately lost that war and were permanently banned from returning to Jerusalem except for a religious observance once a year. Aelia Capitolina became Jerusalem again after 638.

Remember that the house of Israel and the house of Judah are two components of the nation of Israel. According to Deuteronomy 24:1, the divorcement of an unfaithful wife requires that she be sent out of her husband's house. The house of Israel was sent out in BC 721-718 at the hands of the Assyrians. Then, in AD 70, the house of Judah was sent out of God's house at the hands of the Romans. This action by Titus and Hadrian effectively completed the Lord God's divorcement of all of Israel ... except the faithful remnant according to the election of grace (see Rom. 11:1-5).

See 1 Kings 12 for a historical perspective on how the nation became divided. Also, note that the books of I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles are records of the kings who reigned over each House after the division took place and the sins both houses

committed. Also read Jeremiah 7, 19, and 32:26-44 for further proof of Jesus Christ's perspective in Matthew 23:37-39.

A Review of the Covenant with Israel

Does Paul indicate in Romans 3:3, 4 that God would give up on the covenant just because of Israel's faithlessness? Paul's reference here is to God's oracles (vv. 1, 2), which are a witness to all of the covenants, promises, and laws He invoked in His relationships with mankind between Adam and Abraham, as well as to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel – including the covenants and promises He made to people like Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh, and David. Any disobedience that occurred disqualified the offender, but it did not cancel God's oracles. All of that notwithstanding, what does Paul say in v. 3? Boiled down to its essential concept, Paul's statement declares that God will not break His promises ... even if humans lack the integrity to keep theirs. Otherwise, we would all be destroyed (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23-26).

Based on that concept, then, would God become a liar if He were to do away with the covenant He originally made with Adam? Noah? Abraham? Isaac? Jacob? Israel? Now, the “kicker”: Who is presently responsible for the maintenance of God's covenant? To whom has He given that responsibility: the “remnant” or the “Church”? Is there any indication that they are one-and-the-same? This is the “tangle” that will have to be untangled through God's revealed truth. Let's review the covenant agreement in order to have an idea about what is involved in the answers to the questions above.

Read Exodus 32:1-14. What is the discussion about? While the Lord God and Moses are communing in the mountain and setting down the legal underpinnings of the “marriage” covenant between the Lord God and Israel, the people are doubting what is going on between the Lord God and Moses (v. 1). They resort to pagan religious ceremonies, melt their gold and make a huge golden calf to worship (vv. 2-5). As part of the pagan religious ceremonies, they engage in porneia (v. 6). The Hebrew word at the end of v. 6 (tsachaq) that is translated as “play” is a euphemism for frivolous sexual activity. In short, their activities degenerated into unrestrained sexual activity. This is reminiscent of Genesis 6:11, 12

(see also Ex. 32:7-9). Exodus 32:10 is a witness of the Lord God's state of mind regarding such grossly sinful and stiffnecked people.

What change to the covenant does the Lord God propose? Could God have maintained His covenant agreement only through the lineage of Moses? It seems that the obvious answer is "yes" because it is commonly believed that God, because of His unlimited power, can do anything He chooses to do. But ... if you know what happened prior to the Mt. Sinai experience, you might think twice before settling for that conclusion. Let's see what you should know already.

If you study Genesis 49 carefully, you find Jacob allotting blessings to his sons. One in particular is given to Judah (vv. 8-12): the "scepter" blessing. The "scepter" blessing is that of kingship (see Genesis 17:6, 16). Jacob says that this will be Judah's blessing "...until Shiloh comes..." (v. 10; *KJV*). The *RSV* translates it like this: "...until he comes to whom it [the scepter blessing] belongs..." (emphasis added). Paul calls Jesus Christ "...the seed...to whom the promise was made..." (Gal. 3:19). This is important understanding.

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

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

Now read Exodus 32:11, 12. Why did Moses think that it would be improper for God to carry out His threat of fulfilling His covenant only through Moses? The perception of other nations would promote and perpetuate the concept that the Lord God was duplicious in His dealings with Israel: He posed as their deliverer, when, all the while, His real intention was to take them to the desert

and destroy them like He had done Sodom and Gomorrah (see Isa. 1:9). If that rumor was spread about and accepted as being true, the Lord God would have been dubbed as being *duplicitous* and not worthy of the trust and worship of humans. *He would be considered unpredictably dangerous.*

In Exodus 32:13, why did Moses remind the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? In Genesis 17:5, the Lord God changed Abram's name to Abraham – which means “Father of many nations.” How could that prophetic name be fulfilled if He only made *Moses* “a great nation” – a *single great nation*? Of course, Moses was primarily concerned about the scorn that would be heaped upon the Lord God for destroying His own people, but destroying His people would also *negatively affect* the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the basis of remembering Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did the Lord God *repent* – that is, change His mind about the proposed disciplinary action of destroying all of Israel except Moses' tribe? Yes.

This problem with Israel presented itself shortly after the covenant with Israel had actually been proposed. Moses had been in the mountain receiving laws from the Lord God. However, Moses' reminder about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was certainly well-timed because *it saved the nation of Israel from certain destruction* – what would have amounted to a death penalty. Sodom and Gomorrah have not existed since their destruction (read Gen. 18 and 19 and Isa. 1:9).

So, what is the actual significance of this “marriage”? There are some salient ideas we must consider in order to understand the entire concept revealed from Genesis to Revelation:

- ❖ This “marriage” constituted the *Kingdom of God* (see Ex. 19:5, 6).
- ❖ In the Lord God's mind, “marriage” establishes an unbreakable unity, or *oneness* (see Gen. 2:21-24 and Matt. 19:4-6).

- ❖ An “unequal yoke” will not work because it works against the concept of an unbreakable unity (see 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).
- ❖ “Marriage” presupposes that any subsequent “family” will share all property and wealth, including that gained by inheritance.
- ❖ The only thing that changes the consequences of the law regarding “marriage” is death (see Rom. 7:1-3) – which allows the surviving partner to marry another partner.

After Israel agreed to enter into this “marriage” relationship with the Lord God (Exodus 19:7-9), she did not live up to the requirements set apart by the Lord God for the proper maintenance of the relationship – that is: the laws the Lord God gave to Moses. These laws would facilitate Israel’s knowledge and understanding of the Lord God’s thoughts and ways (Isa. 55:6-11; Gal. 3:21-25).

Read Ezekiel 16:15-34. To whom is this prophecy directed (vv. 2, 3)? In what or whom did Jerusalem (the city in which the King and High Priest dwelt) place her trust? This place is symbolic of the “head” of the nation. The “head” directs the body. If you have a sinful king and/or priesthood, it is going to affect the nation in many, many adverse ways. Did all of this harlotry/whoredom give the Lord God grounds for divorce? It is apparent here that the Lord God is intent on divorce, which would annul the covenant of “marriage” between Himself and the nation of Israel. Why? Because there was no oneness in their relationship.

Now to the point of this chapter. Read Galatians 3:17. Did the Lord God cancel His covenant with Abraham when He entered into a “marriage” covenant with Israel? Paul references the “marriage” between the Lord God and Israel in the expression “the law” – the “marriage” covenant based on the 10 Commandments (see Deut. 4:13). He shows that concluding a “marriage” covenant with Israel 430 years after His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:13-16; Ex. 12:40, 41) had absolutely no effect on the Abrahamic Covenant. In v. 18, the “inheritance” of which he speaks is the “inheritance” of the Abrahamic Covenant by Isaac, Israel, and the tribe of Joseph.

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

- ❖ Christ redeems us from the death penalty imposed by God’s law so that we can receive the promises bound up in the covenant He made with Abraham (vv. 13, 14).
- ❖ The covenant promises were made to Abraham and his Seed – whom Paul identifies as being Jesus Christ (v. 16). Perhaps this lends fuller meaning to Colossians 1:16: “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him...” (emphases added).
- ❖ The “marriage” covenant God made with Israel did not, could not, annul God’s covenant with Abraham because it was based on His promise, not on His laws (see also vv. 26-29). The “marriage” covenant with Israel was based on His 10 laws (Ex. 20:1-17; 24:7, 8; 31:13-18; 34:10, 12, 15, 27, 28) ... as will be His re-marriage to Israel (Jer. 31:31-34).

Conclusion

All of this indicates very clearly that the Lord God made two different covenants: one with *Abraham* and one with *Israel*. His covenant with Abraham was not a “marriage” covenant. His covenant with Israel was a “marriage” covenant. Both covenants are protected by His solemn, faithful word of truth. It is important to remember this as you consider the difference between the *Old* and *New* testaments ... especially since the new “marriage” covenant is based on better promises (Heb. 8:6-13). How is that possible? That will be discussed in a later context.

Review Questions

1. Why did the Lord God enter into a covenant with Israel that is separate from the covenant He made with Abraham?
2. Why would His covenant with Abraham not be sufficient to achieve His goals for all of mankind?
3. What is the overall objective of this chapter? Why is that objective important in the pursuit of God's truth?
4. Why did the Lord God "marry" Israel? What does Hebrews 2:16 teach us about this?
5. In Romans 9:16, why does Paul use Isaiah 28:16-19 to frame his comments about Israel's salvation through Jesus Christ in Romans 9, 10? How does this relate to Ezekiel 36:16-38?
6. In Romans 10, which three questions relate specifically to Israel? Why was Paul writing about this?
7. What do *knowledge*, *obedience*, and *belief* have to do with the "gospel"? Why is this related to Romans 1:18-25?
8. Explain the meaning of Paul's comment in Romans 2:9, 10: "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentiles. Why "to the Jew first"?"
9. How broadly was God's "good news" spread by ancient Israel? Use Romans 10:14-16 to frame your answer.
10. Did all of Israel forsake their God-given commission to "preach the gospel"? How would you explain Isaiah 1:9 in relationship to this topic? How did the Gentiles compare to Israel in this matter?
11. Explain the significance of Isaiah 65:8-10 in comparison to vv. 1-7.

12. Despite the preservation of a remnant of Israel, what did the Lord God decide to do through a non-Israelite people? Why did He decide to use these people? Use Romans 11:11 as part of your explanation.
13. What is the significance of the story in Acts 10?
14. What is significant about Matthew 23:37-39? Compare v. 38 to v. 39 in the explanation. Also use Jeremiah 7, 19, and 32:26-44.
15. Does Paul indicate in Romans 3:3, 4 that God would give up on the covenant just because of Israel's faithlessness? Explain.
16. Who is presently responsible for the maintenance of God's covenant? Base your answer on Romans 11:29.
17. Why would it not be reasonable for the Lord God to destroy all of Israel except Moses' line?
18. In Exodus 32:13, why did Moses remind the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
19. Relative to this incident, what is significant about the Lord God's repentance? Did He sin when He proposed His plan about Moses'? (Rely on the previous explanation of Numbers 23:19.)
20. What is the actual significance of the "marriage" between the Lord God and Israel??
21. Explain Galatians 3:13-17.
22. How comfortable are you with what you have learned thus far? Explain.

