



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 9:4-5, 11:12-36

“Covenants of God and the Second Advent of Christ”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] It is after eight now, so let's go ahead and begin with a word of prayer,

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege that is before us again, of turning to the word of God. We thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit who has been given to instruct us in the things that concern our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. And we pray tonight, as we consider some of the great purposes which Thou hast for man kind, and for the nation Israel, and for the church of God, that our understanding may be enlarged and broadened. And also Lord we pray that these truths may be truth that means so much to us that we desire and actually do share them with others. We commit our study to Thee and we commit each one present to Thee for spiritual blessing throughout this hour. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now tonight our subject is the “Covenants of God and the Second Advent of Jesus Christ” and since we did not quite finish our study last time, but since I think we can cover what we missed in this one, at the appropriate place, we're going to go ahead and begin anyway. Now I want you to turn with me if you will, to Romans

chapter 9 in the New Testament, and I want to read an opening verse or two. And then turn to the 11th chapter to read a very difficult portion, but which, in spite of its difficulty, gives the heart of the truth that we are discussing tonight, the covenants of Israel and the second advent of Jesus Christ, or the covenants of God.

Now the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the 4th and 5th verses, and before we look at these verses, remember the apostle in Romans 9, 10, and 11 is trying to explain how it is that, in spite of being the recipients of many, many promises in the Old Testament, Israel seems to be missing from the church of Jesus Christ. And so the apostle is trying to explain how it is that Israel has missed her blessing, and at the same time, to assure her that the promises are still going to be fulfilled in spite of their present disobedience. Now he begins by saying something of their privileges, and the 4th verse and the 5th verses are the two verses I want to read in chapter 9,

“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, (now you’ll notice the apostle has stated that to the nation Israel, to them pertain the covenants) and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Now let’s turn to the 11th chapter in which the apostle sets forth for Israel her future conversion and entrance into her promised blessings. Chapter 11 and verse 13, “For I speak” or perhaps we should begin with verse 12,

“Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their (that is Israel, their) fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, (Paul was an Israelite, he

has stated right in the first verse of this chapter) If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, (that is you Gentiles) thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graft in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graft in. (in other words Israel is in unbelief in order that us Gentiles might be saved, verse 20) Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

In other words the promises and the covenants were designed for Israel, they're the natural branches of the olive tree, you were not the recipients of the promises of God, therefore you have been graft in contrary to nature, you Gentiles you don't really belong, so if they can be cut off, and you graft in, if you disbelieve, how much easier it is to lop you off and put the natural branches back in, it's kind of humbling isn't it? “Take heed lest he also spare not thee” verse 21,

“For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graft in: for God is able to graft them in again.”

Now we are seeing some very, very interesting things in the land of Palestine today. And this of course is not the grafting in of Israel into the olive tree, because you'll notice that the condition for grafting in is faith, or belief. And Israel is back in the land in unbelief. But I think you can see that the ground may be being laid by God for their faith, for after all, all of our faith comes ultimately from the movement of the Spirit of God in our hearts. And it may just be, we can only say “may,” that God is preparing for Israel's return to faith in him. Verse 24,

“For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graft contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graft into their own olive tree? (notice by the way it's “their” olive tree not ours, Gentiles thought you were something didn't you) For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (that is until the full number) the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (he never regrets his gifts and calling) For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy (or the mercy shown to you) they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all (Gentile and Jew) in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. (and this so fills Paul with the thrill of understanding divine purposes among men that he concludes this great theodicy, Romans 9 through 11, with) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the

mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

Now the “Covenants of God and the Second Advent of Jesus Christ,” the covenants, as you can see from the 9th chapter in the 4th verse of the Epistle to the Romans, really are the covenants of Israel. For all of the covenants, with the exception of the first, which is a minor covenant, the Noahic covenant, are covenants that pertain directly to the nation Israel. And so when we talk about the covenants, we talk about covenants that God made with the nation Israel.