Chapter Six

The “Lost Sheep” Imagery

Read Matthew 10:1-15. All of this is Jesus Christ’s command to His freshly-chosen 12 disciples. Notice a couple of things in vv. 5-7:

- ❖ They are ***not*** sent to the *Gentiles*; they are sent to “the *lost sheep* of the house of *Israel*.”
- ❖ They are sent to preach the coming of the Kingdom of God to *the house of Israel* – a time when the Lord God’s *new covenant* will be concluded with her and their “re-marriage” can take place.

There is not even a *hint* here that He has cast *the house of Israel* aside ***forever***. In fact, *He is sending the disciples to evangelize them and recover them to Himself*. Jesus Christ repeats His primary mission regarding the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” to the Canaanite woman (a Gentile) in Matthew 15:24. He makes it clear that His focus is on *recovering Israel*. In Matthew 18:11-14, the statement about the “lost sheep” is aimed primarily at the house of Israel ... the “one sheep” representing the “remnant.” Luke 15 is primarily about recovering the house of Israel ... as is Luke 19.

From where did Jesus Christ get such imagery? Did He simply grab such a concept out of thin air? Or ... had that concept been *prophetically* placed in Scriptures in the *Old* Testament? Was He

drawing the “lost sheep” imagery from *prophecy*? If so, how does that blend with His statements in Matthew 5:17 and Isaiah 55:11 to support the concept that He is not a liar? The only “Scripture” available was whatever form the Old Testament had at the time.

Follow the Imagery

We can begin our “evidence gathering” in Psalm 23. David’s opening line is well-known to innumerable people: “The Lord is my shepherd.” It is well-known that David was a shepherd (1 Sam. 16:11). It should be no mystery that David is using that “shepherd” imagery from his own experiences. The remainder of Psalm 23 describes the benefits a “sheep” has under the care of a “good shepherd.” You can see a similar statement in Psalm 80:1: “Give ear, *O Shepherd of Israel*, you that leads Joseph [the inheritor of the Birthright] like *a flock...*” (emphases added).

Psalm 119:176 is a confession by the psalmist of a lapse in his faith and duty: “I have gone astray like a *lost sheep*; seek your servant; for I do not forget your commandments” (emphases added). It is interesting that the term “lost” is not used again from that point until Isaiah 49:20, 21 bring it into a *prophetic* setting.

The context of the entire chapter of Isaiah 49 focuses on “lost *Israel*” and the prophetic pledge by the Lord God *to recover them from among the nations where He has scattered them and to bring them back to the land, He promised them*. We will discuss later the terms of the *divorce* of the House of Israel – part of which includes being expelled from the “house” of the husband (read Deut. 4:23-40; 24:1).

Let’s put this into a context that supports the reference to *recovering* His “lost sheep.” *Remember that the Lord God became Jesus Christ*. This prophecy in Isaiah 49 is preceded by a prophecy in Isaiah 40 that is directed at *Judah*. Read the first 11 verses of Isaiah 40. Now pay close attention to the “shepherd/sheep” imagery in 40:11:

He shall feed His flock *like a shepherd*: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them to His bosom. And shall gently lead those that are with young.

That Shepherd is the Lord God. Jesus Christ makes that claim in John 10:11 based on the prophecy from Isaiah 40:11: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep” (emphases added). Read 10:12-16 where He distinguishes between the good shepherd and the hireling shepherd. The “other sheep” to which He refers in v. 16 are, no doubt, *the House of Israel*. You can see that He repeats the theme in v. 14 and adds: “[I] know my sheep, and am known of mine.” In other words, His true “sheep” know Him.

If you continue to read vv. 17-26, you can see that He makes a distinction between the *faithless* and *faithful* among the Jews – which you can also extend to the rest of Israel. He tells His detractors: “You do not believe *because you are not my sheep*” (emphases added). Now read vv. 27-30. He repeats the “shepherd theme.” When He mentions giving to His “sheep” *eternal life*, you should know that He is not speaking of *literal sheep*. In v. 30, His claim is not that He and the Father are one-and-the-same Being; He is telling the contentious Jews that He and the Father are in spiritual *agreement* about the matter (see Eph. 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:3).

The statement from Isaiah 49:11 follows a prophecy that suggests the *evangelization* of Judah with the “good news” of His return to reclaim His people. We can see in Matthew 3:1-3 that John the Baptist uses the prophecy in Isaiah 40:1-3 as a call to repentance and as a notice to the *Jews* about the coming Kingdom of God (see Acts 1:6). If you read down to v. 9, you can see that it is addressed to *Jerusalem* and *Judah* (see also John 1:19-23). Again, remember Matthew 5:17 and Isaiah 55:11 ... because this incident with John the Baptist is a testimony to the fact that *prophecy* specific to a “remnant” of Israel *was being fulfilled*.

Isaiah 44:28 shows that the Lord God was going to use Cyrus, who, at this point about 150 years before his time, was to be the prophesied king of the Medes and Persians. The prophecy casts him in the role of a “shepherd” who was to be sent by the Lord in the future to be a benefit to His “sheep.”

Isaiah 63 is a prophecy about the Lord God (who became Jesus Christ) remembering His people and being stained with the blood of His vengeance splattered on His garments. Both His people who sinned grievously against Him and those who abused His people had

been trampled in the process (vv. 1-6; compare this to Rev. 14:18-20; the entire process is described in Revelation 15-19). In Isaiah 63:11-13, we find the “good shepherd” and “lost sheep” imagery ... the “sheep” being “led” through the sea that was quietened for their sake (Psa. 23:2) ... led through the sea and the wilderness. That is imagery of a future “exodus” of His people.

The next reference comes from Jeremiah 50:4-8, 17-20. Notice how v. 4 speaks of Israel and Judah together seeking the Lord “in those days, and at that time.” Verses 1-3 are the reference point for this declaration. These verses are indicative of the ultimate and utter destruction of the Babylonish system (Dan, 2:44, 45). It not only includes the punishment of Babylon of that day; it also includes the prophetic panorama of God’s punishment of Babylon until it is ultimately destroyed (Rev. 16:19; Rev. 18). The event cited in Jeremiah 50:4-8 involves the aftermath of the war prophesied in Zechariah 14 and Isaiah 2.

Notice in particular the statements in Jeremiah 50:6, 17: “My people have been lost sheep...” and “Israel is a scattered sheep...” Notice in v. 6 that it is the fault of the “shepherds” of Israel that they became lost and scattered. In vv. 17-20, the various nations that scattered them are named. Verse 20 offers an interesting detail:

*In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the **iniquity** of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none [found]; and the sins of Judah [shall be sought for], and they shall **not** be found; for I will **pardon** them whom I **reserve** (emphases added).*

This signifies the evangelization of Israel and Judah to the understanding of and belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord God (Master or Owner) and Savior. If you take the expression from Ezekiel 37:13 (“And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you out of your graves”) and find the repetition of that expression addressed to all of Israel about knowing that He is the Lord, then you have a clue about the evangelization of Israel. By what means?

The term Lord in Hebrew, in multiple hundreds of places in the Old Testament, comes from the tetragrammaton YHWH of Exodus

3:13, 14. Some translate it to be *Jehovah/Yehovah* while others translate it to be *Yahweh/YaHWeH*. It identifies Him as being the *God of Israel* who delivered them from Egyptian slavery ... and with whom they entered the “marriage” covenant (Ex. 19:5, 6).

Pay close attention to Dr. C. I. Scofield’s comment about this name in his “Reference Edition” of the *King James Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909; p. 6):

*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 righteousness provided by the LORD GOD through sacrifice (Rom. 3. 21, 22). The first distinct *revelation* of Himself by His name *Jehovah* was in connection with the redemption of the covenant people out of Egypt (Ex. 3. 13-17; emphases added).

What you should understand when you read the expression “I am the Lord” is simple: “*I am your Savior, Redeemer, and Master.*” The Lord God, who became Jesus Christ, reminded Israel over and over again that **HE** was their only hope for receiving the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now, read Ezekiel 34 in its entirety. Here is a list of salient points you should understand from this prophecy:

- ❖ Verses 1-10 are the Lord God’s reproof of the “shepherds” He had appointed to assist in “feeding” His flocks and keeping them safe from harm. They did not treat the diseased, wounded, and sick ... or return those that were driven away by whatever incident ... or seek those who had wandered off and gotten lost. Instead, they were cruel and forceful against the sheep.
- ❖ The “shepherds” had fed *themselves*, eaten the sheep that were fed and fat, clothed themselves with their

wool, and neglected their responsibilities with regard to feeding the rest of the sheep.

- ❖ Because the “shepherds” were so negligent, the sheep wandered away over hill and mountain and suffered from wild animal depredations. None of the “shepherds” went out to search for and rescue the sheep.
- ❖ He will take the sheep away from the negligent “shepherds” and hold the “shepherds” liable for the losses. The “shepherds” will no longer derive their food and clothing from the sheep.

In vv. 11-16, the Lord God proclaims His intention to seek out and save His sheep. Notice v. 13:

And I will bring them out from the people [Hebrew = ‘am – the non-Israelite nations], and gather them from the countries, and will bring them back to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by rivers, and in all of the inhabited places of the country.

Conclusion

There is abundant evidence in Scripture that the Lord God’s “sheep” are identified as being the nation of Israel. After the division of the nation into two “houses,” each “house” continues to be referred to as being His “sheep.” It is evident that the same is true of the “remnant” theme. All of this is evidence of Jesus Christ’s determination to make good on His threats in Leviticus 26 (note especially vv. 21-24) and Deuteronomy 28. If you are not familiar with these chapters, you should read them thoughtfully and carefully. Remember: God is not a liar. These chapters are prophecy (Isa. 55:11). He will punish Israel, in whole or part, in order to bring her to repentance so He can cleanse her of her sins and take her back as His “wife” (Hos. 2:14-20). If you miss that pregnant point, then you do not fully and properly understand the scriptural revelation.

Those whom He shall reserve will be the faithful “remnant.” So, we see here the entwinement of the “lost sheep” theme with the “remnant” theme. From this point on, there should be no question about whether or not this is a reference to the “lost sheep” theme pursued by Jesus Christ in the Gospels of the New Testament. There should be no question about His plan to find them, clean them up, and “Christianize” them in preparation for the completion of the New Covenant He sealed with His Israelite Jewish disciples in Matthew 26:26-28 and the shedding of His blood during His trial and crucifixion. There should be no doubt that the ministry of reconciliation is aimed primarily at Israel, but ... the Gentiles will be beneficiaries of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His “wife” through salvation and inclusion in the New Heavens and New Earth. This “new covenant” that was sealed in Matthew 26:26-28 was the beginning of His quest to re-build His ekklesia: Israel (Matt. 16:18; Acts 7:38; Jer. 31:27-30).

Review Questions

1. Briefly explain the significance of Matthew 10:1-15.
2. Does Matthew 10:1-15 suggest in any way whatsoever that the Lord God had cast off Israel forever? Explain.
3. What is meant by the statement that Jesus Christ came to evangelize Israel through His disciples? Use James 1:1 as an example.
4. What do Matthew 15:24; 18:11-14; and Luke 15:19 have in common? Explain the significance of that commonality.
5. From where did Jesus Christ get such imagery? Did He simply grab such a concept out of thin air?
6. How had that concept been prophetically placed in Scriptures in the Old Testament? Will it fall uselessly to the ground?

7. Give a brief explanation of how Jesus drew the “lost sheep” imagery from prophecy?
8. Using Psalm 23 as a primary source, briefly explain the shepherd/sheep imagery used by David.
9. Why should you, at this point, understand that the “lost sheep” represent Israel? Use Isaiah 49 as a source for your answer.
10. What is the relationship between John 10:11 and Isaiah 40:11? How did Jesus use it relative to His messages to the Jews of His day?
11. Who are the “other sheep” that Jesus Christ claimed to have had?
12. Using the “lost sheep” theme as your guide, how did Jesus Christ distinguish between the “faithful” and the “faithless” among the Jews of His day?
13. How is the incident with John the Baptist a testimony to the fact that prophecy specific to a “remnant” of Israel was being fulfilled?
14. What future prophetic event is discussed in Isaiah 63? To which past event relative to Israel is it to be compared? What does this help you understand about the faulty reasoning of the “theological drift” perpetrated by the early church fathers?
15. What is the prophetic significance of Jeremiah 50?
16. How does Ezekiel 37:13 help you understand the meaning of the term Yahweh relative to Acts 4:12? Why is Yahweh Elohim called “the God of Israel”?
17. How could Ezekiel 34 be connected to the “theological drift” perpetrated by the “early church fathers”? How could you connect that with 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15?
18. In what way will the Gentiles benefit from Yahweh Elohim’s faithfulness to Israel (and Abraham)?

Chapter Seven

The “Remnant” Theme in the Old Testament

A “theme” is a recurring and/or identifying subject or topic that is laid down as an *idea* or *orienting principle* that is dominant and/or persistent in a story, argument, artistic rendering, music, *et cetera*. It will appear at frequent, regular intervals to reinforce the objective of the story, argument, artistic rendering, music, *et cetera*. As this idea pertains to *Scripture* and the story it reveals, the “remnant” theme is laid down as a fundamental part of Scripture’s objective regarding *the nation of Israel* (the *race*): *The “marriage” of the nation of Israel to the Lord God by covenant.*

Before we complete the reading of the book of Genesis, *Israel* is the focus of the Lord God’s special attention. Before we complete the study of the first five books of the Bible, we see *Israel* being specially chosen by the Lord God, *above all other nations in existence then or now*, to be His special, holy people – to be His “wife” by a binding, *eternal* covenant that is *sanctified* with holy laws and precious promises ... and *sealed* with blood. Throughout Scripture, the relationship between the Lord God/Jesus Christ and a *remnant* of Israel is a repeated theme.

If we fail to grasp the gravity of this relationship, then our attempts at correctly understanding much of Scripture will be lacking a very key element. The “remnant” theme is more dominant and recurring than many “Christians” have ever imagined. It has

much to do with the ekklesia that Jesus Christ will “marry.” Is this ekklesia merely an amorphous body of believers without a national or racial identity? Or, is it a specific national/racial entity that also encompasses other people? If so, how is that supposed to develop?

With that in mind, the objective of this chapter is to sort out the connection between this “remnant” and the “New Covenant” prophesied by several Old Testament prophets. Make no mistake about this New Covenant issue: It is focused on the fulfillment of the Lord God’s prophecies and covenants (Matt. 5:17-19). Because it is an event prophesied to be between the Lord God and His estranged “wife” Israel, of necessity it must be related to the pending “marriage” between Jesus Christ and the ekklesia He is presently building. *It is a serious theological error to miss, misunderstand, or ignore that relationship ... and the gifts and calling of God attached to it* (Rom. 11:29).

The Importance of the “Remnant” Theme

It is a good idea that you should get familiar with this “remnant” concept because it plays a very important part in the ultimate salvation of all of Israel (Rom. 11:25-27). Read the following passages from Isaiah to get an idea about what many more references to this “remnant” imply: Isaiah 10:20-22; 11:10-16; 37:4, 31, 32; and 47:3, 4. You can find numerous other Scriptures related to this “remnant” theme ... if you are willing to consult a reputable concordance. This “remnant” theme is important for understanding that not all of Israel was rebellious. The “problem with the people” involves a majority of Israel, but ... an obedient “remnant” remains faithful to the Lord God through the ages.

The Lord God, according to Isaiah 1:9, decided that the destruction of all of Israel (like He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) would not be fair or prudent (see also Ex. 32:1-14). After all, He had told Jacob that He would not leave him *until He had done that of which He had spoken to him* (Gen. 28:10-15). Will He be a liar – or will He persist in being true to His holy nature ... despite having only a “remnant” of Israel with whom to work? This is a question about whether or not God will be true to His holy nature (Rom. 3:4). If He will not, can He be trusted about anything He has promised?

Read Romans 9:25-29; 10:16-21; and 11:1-7. Pay attention to Paul's use of the "remnant" theme. Throughout subsequent history from Isaiah, the Lord God has preserved for Himself, *to this very day*, a "remnant" of *Israel* in order to fulfill His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). He knows exactly *who* they are. He knows exactly *where* they are. After all, they are His *ekklesia*.

Christ's comments to His Israelite Jewish disciples in Matthew 10:6; 15:24; and 18:11 are references to that "remnant" of Israel who will emerge throughout history as His true, *Christianized* people to ultimately be *re-married* to Him just before He conquers the nations of the world and sets up God's Kingdom on the earth (Rev. 19:7-9).

Isaiah 2:1-5 is a prophecy about the effects of the Kingdom of God upon the nations of the earth once Jesus Christ and the Saints (His True Church; Rev. 19:7, 8) have conquered them (see also Dan. 2:44, 45; Rev. 11:15). Notice in Isaiah 2:2, 3 that His government will be established in *Jerusalem* and exalted above all other national entities. Notice also what the nations of the earth will be taught:

- ❖ God's thoughts, ways, and laws;
- ❖ God's way of settling national conflicts; and
- ❖ God's determination to have lasting peace and prosperity among His creation.

Would you say that, historically speaking, so-called "Christian" nations have been successful in that regard? Sad to say, their success has been severely limited – at best. But this is not the *end* of His *reclamation of Israel* to once again be His people. *The first resurrection is merely the "ruling class" of the Kingdom* (Rev. 5:10; 20:4-6). But ... among the *humans* who survive the conflict prophesied in Zechariah 14 (see v. 16), there will be many *Israelites* who *survive* in the flesh and will not be changed from flesh to spirit to rule with Jesus Christ when He returns. They will be *subjects* of the Kingdom.

This is important for you to understand because of Jesus Christ's instructions to His disciples in Matthew 19:27, 28. Jesus tells them that *they* will sit upon 12 thrones and assist Him in judging the 12

tribes of Israel in His Kingdom. What this strongly implies is relatively simple ... once you understand the “big picture” of God’s plan: There will be many among Israel who will not be among the firstfruits. But ... Judah will have part in the ruling realm of the Kingdom over the 12 tribes of Israel (those still in the flesh who survive the war prophesied in Zechariah 14; see Matt. 19:27-30).

Some of the invaders of Israel, at the time of the Lord God’s battle against the nations who will be intent on destroying Israel, also will be among the survivors spoken of in v. 16 (*KJV* = “every one that is left of all the nations”; emphases added). Those who are called “all the saints with you” in v. 5 will be those who will be changed from flesh to spirit at Christ’s return (1 Cor. 15:50-54; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 6:12-7:8; 14:1-5).

Those who remain in the flesh as the survivors of this climactic battle will be the subjects of the Kingdom. Jesus Christ and His saints will rule over them. Christianized Gentiles also will be among the “ruling realm.” They will probably be rulers over the various surviving Gentile nations who will also become the flesh-and-blood subjects of the Kingdom once it is established. The great honor is that Gentiles, in part, will also have received salvation in order to participate in God’s plan to also bring the surviving flesh-and-blood Gentiles into His family. God is not a liar.

Ezekiel 37 shows how the dead of Israel also will be resurrected later in human bodies, separated into their various tribes in the reconstituted nation, and ruled over by David. This resurrection will occur at the end of the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:5-15) and will include additional Gentiles. By connecting the “dots,” one could reasonably infer that the 12 disciples will serve under David (king over all of Israel) as kings of individual tribes of Israel during the first 1,000 years of the Kingdom. They and all other True Christian firstfruits will have been changed from flesh to spirit at Christ’s return. This resurrection at the end of the 1,000 years (see Rev. 20:4-15) will bring to completion of the “ministry of reconciliation” and the “times of refreshing” and “restitution of all things ... spoken by the mouth of all His prophets since the world began” (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Acts 3:19-21).

That being the prophetic case, we also should be able to understand how it all comes around to the Kingdom being restored

to **Israel** again (Acts 1:6). As we saw above from Isaiah 2:1-5, the “gospel” will go out to the entire world, during that 1,000 years, from Jerusalem ... where Jesus Christ will set up His throne after His return (Zech. 14:9; Isa. 2:2). David and Christ’s disciples will be part of that first resurrection (compare 1 Cor. 15:23 to Job 14:13). They and “all the saints [Christianized Israelites and Gentiles] with you [Christ]” (Zech. 14:5) will be the kings, priests, judges and lords who will execute the rule of Jesus Christ over all nations during the 1,000 years (see Rev. 5:10; 20:4-6; Dan. 7:13, 14). Quite naturally, the Gentiles who have become firstfruit Christians will share in the responsibility of rulership of the “nations” with Christ during that 1,000 years.

Following the Evidence

The term “remnant” is used numerous times in both the Old and New Testaments. Refer to an exhaustive concordance to see this for yourself. Not every mention of the term is aimed at the nation of Israel. In some cases, it refers to the “House of Israel” (the 10 tribes constituting Samaria); in others, it refers to the “House of Judah” (the three tribes constituting the “Jews”). The point of this is simple: The prophecies regarding the “New Covenant” refer to both “Houses” of the nation of Israel in one way or another (see Jer. 31:31-34). When the “New Covenant” is completed, all of Israel will have been restored to the Lord God (the One who became Jesus Christ) as His “wife.”

The first mention of “remnant” as it relates to anyone in Israel is found in 1 Kings 12. You have to have read 1 Kings 11 in order to understand the context. Solomon had sinned grievously against the Lord God by accumulating 700 wives and 300 concubines who were all devotees of various pagan gods. Solomon built holy shrines for them and put idols dedicated to those gods inside the Temple. For this, the Lord God said that He was going to “...rend the kingdom from [him] and give it to one of his servants” (1 Kings 11:11). He did not immediately take it away from Solomon “...for David [his] father’s sake” (v. 12), but postponed it to be taken from Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. You can read that account in 1 Kings 11:26-39.

Ten tribes of the nation of Israel were given to Jeroboam, an Ephraimite whom Solomon had appointed as a "...ruler over all the charge of the House of Joseph" (v. 28). The prophet Ahijah certified this determination of the Lord God in vv. 29-38 with the promise that Jeroboam would receive the same kind of legacy as David *if he was faithful in his rulership over those 10 tribes*. We would do well to pay attention to what the Lord God committed to David because of his faithfulness to Him. It, too, has a major part in this discussion.

In 2 Samuel 7, the prophet Nathan is dispatched by the Lord God to give David a message of great importance. It begins with the Lord God's comments about David's desire to build Him a Temple in Jerusalem (vv. 1-7). The Lord God had never chosen to dwell in a "fixed" building. In vv. 8-16, the Lord God makes a momentous commitment to David and his descendants: He is going to perpetuate David's "house" and "kingdom" *forever*. In vv. 18, 19, David is over-awed at this great honor because *forever* is a very long stretch of time – in fact, it is *endless* ages of time.

Now read vv. 23-29. What is emphasized here by David? Take note of David's assertion that the Lord God took *Israel* (that is: the entire nation) to Himself as a specially chosen people – to be their God *forever* (see especially vv. 24, 25). You can understand the enormity of this when you read 2 Samuel 5:1-5 and realize that this great honor was given to David to be king over *all of Israel*.

Let's connect a couple of "dots" at this point. In Luke 1:32, the angel announced to Mary, a young virgin *from the lineage of David* ... and, therefore, a *Jew* (Matt. 1:1-18), that her Son will sit upon *the throne of David*. What happens if we connect those "dots" to Revelation 11:15? Can you figure from that how the throne of *David* gets perpetuated into *forever*? Such is the essence of the "evidence" by which we seek to *prove* the point about the Lord God's fidelity to *Israel*. Can you connect another "dot" in the prophecy in Ezekiel 37:11-28? What would it *reveal* to you ... now that you understand the other "dots" we have connected?

So, the division of Israel into two "houses" does not *invalidate* what the Lord God *ultimately* intends to do with her throughout history. If Jeroboam is faithful and his throne is secured *forever*, like David's, it will not matter in the long run if there are two "houses" of Israel because *all of Israel* will *ultimately* be "connected" to Jesus

Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. David and Jeroboam would be two faithful kings and lords under Jesus Christ ... and *all of Israel* would be “connected” to Him and one another through faith and service to the same King and Lord. There is nothing *flimsy* about those assertions ... *if God is not a liar*.

Now look at 1 Kings 12:23. Who are the “remnant” being addressed here? Judah and Benjamin. Why? Because they are the only ones left of the House of Judah after the Lord God takes the House of Israel away from Rehoboam. If you read vv. 26-33, you will see that Jeroboam grew paranoid about whether or not the House of Israel would remain faithful to *his* rulership. Why? Because *Jerusalem* was the place where the Lord God had placed His *name* ... the place where all faithful Israelites were to go to observe the Lord God’s feasts (Lev. 23). If his 10 tribes went there to do this, would they yearn to be joined again to *David’s* “house”? Does this paranoia indicate that Jeroboam trusted the Lord God?

This paranoia drove Jeroboam back to the Golden Calves and Baalism. He got rid of the *Levitical* priesthood and appointed “the lowest of the people” to be his priesthood (v. 31). He, then, assumed the position of the high priest, offered sacrifices at an altar, and changed the dates of the feasts set by the Lord God so they would not coincide with those of the House of Judah (vv. 32, 33) ... especially the feasts in the seventh month of the year: Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. His chance at an eternal “house” like David’s was short-lived. The *Levites* among the House of Israel left in droves and associated themselves with the House of Judah. Even then, the House of Judah was still the “remnant” referred to in v. 23: Judah, Benjamin, and, now, Levi.

The evidence trail takes us to the next mention of a “remnant.” First Kings 14:10 speaks of those “left of Israel” and a “remnant of the house of Jeroboam.” This has to do only with Jeroboam and the House of Israel. The House of Judah is not included in this. Jeroboam’s paranoia led to punishment from the Lord God (1 Kings 13:1-10). Despite a personal visit from a prophet of God, Jeroboam set his mind to continue in his treachery (vv. 33, 34).

When you read the list of the kings of the House of Israel given in the books of Kings and Chronicles, you will read a frequent comment like that given in 2 Kings 10:29: “...From the sins of

Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made [the House of] Israel to sin, [the king involved] departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan” (see 1 Kings 12:28-30). Most succeeding kings of Israel persisted in that idolatry and the pursuit of various forms of Baalism.

If you read the entire context of 1 Kings 14, you will see that a few things of importance are taking place:

- ❖ The Lord God is removing Jeroboam from the throne of Israel (vv. 7-10).
- ❖ Jeroboam’s sick child is going to die as part of Jeroboam’s punishment (vv. 1-6, 12).
- ❖ The House of Israel is going to suffer dire consequences because most of them willingly followed Jeroboam in his sin, but ... all but a “remnant” of them would be affected. That “remnant” would be scattered beyond the river [Euphrates] and given up by the Lord God (vv. 15, 16) – the rest would be destroyed (v. 10).

Now, let’s look at 1 Kings 22:46. This reference is to a “remnant of sodomites.” These “sodomites” are mentioned in 1 Kings 14:24 as men who “...did according to the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.” You can understand this more fully by reading Leviticus 18:1 through 20:27.

They were professional, homosexual, male prostitutes who were housed next to the Temple of God in Jerusalem and active in the sexual orgies in the “high places” dedicated to Baal and Aphrodite throughout Israel (Lev. 18:22-24; 20:13, 15, 16). The term *sodomites* identifies them as *homosexuals*. You can read more about them in 2 Kings 23:7 when Josiah destroyed their living quarters over *100 years* later. Their community was very active among Israel and Judah at the time – especially in the worship of Baal and Aphrodite (the “goddess of love”: think of the word *aphrodisiac*). They are a “remnant” because the House of Israel was reduced to a “remnant.” They, most definitely, are not included in the “remnant” theme regarding salvation (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

In 2 Kings 19:4, 30, 31, we are told of a “remnant” of the House of Judah. The basis of this remark is found in Assyria’s attack on Judah after Assyria had taken the House of Israel completely out of their territory in Samaria (see 2 Kings 17:5-24; 18:9-13). You should notice in 2 Kings 17:13, 18, 19 that the House of Judah was as bad as, if not worse than, the House of Israel (see also Jer. 19:5; 32:35). It is a fact of scriptural history that the Lord God continually reduced the ranks of Israel and Judah because of their sinful ways.

In 2 Chronicles 30, King Hezekiah of Judah sent out a letter to “all Israel and Judah” to invite them to Jerusalem “to keep the Passover of the Lord God of Israel” (v. 1). Because the priests were not sanctified to keep the Passover at its assigned time in the first month of the year (Lev. 23:5), they had to plan for the Passover to be kept during the 14th day of the second month of the year (see Num. 9:9-13). The House of Israel and the House of Judah had not kept the Passover together for a very long time (v. 5).

Pay close attention to v. 6 where the Chronicler writes that the members of the House of Israel that were invited to Jerusalem were a remnant that had “escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.” It is also important to understand that that “remnant” occupied their properties in Samaria ... their homeland that the Assyrians turned over to foreigners when they took all but the poor away into captivity (see 2 Kings 17). The message included an admonition to this remnant of the House of Israel *to return to the Lord so that He would return to them* (vv. 7-9). Hezekiah also admonishes this “remnant” from the House of Israel to be faithful to the covenant made anciently with their forefathers.

Read 2 Kings 21 in order to understand the continued problem with the House of Judah. Note how King Manasseh restored the idolatry in the high places and put idols of pagan gods in the Temple – after his father Hezekiah had gotten rid of them during his reign. Verses 7-9 explain the Lord God’s reaction to the entire sorry mess. He explains that He had agreed to allow the Temple to be built and legitimized it by placing His name there forever. He had also vowed to David to keep Israel in the land and never allow them to be moved again. But ... He also says that such an agreement regarding the nation of Israel to perpetually occupy the land was conditional upon their obedience “to do according to all the law that my servant

Moses commanded them” (v. 8; see also Lev. 26 and Deut. 28). Their rebellion required disciplinary actions (1 Sam. 15:23).

What did the Lord God determine to do about this continued rebellion? Read all of 1 Samuel 15 to understand the serious nature of this sin. Read Deuteronomy 18:9-14 to understand the punishment for such a sin: Israel would be driven out of the land because they would have continued the sins for which the heathens had been driven out.

King Manasseh knew what had happened to the House of Israel. In 2 Kings 21:12-16, you can read the judgment for yourself. Notice that v. 14 speaks of the Lord God forsaking “...the remnant of my inheritance.” Judah was now going to be faced with removal from the land by the Babylonians. Jeremiah 25:1-18 reveals 70 years of impending Babylonian punishment for Judah. Jehoiakim was Manasseh’s great-grandson. Jeremiah pronounced this curse upon Judah about 37 years after Manasseh’s death.

You should be able to understand the nature of the destruction of Jerusalem from 2 Kings 25:8-17. Verse 11 mentions a “...remnant of the multitude” being carried away by Nebuzar-aden, as well as “the rest of the people that were left in the city” being among that “remnant.” The “poor of the land” were left and made to be vineyard keepers and farmers for the Babylonian occupiers.

Now read 2 Chronicles 34:9. During Josiah’s reign over Judah (vv. 1, 2), he purged Baalism from both the House of Judah and the remaining “remnant” of the House of Israel in Samaria (vv. 3-7). This was similar to the purge executed by his grandfather Hezekiah 80+ years earlier (see 2 Chron. 31:1). Josiah’s purge was prophesied to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 13:1-3 ... about *100 years* before Josiah was born. The destruction of Jeroboam’s altar was fulfilled by King Josiah in 2 Kings 23:15-18. In the 18th year of his reign, we see that Josiah commissioned the Levites to collect moneys from both “Houses” of Israel – referring to “Manasseh and Ephraim, and all of the remnant of Israel” separate from the “remnant” known as Judah, Benjamin, and Levi.

About 50 to 70 years after the Babylonians took the House of Judah captive and moved them to Babylon, there began a slow release of various parties to return to Judah – an action of God prophesied in Jeremiah 25:12. The book of Ezra chronicles some of

that history. The first release was done by the Persian king, Cyrus (Ezra 1, 2). Read Isaiah 44:21 through 45:6. This was prophesied by the Lord God through Isaiah over *150 years* earlier. Ezra 3:8 refers to these returnees as being a “remnant.” Several colonies of the House of Judah would follow over the next few decades.

Even then, they were recalcitrant and rebellious. Ezra 9 is an example of this problem. Read closely vv. 8-15 and note the mention of a “remnant” in v. 8 and “no remnant” in v. 14. This spirit of rebellion seems to have been an identifying characteristic of the entire Israelite nation! They would fall into grievous sin and be punished. They would repent and be rescued. Then ... they would fall back into grievous sin. It is no wonder that there was only a “remnant” who were faithful ... a “remnant” that the Lord God was willing to save and use as a *holy leavening agent* to eventually affect the entire nation (see Matt. 13:33; 1 Cor. 5:6).

About 13 years later, Nehemiah received news about the “remnant” that had returned to Judah (Neh. 1:3). Because of this news, Nehemiah prayed a most earnest prayer to the Lord God about what he would commit his life to do to help the Lord God reclaim His people (vv. 4-11). Nehemiah 2 explains the Lord God’s answer to Nehemiah’s prayer. He and a small contingent of the House of Judah (another “remnant”) were allowed to go back. Nehemiah was made governor of the territory so he would have the authority to rebuild Jerusalem and re-establish Judah in their territory without interference from the surrounding Gentile nations.

We will leave the story there and go to Isaiah 1:1-9. Isaiah prophesied between about 742 to 700 BC. So, Isaiah 1:1-9 would have been written in the 740s to the 730s BC. His rehearsal of the Israelite problem (both “Houses”) in these first nine verses leads to one terse, frightening conclusion:

Except the Lord of hosts had left us a *very small remnant*, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah (emphases added).

Among Isaiah (15x), Jeremiah (19x), Ezekiel (6x), Joel (1x), Amos (3x), Micah (6x), Habakkuk (1x), Zephaniah (4x), Haggai (2x), and Zechariah (2x) the term *remnant* is used 59 times ... most

of which applies to either Judah, Israel, or both. The point of all of this evidence is to punctuate the importance of this “remnant theme.” If you go through these references and read the foremost idea involved in them, you will find, in one way or another, the commitment of the Lord God to use this very small remnant to preserve His covenant relationship with the entire nation of Israel. Our question should be whether or not that “remnant” has a place in New Testament theology. We will see the importance of this in various places in the New Testament. The greater question is this: Will you believe it?

Review Questions

1. Why is the term “remnant” considered to be a theme in the Old Testament?
2. Who is the focus of this particular theme in the Old Testament?
3. What is the consequence if we fail to understand the gravity of the relationship between the “remnant theme” and the nation Israel?
4. Why would this theme affect the New Testament writings? How is it related to Jesus Christ and His *ekklesia*? What part does Romans 11:29 play in this theme?
5. What is significant about the Lord God’s covenant with David relative to Israel’s future? Use Jeremiah 33:14-26 in your answer.
6. Why was Israel not allowed to perpetually occupy the Promised Land? Did that punishment mean that they would not/could not be recovered by the Lord God and ultimately returned to the land? Explain.
7. What does it mean that the Lord God would use the “remnant” as “a holy leavening agent to eventually affect the entire nation”? Use Matthew 13:33 and 1 Cor. 5:6 as reference points.
8. Briefly explain the importance of Isaiah 1:1-9.

Chapter Eight

The “Remnant” Theme in the New Testament

How is the *remnant* theme connected to the New Testament? It is not out of the high, thin air that the Apostle Paul takes up the mention of the “remnant” theme in Romans 9:25 through 11:36. Two of the most profound conclusions that Paul came to in this discussion are found in Romans 11:5-7 and vv. 25-29. Paul, no doubt, was aware of this overarching theme in Scripture – in numerous prophecies. It had resided there for *centuries* before Paul drew the following conclusions in those verses in Romans 11:

- ❖ *vv. 5-7* – The *remnant* [of Israel] *according to the election of grace* (that still existed in Paul’s day) had obtained what Israel as a nation had *not* obtained: Being the recipient of the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah and others.

- ❖ *vv. 26, 29* – *All of Israel* [ultimately] *will be saved* because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God does not lie, and He has not changed His mind.

What kind of conclusion shall we draw from this *evidence* relative to the New Covenant spoken of by Jesus Christ in Matthew

26:26-28? What was He up to when He chose 12 disciples from the tribes of Judah (Judah, Benjamin, and Levi) whom He would commission to again build up His ekklesia (Matt. 16:18; Jer. 31:22-28) and be kings over the 12 tribes of Israel in His Kingdom (Matt. 19:27, 28)? What does it mean that He had only about 120 disciples when He ascended to the Father's right hand in Acts 1:1-6, 15? Is that His remnant of Israel? They were, after all, His ekklesia.

When Peter wrote his letters to the circumcision (see his commission in Gal. 2:7), why did he draw his imagery of them being "as lively stones ... built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" from Exodus 19:5, 6? Read 1 Peter 2 in its entirety and see if you can discover the invitation to the circumcision (Israel and Judah) to return to the Lord in the New Covenant relationship. It is there. Remember the evidence. What evidence do we find in James 1:1?

The Gentiles were not being left out of God's plan of salvation. That is evident in many post-resurrection accounts involving men like Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. Paul recognizes and admits in Romans 11:11-15 that God allowed Israel to stumble and fall in order for the Gentiles to receive a calling to salvation. In the process, the faithful Gentiles would provoke Israel to jealousy and facilitate her repentance and recovery to the Lord ... in effect, fulfilling Hosea 2:14-20.

Now read Romans 11:16-24. This section of Scripture bears some serious contemplation because Paul bears witness to the ultimate, full recovery of Israel (vv. 25-32). Even without my commentary at this point, you should be impressed at how wrongheaded Ignatius, *Barnabas*, and Justin Martyr were in their theology of separation!

You also should be able to understand that "branches" of Israel were "broken off" the "holy root" (Rom. 11:17). What do you have left if only a "holy root" is what represents Israel ("the firstfruit"; v. 16)? Paul's point in this discussion is to explain that the "remnant according to the election of grace" is what remains of faithful Israel (vv. 1-5). And ... it is into the "holy root" that a certain number of Gentiles are being grafted before Jesus Christ returns (v. 25). Verse 18 is aimed at the Gentiles:

Do not boast against the branches [*neither* the ones who remain *nor* the ones who were broken off]. *If you boast against them*, then you must remember that *you do not support the root; the root supports you* (emphases added).

That statement, in and of itself, should solve the problem of the *theology of separation* perpetrated by the Church “fathers.” There is *nothing* in their *theology of separation* that allows consideration for this concept of a “remnant according to the election of grace” being the ones who have obtained what *Israel* (the nation and race) sought in the covenant (vv. 5-7). The “fathers” claim is that *Israel/Jews* have been *completely and irrevocably replaced* by the Gentiles. All that was formerly promised to Israel has now been *transferred* to the Gentiles. That sounds like someone has taken up *boasting* against the “root.” Their admission that *some* from Israel and Judah will be saved circumvents God’s *oath* and *promise*. Saying that the *Jews* will receive the earth and *Christians* will receive heaven, as the Dispensationalists do, reveals a gross ignorance of God’s word and character. Why? They *tacitly* admit that *God is a liar*.

Paul explicitly says in v. 7 that the “rest [the majority of Israel] were *temporarily* blinded.” Such a statement suggests that God did not *completely* abandon Israel because of their wickedness. Evidently, the “remnant” theme *proves* that God did not abandon *all of them*. Evidently, the prophecies of Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 37 and 39; and Hosea 2:14-20 show God’s intentions toward *the rest of Israel* (the “branches” that were “broken off”) in the future at the end of the ages (before and after the return of Jesus Christ). The faithful *remnant* represents the *firstfruits* of that action. The discussion below is for the purpose of demonstrating how God’s plan of salvation *really* works ... and how the *remnant theme* is involved in that plan.

The “Firstfruits”

To what is Paul referring in Romans 11:16 when he speaks of the “firstfruit” being holy? Remember the difference between *cardinal* numbers (1 2 3 ...) and *ordinal* numbers (1st 2nd 3rd ...). With *cardinal* numbers, there is no necessity after the number *one*

to expect a two, three, *et cetera*. However, after the ordinal number first, there *is* an expectation of at least the second ... and the possibility of *third, fourth, et cetera*. That being the case, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23 suggest such an ordinal arrangement for the resurrections from the dead: “every person in his/her own order.” You can see a similar thought in Job 14:13, 14: “...appoint me a set time, and remember me ... all the days of my appointed time I will wait until my change comes” (emphases added).

What idea does Paul posit here? It is simple if you follow the logic of the answer. Jesus Christ was the first dead human being to be raised from the dead to eternal life (look back at 1 Cor. 15:20). We know that Scripture tells us that some dead humans were brought back to human life (see John 11:1-45; Heb. 11:35). But, *Jesus Christ was changed from flesh to spirit when He was resurrected from the dead*. That was Paul’s testimony in his trial before Agrippa (Acts 26). In Acts 26:19-21, he says that he preached God’s truth about repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to both Jews and Gentiles. What did he preach and why?

In vv. 22, 23, Paul uses some very interesting logic on which to base his fundamental message “to small and great.” Pay very close attention to how Paul frames his defense because it reflects greatly upon the theology of separation:

- ❖ He declared that he was teaching what the prophets and Moses said would happen: that is, Christ would be raised to eternal life from the grave in order to save mankind from eternal death (v. 22; harmonize this with Matt. 5:17).
- ❖ Jesus Christ would do three basic things: (1) He would suffer [for the sins of mankind]; (2) He would be the first human to be raised from the dead to eternal life; and (3) He would show light to the people (essentially, to Israel and Judah) and to the Gentiles (v. 23).

Again, this testimony destroys the theology of separation. Why did Paul make the distinction between “the people” and “the Gentiles”? He obviously was not using both expressions to name the

Gentiles! Read Luke 2:32 and cross-reference it with Isaiah 42:6, 7 and 49:6. *Paul did not state this out of thin air!* Paul's testimony also establishes the basis for his claim that there will be an order to the resurrections of the dead to eternal life. *You can understand that from John's testimony in Revelation 14:1-4 and 20:4-13.* The resurrection to eternal life is the subject of Jesus Christ's discussion with Nicodemus in John 3:3-8. Jesus describes that process as being born again into a spirit life.

It also presupposes that there will be more than one resurrection from the dead in any form! Ezekiel 37 is an example of the resurrection of the dead that will occur at the end of the 1,000-year period revealed in Revelation 20:7-13. This second resurrection will include everyone not resurrected in the first resurrection when Jesus Christ returns (Matt. 24:27-31; 1 Cor. 15:50-54; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 14:14-16). They, however, will not be raised to spirit life; they will be flesh-and-blood, but ... the purpose for this will be for salvation, not for destruction (see our book *A Statement of Beliefs*, pp. 79, 80 and the Bible Study Course, Lesson 12, pp. 13, 14).

All of this was prophesied in the Old Testament. How? It should not be a "mystery" that the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath and the holy days of Leviticus 23 are symbolic of God's plan of salvation and the process by which God will reconcile all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth to Himself through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-14; Phil. 2:5-13; Col.1:9-23).

In the Old Testament, the Lord God is repeatedly referred to, relative to Israel, as the God of our salvation (see Psa. 3:8; 25:5 for examples). This Lord God is the one who became Jesus Christ (John 5:46). It is amazing how that point is either ignorantly missed or not known among "New Testament" Christians! Compare Isaiah 45:21 to Acts 4:12. What is the connection between them? What is the importance of Isaiah 44:21-28? Is the Lord God a liar?

In Leviticus 23, the first holy day is the weekly seventh-day Sabbath (v. 3). Hebrews 3, 4 discuss the symbolism involved: a place and a time for entering the "rest" (Sabbath) that God intends to bring through Jesus Christ. It was there from the beginning (Gen. 2:1-3; Mark 2:27, 28). Notice in Leviticus 23 that there are seven "yearly" Sabbaths involved in the holy days (vv. 7, 8, 21, 24, 28, 32, 36). Also, read vv. 38, 39. In John 19:31, the Sabbath that is

mentioned refers to the yearly Sabbath of Leviticus 23:6, 7, not the weekly Sabbath. Now, read Exodus 31:13-17. How does this harmonize with Matthew 5:17 and Isaiah 55:11? Is the Lord God a liar?

John 19:31 is often used to refute the doctrine that claims that Jesus Christ was crucified on Friday. He was actually crucified on Wednesday ... and the first day of Unleavened Bread (a “yearly” Sabbath) followed on Thursday. Use Matthew 12:40 to prove whether or not Jesus Christ was resurrected at sunrise on Sunday morning. Take into consideration the information found in Luke 23:50-56 and John 19:31-42:

- ❖ Luke 23:50-56 shows that His body was taken down before sundown because it happened during the preparation day for the oncoming “yearly” Sabbath. That was during the afternoon of His crucifixion.

- ❖ John 19:31-42 shows that the Jews did not want the bodies to be left on the crosses during the oncoming Sabbath. In v. 31, John makes a parenthetical note that the oncoming Sabbath was “a high day” ... which is another way of stating the difference between a “weekly” Sabbath and a “yearly” Sabbath. He reiterates this in v. 42.

This event did not occur on Friday. How do you prove that? If you count three days and three nights from Wednesday at sundown, when He was placed in his tomb, you get His resurrection on Saturday at sundown. If you count from Friday at sundown, the three days and three nights would place it at Monday at sundown ... not Sunday morning at sunrise. In Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus prophesies that He will be three days and three nights in the grave.

Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, April 25, AD 31. The first day of Unleavened Bread was on Thursday, April 26, AD 31. So, on Saturday, April 28, AD 31, just before sundown ... three days and three nights after His burial ... Jesus Christ became the first of the firstfruits from the dead. No other human in history had ever been raised from death (or spontaneously changed while still alive) to

eternal life (see John 3:12, 13; 17:5). Even if you use His death at about 3:00 pm, the three days and nights end about 3:00 pm on Saturday afternoon.

Read Matthew 28:1. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were at the tomb well before sunrise on the first day of the week. Mark describes it as being at sunrise; Luke describes it as being very early in the morning; and John says that it was “yet dark.” If you contend that the sunrise service on Easter marks the time at which Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then you are practicing a religious tradition (see Matt. 15:1-9), not a scriptural truth. Why? Because Mary Magdalene and the other Mary discovered that Jesus Christ was not in the tomb before daybreak while it was yet dark. The folded garments demonstrate that He was in no hurry to leave the tomb. The great stone having been rolled away was not done by human force. It was not done to allow Jesus Christ to exit the tomb; it was done to allow the disciples to enter the tomb (see John 20:19, 26).

When do the rest of the firstfruits get raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:23)? James 1:18 describes those who are “brought into being through the word of truth” (*BAG*; p. 93) as being “...a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (emphases added). Such people of true faith are described in Hebrews 11, beginning with Abel (v. 4). Verses 39, 40 demonstrate that principle by affirming that “they without us should not be made perfect.” In other words, Paul is again refuting the theology of separation concept. He very plainly states that the Old Testament Saints and the New Testament Saints will make up the smaller, early firstfruit “harvest” into eternal life through Jesus Christ. Enoch and Elijah are among that group. That harmonizes with John 3:13 that no human has gone through this “born again” experience except Jesus Christ. It also should be understood that John 3:12, 13 does not prove that heaven is the reward of the saved. It merely states where Jesus presently resides.

If we harmonize Revelation 7 with Revelation 14:1-4, then we can understand that the firstfruits will be raised from the dead or “changed in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15: 50-54; 1 Thes. 4:13-18) to eternal life when Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God. Until then, as Job 14:10-15 indicates, we will lie dead in our graves and wait for our appointed time to be resurrected.

In the Revelation 7 account, you should be able to see that the “remnant” of Israel and the “great multitude” are the firstfruits from Israel and the Gentiles. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul shows that flesh-and-blood humans cannot be in the “ruling realm” of the Kingdom. All who are in the first resurrection will be made rulers under Jesus Christ over the nations of the Kingdom. You can see this in Zechariah 14:5-9; Daniel 7:13-27; Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 19:27-30; Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:4-6. The 144,000 from Israel figuratively represent the ekklesia of God that Jesus Christ began to rebuild during His earthly ministry (see 1 Pet. 2:5-10; Rev. 19:7-9). Isaiah 2:1-5; 65:17-25; Zech. 14:9-19 show that humans can be ruled over in the Kingdom of God.

The Gentiles in that “great multitude” are part of that ekklesia because they will have been “grafted” into the holy root. Read Romans 11:16-25 with that in mind. The language suggests that the faithful “firstfruit” Gentiles acquire citizenship in Israel and are made to be participants in the “ruling realm” of the Kingdom of God (see Eph.2:10-21). The Gentiles do not replace Israel.

How could the Gentile Church “fathers” have been so blind to God’s plan and purpose for the firstfruits? It is because their theology of separation was based on a faulty paradigm: The House of Israel was “lost” to the world and the House of Judah had been expelled from Jerusalem and scattered without remedy ... Jerusalem and the Temple having been destroyed. These factors were their “proof” that God had totally and irrevocably abandoned His covenant with all of Israel (the nation and race). It appears that such a paradigm requires that the “law” and “prophets” should be “nailed to the cross” and considered null and void (see Matt. 5:17-19). However, the ordinal number concept enables us to understand more fully the true role of the “law” and the “prophets.”

The “Secondfruits”

Ezekiel 37 should be understood in the sense of an ultimate outcome of the first and second resurrections. Revelation 7 tells us about the firstfruits from Israel and the Gentiles. Matthew 19:27-30 tells us that the disciples are to be among the firstfruits of the ruling realm under Jesus Christ. David will be raised from the dead (see

Acts 2:22-36) during the first resurrection. That is the sense of Ezekiel 37:24. Jesus Christ will occupy the supreme throne of the Kingdom (Zech. 14:9; Rev. 11:15). Pay attention to how the focus is on the Kingdom being located on the earth.

Those humans (Israelites and Gentiles) who are not killed in the war over Jerusalem that is described in Zechariah 14:1-15 are described as survivors in v. 16. Those surviving humans will be the subjects of God's government over the earth as described in Isaiah 2:1-5. During that 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6), they will have the opportunity to receive salvation as secondfruits as Jesus Christ and His ruling realm execute the continued "ministry of reconciliation" described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Their opportunity to be changed from flesh to spirit will probably happen during the second resurrection at the end of the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:5 re: "the rest of the dead"). *There is no specific instruction about that in Scripture*. You also have to understand that many of the survivors will die natural and unnatural deaths during the 1,000-year completion of the ministry of reconciliation (see Acts 3:19-21). Their children will continue to supply succeeding descendants during the 1,000-year ministry of reconciliation.

How does this involve the feasts of Leviticus 23? We know that Passover is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins: Israel and Gentile. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is about coming out of sin (see 1 Cor. 5:6-8; 11:20-29). That is why Passover and Unleavened Bread are connected to the exodus out of Egypt. The next "feast" is described in Exodus 34:22 as "...the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest..." (emphases added).

Notice the connection between a feast day and a harvest. The first "harvest" is pre-figured by Pentecost/Feast of Weeks. That is because this feast day is determined by counting 50 days (that is: seven Sabbaths plus one day) from a Sabbath that occurs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:15-22: $7 \times 7 = 49 + 1 = 50$). Make note of the mention of firstfruits in those verses. It is the first harvest of the year. It is also called Pentecost, which is mentioned three times by that name in the New Testament (Acts 2:1; 20:16; and 1 Cor. 16:8). Pentecost means "count (cost) fifty (pente)." What does this suggest? Remember that an ordinal number "first" demands that there shall be at least the ordinal number "second" ...

and it does not preclude additional ordinal numbers as situations require them.

That being the case, the additional holy days in Leviticus 23 should pre-figure at least the secondfruits and allow for additional fruits as situations develop for them to be added. The secondfruits would come from an additional “harvest.”

The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are not “harvest” feasts. Trumpets prefigures the return of Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God. Atonement pre-figures the two-fold purpose of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world: (a) the actual sacrificial death and (2) the act of taking upon Himself the burden and penalty of our sins so He can bear them away for utter and complete destruction. We will discuss in later lessons the possibility of thirdfruits and beyond.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the second, greater harvest in the holy days. It represents the conversion and “Christianization” of other humans after the return of Jesus Christ, during the 1,000 years of the continued ministry of reconciliation. The “survivors” of both the nation of Israel and the Gentiles will benefit greatly from this additional “day” (a period of time) of salvation ... a period of “rest” (see Rev. 20:1-3). They will be a larger, greater “harvest” of secondfruits.

The Great White Throne judgment is the second resurrection from the dead into flesh-and-blood bodies (Rev. 20:5-15). This is, in part, the subject of Ezekiel 37. David and the 12 Disciples will have been resurrected with the firstfruits at Christ’s return. The Israelites and Gentiles converted during the 1,000-year period will have qualified to be changed from flesh to spirit during the second resurrection.

The masses of dead humanity raised from the dead during this second resurrection will be all who have died since the Garden of Eden to that time – multiple billions of them! In part, they represent all who have never known God’s truth ... because God never revealed it to them or “called” them to His truth (see John 6:44, 65) and the “god” of this world deceived them (1 Cor. 2:6-16; 2 Cor. 4:1-4; John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9). The other living and dead not so represented will have been converted to God’s truth during the 1,000-year period.

In Revelation 20:12, 13, the purpose for “opening the books” is to instruct those who are now candidates for salvation in God’s truth and bring them to salvation. Apparently, they will be given a space of time to show the “fruits” of repentance and commitment to God’s thoughts and ways. Those who successfully make the transition from sin to holiness ultimately will be saved through Jesus Christ. Whether this counts as secondfruits or thirdfruits is not really the point here.

The point is simple: God originally planned to create mankind in His image and bring them into His Family (Eph. 1:3-14; Gen. 1:26-28). Over vast ages of time, the Father and Jesus Christ are making every effort possible to “save” as many as will commit themselves to God’s thoughts and ways (2 Pet. 3:9). Compare Revelation 20:14, 15 to 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. If you show yourself to be an enemy toward His plan, you will be destroyed. Otherwise, the path to salvation will be available to you. The discussion about the “new heavens and new earth” will clarify that situation for you.

The New Heavens and New Earth

The first mention of “new heavens and new earth” is not in Revelation 21, 22; it is in Isaiah 65:17-25. Peter foretells this event in 2 Peter 3:9-13. Let’s begin with Isaiah 65:17-25 and glean pertinent information for our discussion of this coming event. You should understand at this point that this subject teaches us something not addressed in most of mainstream Christianity.

Isaiah 65 begins with a declaration by the Lord God of His intention to call the Gentiles to salvation. Pay attention to v. 1 because it refutes the claim of those who say that Israel was not God’s ekklesia because they were called by Jacob’s name (“Congregation of Israel”), not God’s (“Church of God”; see Acts 7:38). The Gentiles were not called by His name:

I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, “Behold me,” unto a nation that was not called by my name (emphases added).

Verses 2-7 is a verbal assault upon Israel for her faithlessness, idolatry, rebellion, and hypocrisy. Because of all of this, the Lord God refuses to draw near to them and expresses His intention, that was threatened so many times in the past, to bring upon them the punishment described in Leviticus 26 (note especially vv. 21-24) and Deuteronomy 28. But ... that is not the final word about Israel because we have to consider Leviticus 26:40-45.

In Isaiah 65:8-10, He declares that He will preserve a remnant ... “a seed out of Jacob [Israel], and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and my elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there” (v. 9). This demonstrates that the nation of Israel (the race) will occupy the Land of Promise provided through the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:16-20). The last part of v. 10 says that this preservation of the remnant represents “...my people who have sought me.” So, we have in these verses of prophecy the combination of Israel’s inheritance and the salvation of the Gentiles (Matt. 5:17). Verses 11-15 are addressed to all of those who “are not my people.” That includes castaway Israelites and Gentiles. You might even get a hint from this that there is also a remnant of the Gentiles who will make up part of the firstfruits of the first resurrection.

You can see a noticeable contrast here between vv. 11-15 and v. 16. Israel was a called and chosen people, but they forsook the Lord God and His covenant for idols that were made by the hands of men (see John 7:37-44). They prepared “...a table for that troop [of idols] and ... furnish[ed] the drink offering to that number [of false gods].” In the process, they forsook the Lord God and His holy mountain (Mt. Zion where the Temple was built; v. 11). Apparently, being called and chosen does not preserve your seat at the table of the Lord (Matt. 20:16; 22:14). As Matthew Henry put it: Those who thought that one God was not enough ... also thought that innumerable gods were not enough (p. 930; author’s paraphrase). It was a strange thing that those who resisted the religious concepts offered by the true God thought that His requirements were too demanding; but ... they submitted to innumerable demands of innumerable false gods ... with as many, if not more, “laws” to obey.

Verse 16 is an interesting statement made as a prelude to the prophecy about the “new heavens and new earth.” Various

commentaries express doubts that this verse was in the original Isaiah document. That notwithstanding, it is included in numerous translations as though it is acceptable as part of that document. At its base, it is a reasonable transition between vv. 1-15 and vv. 17-25. Especially noteworthy is the concept that a proper relationship between faithful people and the God of truth has an important subsequence: There is coming a time when *all of the former troubles will be forgotten because they will be hidden from the mind of God.* Why is this important?

This is the ultimate effect of the symbolism of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32). The two goats represent two different, but necessarily associated, aspects of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins against God:

- ❖ The first goat is a redemption sacrifice to “buy” us out of death and destruction (Lev. 16:9; Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 2:6-18; 10:1-18).
- ❖ The second goat is a “sin-bearing” sacrifice. All of the sins of the people are put upon him and taken to the “wilderness” to be destroyed (Isa. 53; 2 Cor. 5:17-21). This puts our sins out of the sight and mind of God.
- ❖ During the course of the 1,000-year rule of Christ and His Saints prior to the creation of the new heavens and new earth, Jesus Christ will defeat all of God’s enemies in order to complete the ministry of reconciliation spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. His ultimate objective will be to destroy death (1 Cor. 15:24-28). If He destroys death, then He will have destroyed sin (see 1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23). The destruction of sin and death will be vitally necessary in order for the new heavens and new earth to have the environment necessary for there to be the conditions described in Isaiah 65:17-25.
- ❖ If the incorrigibles are destroyed in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14, 15), why would God allow the memory of life destroyed by sin to exist? Would not the destruction

of that memory be compatible with the acts of grace, mercy, and forgiveness? How would you apply 1 Corinthians 13 to this discussion – especially vv. 10-13?

Why do I bring this up? In the Feast of Tabernacles (the “great” second harvest of the year), there is a “yearly” Sabbath (Lev. 23:34-39). Notice that this “yearly” Sabbath is a closing convocation of God’s people on the eighth day. Although it is not explained in text, the following comment by *The Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 2, p. 116) is noteworthy:

The incongruity of connecting a feast of the vintage with the wanderings in the wilderness is plain enough, but it marks *the tendency of Israel to bring every religious celebration into connection with the saving acts of God* (emphases added).

If you follow the sense of our explanation of the Lord God’s holy days, it would be logical that this eighth-day Sabbath – as a closing ceremony of the holy day seasons – would have significance congruent with the order of prophetic events described above:

(a) the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Passover and Atonement);

(b) our spiritual journey out of sin (Feast of Unleavened Bread);

(c) the giving of the Law that brings us to “Christ,” as well as the Holy Spirit as a down-payment on our redemption out of sin and the eternal, spirit bodies we will be given as a result of the “harvest” of the firstfruits (Pentecost/Feast of Firstfruits),

(d) Christ’s conquest of all the worldly governments and the enemies of God (Feast of Trumpets);

(e) the millennial reign of Christ and the Saints to complete the ministry of reconciliation and the second harvest –

which includes a second resurrection and what is called the “Great White Throne Judgment” of all the dead who have never known God’s truth (Feast of Tabernacles).

That eighth-day Sabbath is the period called the “White Throne Judgment.” The judgment of the *survivors* of the Jerusalem war, their descendants during the 1,000-year reconciliation, and those raised from the dead during the second resurrection will cover an undisclosed period of time. The judgment seems to hinge on two things: those who are deemed ready for their change from flesh to spirit and ... those who are not.

It would make sense that the second resurrection is similar to the first. When it occurs, those who qualify for the change from flesh to spirit, among the living and those who have died during the 1,000 years, will be changed at that time. Those who are still a “work in progress” and the innumerable dead who never had an opportunity to know God’s truth *will be taught God’s thoughts and ways*. During that time of judgment, some might very well qualify to be changed from flesh to spirit. What about those who do not *fully* qualify to be changed ... but show great promise?

Isaiah 65:17-25 might very well provide us clues to what their fate is. As you read the account, does it strike you as strange that there are still *human beings* present who are having families and who have the opportunity to develop to advanced ages (v. 22)? Such a revelation stands in the face of the mainstream Christian concept that the return of Jesus Christ marks the end of the availability of salvation. Since this continues beyond the Great White Throne Judgment in which the *secondfruits* are brought to salvation, the new heavens and new earth might very well signal that the plan of God to make human beings in His own image does not terminate even at the Great White Throne Judgment!

Let’s consider another prophecy in Isaiah as a possible explanation of this prophecy in Isaiah 65:17-25: Isaiah 9:6,7. This prophecy is largely understood to be about Jesus Christ – it is used quite regularly in the explanation of His birth (Matt. 1:22, 23). It is from v. 7 that we get some important information that helps to explain the comments above: “Of the *increase* of His government

and peace *there shall be no end*” (emphases added). What is the significance of the *italicized* and underlined emphases?

The Hebrew term is *marbiyth*. The *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* definition is short and to the point: “a *multitude*; also *offspring*; spec[ifically] *interest* (on capital): – greatest part, greatness, increase, multitude.” You could easily reason that the Lord God’s promise to Abraham about innumerable “seed” would continue to be fulfilled in the new heavens and new earth because humans would continue to produce offspring. *BDB Hebrew-English Lexicon* concurs with that definition (p. 916).

Prophetically speaking, we have the Lord God’s word of truth telling us that “there shall be no end” to the existence of *human beings*. *BDB* specifically includes *family* in its definition. God will continue the plan explained by Paul in Ephesians 1:3-14 ... which means that *humans* will continue to be added to the God Family. At some point in their long lives, they will qualify for the change from flesh to spirit. *In my personal opinion*, if there is any need ... after that change has taken place ... to assign an identity to them other than “the Children of God through Jesus Christ,” it would have to be *Abraham’s Seed*. Paul is very clear in Galatians 3:26-29 that in Jesus Christ there eventually comes a time when gender and national identities become unnecessary. *Until that time comes, we must be aware that the “marriage” covenant, old and new, belongs to the nation of Israel, the race.*

Conclusion

With regard to the *ordinal number* concept, the “remnant” theme is descriptive of the “first” level of God’s plan of salvation prior to the establishment of His Kingdom. The *firstfruits* will be a “remnant” out of Israel and the Gentiles who will be the *first* human beings who will be raised from the dead or instantaneously changed when Jesus Christ returns. They will be the “ruling realm” of the Kingdom under Jesus Christ. David will be king over all of Israel ... with the 12 disciples being kings over the individual tribes of Israel.

The Gentiles in this “ruling realm” will be kings over the various Gentile nations that have developed outside of the nation of Israel. In that manner, all nations will be blessed by Jesus Christ and the

holy government of God that He will establish at His return. When He and the “ruling realm” have completed their work of bringing in the secondfruits, the earth and the entire universe will be cleansed of all of the effects of sin (Isa. 65:17-25; Rev. 21 and 22), Jesus Christ will then turn the government over to God the Father, who will move His throne in heaven to the earth among His redeemed people (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

However, the “remnant” theme in the Old Testament and carried over into the New Testament relates to the nation of Israel. It is indicative of the Lord God’s dogged determination to punish Israel for her sins in order to bring her to repentance, cleanse her, “Christianize” her, and prepare her for their re-marriage. Jeremiah 31:22-34 is about that New Covenant between the Lord God (Jesus Christ) and Israel (whether they are natural or adopted Israelites). That is Jesus Christ’s focus in Matthew 16:18 and 26:26-28. Paul reminds us of that in Hebrews 8:6-13 and Hebrews 10:14-17. Both are references to the Lord God’s re-marriage to Israel – His ekklesia.

All of these “themes” prove that the second, third, and fourth century “church fathers” were egregiously in error when they constructed their theology of separation. They paid too much attention to a situation that seemed to indicate that God had cast off Israel forever (Prov. 14:12). It does not appear that they took into consideration that God is not a liar (Num. 23:19). They overlooked the fact that His word is truth (John 4:23, 24; 8:31, 32; 17:17). They adopted a jealous hatred toward Israel and Judah that blinded them to the immutability of the Lord God’s great and precious promises (Heb. 6:13-20).

Paul made a profound statement when he wrote the following in Romans 3:3, 4:

What if some [of Israel] failed to believe? Their unbelief surely does not nullify God’s faithfulness, does it? Not at all. Rather shall it be: God must be true though every man is a liar, as it is written, “That You might be vindicated in Your sayings and might triumph when You are tried” (*Modern Language Bible*; Read Psalm 51 and pay close attention to v. 4; emphases added).

Vindicate means that God will: (a) clear His name from criticism and blame, (b) defend Himself against all opposition, and (c) show Himself to be just and righteous in His cause. Just how capable are humans in doing such things in everything they do and/or think to do? When the Israelites stood at the edge of the Red Sea, they did not have the faith needed for their journey to the “promised land” ... despite all of the power and glory shown by the actions of the Lord God up to that point in time. In Exodus 14:12, they reminded Moses how they had warned him to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Maybe they did not know about Genesis 15:13-16 where the Lord God told Abraham about their 400 years of servitude to the Egyptians ... and how they would be subsequently delivered from it. They did not exist at the time. Now, at the edge of the Red Sea, He was about to vindicate His word (Isa. 55:11). Now read Exodus 14:13. What did Moses tell them? What happened? Did that event erase their doubts thereafter? In a word: No. Their continued acts of faithlessness proved them to have been the liars.

What shall we now believe: The word of God ... or the theology of separation? You are at a critical juncture in your own faith and belief. Where will you stand after your confession of faith, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit? Will you go into the promised land ... or die in the wilderness? After all, you will have professed faith in the new covenant.

Review Questions

1. What was Jesus up to when He chose 12 disciples from the tribes of Judah (Judah, Benjamin, and Levi) whom He would commission to again build up His ekklesia (Matt. 16:18; Jer. 31:22-28) and be kings over the 12 tribes of Israel in His Kingdom (Matt. 19:27, 28)?
2. What relationship does this have with Hosea 2:14-20 and the new covenant?
3. Why did he Peter draw his imagery of the circumcision being “as lively stones ... built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” from Exodus 19:5, 6? Use James 1:1 as part of your evidence.

4. How does Romans 11:16-32 refute the *theology of separation*?
5. How does Romans 11:18 affect the claims of the second, third, and fourth century “church fathers”?
6. What is the importance of Romans 11:5, 7-15 in this discussion?
7. What was the importance of Paul’s testimony in his trial before Agrippa (Acts 26) in Acts 26:19-21 when he says that he preached God’s truth about repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to both Jews and Gentiles?
8. Why did Paul make the distinction between “the people” and “the Gentiles”? What does this do to the theology of separation?
9. Compare Isaiah 45:21 to Acts 4:12. What is the connection between them? What is the importance of Isaiah 44:21-28?
10. What does Matthew 12:38-40 teach you about the observance of a Good Friday crucifixion of Jesus Christ?
11. What do the two “harvest” feasts in Leviticus 23 teach us about the resurrections of the dead? How do ordinal numbers help us to understand these “harvests”?
12. Why does the return of Jesus Christ not “close the door” on His plan of salvation? Use Isaiah 2:1-5 and Isaiah 65:17-25 as sources of proof for your answer.
13. How does “new heavens and new earth” clarify the salvation issue for you?
14. What is the ultimate effect of the symbolism of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32)?
15. What significance does the closing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles have congruent with all of the holy days of Leviticus 23?

16. How will the second resurrection be similar to the first resurrection?

17. How are Ezekiel 37 and Romans 11:15, 26 connected?

18. Based on Isaiah 65:17-25, why does it appear that *humans* will be carried over to the new heavens and new earth? What evidence is there that humans will continue to be born and grow from infancy to a great age? Use Isaiah 9:6, 7 to support your answer.

19. To whom do the old and new marriage covenants belong? Why?

20. What do the “themes” in this lesson prove? Why?

21. Explain Romans 3:3, 4 as it relates to the topic of this chapter. How is this related to Isaiah 55:11?

Summary

We began with a discussion about principle-centered theology and demonstrated that theological paradigm with three important scriptural principles: (1) God is a God of laws; (2) God is a God of holiness; and (3) God is not a liar (in other words: a God of truth). This set the stage for demonstrating why the old covenant is directly related to the new covenant – both being “marriage” covenants between the Lord God (Jesus Christ) and the nation/race of Israel: His ekklesia.

The discussion about “theological drift” was necessary to demonstrate a principle addressed by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15: The development of a rising counterfeit “Christianity” that teaches another Jesus, another gospel, and another Spirit. The rise of false ministers and false gospels was one of the major points Jesus Christ made to His disciples in Matthew 24:4, 5. It has expanded dramatically to our present day.

The theology of separation has been living proof that such has been the case. It has amounted to divisions in “Christianity” to the tune of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations who doctrinally oppose one another in significant ways. The theology of the Bible was significantly changed to teach things that make God a liar (Rom. 1:18-32).

Such division requires an answer to the question about whether or not the God of truth (John 17:17) is a liar. If He is not, how can all of those opposing voices be counted as His single ekklesia (Eph. 4:1-16)? That naturally poses the question about which “Christian” group actually represents God’s true people. That group would represent the True Church to whom Jesus Christ will be “married” under the new covenant. If it substitutes an amorphous group of believers in the place of the nation/race of Israel, then there are serious questions we must ask of that kind of theology.

The next three chapters explored the covenant relationship between the Lord God and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We studied

about Israel's God-given destiny from their inception to beyond the second-coming of Jesus Christ. We learned about the separate covenant the Lord God made with Israel ... when He took her to be His "wife." And ... it was made clear through many prophecies that He will punish her for her rebellion and sins, clean her up, purify her through His truth, and woo her in order to "marry" Him again under a new covenant that is based on better promises (Lev. 26:40-45; Hos. 2:14-20; Heb. 8:6-13). The promises are better because He, before the creation of the orderly universe, knew that flesh-and-blood cannot be a true "spirit of His Spirit" marriage partner (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 15:50). In order for Israel to be a "wife" suitable to be a helper to Him forever, she will have to be "born again" (John 3:3-8; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). It is the responsibility of her Creator and "Husband" to get her prepared for that "rebirth."

In the discussions about the "lost sheep" imagery and the "remnant" theme in the Old and New Testaments (also shown to be the covenants), we found a connection between Jeremiah 31:22-37 and Matthew 26:26-28. The revelation is that Israel is, in fact, the Lord God's ekklesia. Stephen declared this in Acts 7:38. We also know from Exodus 20:7, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 65:1 and others that Israel was called by the Lord God's name; that is: she was known in the Old Testament as the ekklesia of God. In Matthew 16:18, therefore, Jesus Christ is speaking of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:27, 28 when He says that He is going to "build His ekklesia." Following that course of action, He initiated the new covenant with Israel in Matthew 26:26-28.

In his book *The Kingdom of God*, John Bright makes some important comments worthy of this conversation:

The covenant is a wedlock; in it, God "married" Israel and made her his wife,

God does not divorce one people and take back another.

It is precisely because he is God, not man, that he will not make a total end of Israel ([Hos.] 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 (2:19-23)...Here indeed is Israel the true bride of God! Here lie the seeds of things of which we shall hear more: the hope beyond tragedy of a new Exodus, a new beginning, a New Covenant.

...Although Israel had certainly broken covenant and paid for it with her national life, it was certain above all certainty that God never breaks covenant. All Jeremiah's world might crumble into rubble, but surer than the very stars of heaven—stands God (31:35-37). (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953; pp, 74-76, 124; emphases added).

Despite the above comments by John Bright, the following comment exposes the true nature of his conclusion:

It lies in the grace of God, who accords to men a New covenant—its law written on human hearts. The people of this covenant are the people of God's Kingdom, for they are the pure in heart who have been, as it were, born again. The Old Covenant thus points to a solution beyond itself—the creation of a new people (p. 126; emphases added).

Unless he means that Israel emerges from this quagmire as a people who are as new in quality of spirit and heart as the New Covenant intends them to be ... and are, therefore, fit to be the Lord God's "wife" again ... then it appears that Bright claims that God, indeed, divorces one people and takes back another! How could that be if the Scriptures he used to make his points on pp. 74-76, 124 were inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16)? Why would Paul claim that the "remnant [of Israel] according to the election of grace" had obtained what "blinded Israel" had not obtained? That would include Paul's observation in Romans 9:4, 5 and his observation in 11:1-5. What is the purpose of saving a "remnant" if all of that is to be given to a new, amorphous people called "new Israel"?

I suspect that the “grafting” of Gentiles into the “holy root” is considered to be so immense that Bright and others believe that it fundamentally demands that God’s *ekklesia* will be changed into an amorphous spiritual entity that amounts to a “new people” that can be called “new Israel” ... therefore, changing the national/racial identity of God’s original “bride/wife.”

Paul shows us in Romans 11:16-25 that there is a *certain number* of Gentiles who will be grafted into the “holy root” of *Israel*. That will make them *Israelites by adoption* (see Ex. 12:48, 49). They will be part of the “firstfruits” who will be changed from flesh to spirit at the return of Jesus Christ. They will be *part* of the Lord God’s *ekklesia* that will be “married” to Him. They will reign with Jesus Christ during the 1,000-year completion of the ministry of reconciliation. *The first resurrection is basically for the purpose of establishing the “ruling realm” under Jesus Christ for the Kingdom of God* (see Rev. 5:10; 11:15; and 20:4-6 regarding the offices to be held by that “ruling realm”: kings, priests, judges, lords).

That course of action *does not change* the focus of the prophecies in the Old Testament that declare that the Lord God will re-marry *Israel*. This does not constitute a new plan with a totally new, Gentile dominated, “spiritual Israel” as posited by the “early church fathers” and others. *God is not a liar*. That is the nature of the *new covenant* with *Israel*. Both are *kainos*:

[I]n the sense that what is old has become *obsolete*, and should be replaced by what is *new*. In such a case the new is, as a rule, *superior* in kind to the old ... with no criticism of the old implied (BAG, p. 395; emphases added; see 2 Cor. 3 for Paul’s discussion of this).

That definition explains the change of the covenant, not the people with which it was made. Apparently, no other Gentiles will be “adopted” into Israel *after the return of Jesus Christ*, but they will be included in the salvation brought by Jesus Christ (John 3:16). That is tacitly stated in Deuteronomy 4:1-13. It will be the same for any *Israelites* who are brought to salvation *after* the return of Jesus Christ. They will not be part of the Lord God’s *ekklesia*, but they will be brought to salvation. From that point forward, both Israelites

and Gentiles can ultimately be changed from flesh to spirit when they are deemed by God to be ready for that “rebirth.” They will enter the Kingdom of God as citizens, but they will not be among the “ruling realm” (see Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

When the New (*kainos*) Heavens and New (*kainos*) Earth are established (Isa. 65:11-25; Rev. 21), God the Father will relocate His throne to New (*kainos*) Jerusalem on the earth. Jesus Christ will have already established His own throne in the present Jerusalem on earth at His return (Isa. 2:1-5; Zech. 14:9). This New Heavens and New Earth will be the point at which Jesus Christ will surrender the full power of the godhead vested in Him by the Father before the creation of the orderly universe (compare 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:19; and Matt. 28:18). From that point forward, the full meaning of Galatians 3:26-29 will prevail ... by which national, sexual, ethnic, and status identities will be of no further significance. We will be one as was originally intended (John 17:11-26; Eph. 4:1-16): the people of God.

That is the short version of a very long discussion. May God grant you the Spirit of understanding in this matter (1 Cor. 2:6-16). This is amazing truth from God’s own word. It does not follow the paradigm posited by the “early church fathers” and adopted by the denominations of mainstream “Christianity.” Many of the so-called “Churches of God” will not agree with it in many ways.

May God bless your understanding of these matters.