Today we’re living many hundreds of years after God made the first covenant with Abraham, the first of significance. And since that time, a great deal of water has gone over the bridge, both in the word of God and in the history of God’s people, the history of Israel and the history of the church of God. But a great deal of theological discussion has also gone over the damn. Today we’re living in the day in which we often have reference made to covenant theology. Now covenant theology is a term that today does not bear directly upon the biblical covenants in the Bible, but it does indirectly. Covenant theology describes an important theological system, a theological system to which many evangelical Christians subscribe. Probably a minority of evangelical Christians, but nevertheless a number of them do. It is made up of three theological covenants. The covenant of redemption, in which the Trinity is involved in man’s salvation. The covenant of works, which is a covenant supposed to have been made between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden. We looked at it, we didn’t call it that because the Bible doesn’t say anything about a so-called covenant of works, but Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden and he was given a test. And that is the so-called, theological covenant of works. And then the covenant of grace, which is a covenant whereby God promises, to all who believe in Jesus Christ, salvation, covenant of redemption, covenant of works, covenant of

grace. Now these covenants are not specifically referred to in Scripture, they are theological covenants. That is, they are, they represent truths, which theologians believe are found in the Scriptures.

Now as far as I'm concerned, I think that some of these covenants have a great deal of truth in them. I certainly would say there is such a thing as the operation of the Trinity and man's salvation. We've seen that in the few short lessons that we've had in this home Bible class. And I certainly do believe in the fact that God promises to all who believe in Jesus Christ, salvation. And I do believe as well, that Adam was given a test in the Garden of Eden that pertained to the tree. But strictly speaking, these terms, covenant of redemption, covenant of works, covenant of grace, are not biblical terms. But going along with the system of theology, is a truther to, which, with which I cannot personally subscribe. Now let me say that it is possible for someone to believe this and still be a genuine Christian. I think however, your understanding of the Bible would be severely limited, if you accepted this teaching. In fact I wonder at times how you could make much sense out of some passages in Scripture. But nevertheless there are fine evangelical Christians who do believe that Israel equals the church. That is, in the Old Testament certain promises were given to the nation Israel.

Now in the New Testament days, the church inherits the promises made to Israel. In fact, inherits them in such a way that the church really becomes the new Israel. In fact you will often hear that term used, the church is the new Israel. Now I don't object, personally, to the term, a new Israel, in the sense that the church represents a people of God, with which entity God is dealing in this age as he did deal with the nation Israel in the age of the old covenant. But this is usually used in a context of the church equals Israel, and passages that refer to Israel are referred to the church. The promises to Israel are the church's promises.

Now the curses that are pronounced upon Israel are not very often applied to the church. As a matter of fact, they are conveniently forgotten, relegated to Israel in the Old

Testament. But this is one of the cornerstones of covenant theology’s teaching. Furthermore, that the kingdom prophesied in the Bible is a kingdom that is spiritual and invisible. That is, that all the references to a kingdom, which is upon the earth, are to be taken spiritually, or symbolically, or the promises are to be spiritualized. That is, reference made to a kingdom upon the earth is not really a kingdom upon the earth, but it is a spiritual and invisible kingdom, given in that figurative type of language, because that was the kind of language that they would understand.

Now I think that the Bible teaches that Israel and the church are separate, and I think that the Bible teaches that there is a coming spiritual kingdom but that it shall be visible, spiritual, yes, but visible as well. For visibility is not necessarily unspiritual. Our Lord for example, was here in the flesh. Very visible material, but he surely was a spiritual person. And he operated entirely by spiritual principles. So it is perfectly possible for God to have a kingdom on the earth which is visible. But at the same time is heavenly in character and spiritual in its nature.

Now I’m mentioning these things because I think it is important for you to understand at least that there is a conflict among evangelical Christians over these factors. And I hope you will be better able to understand what I’m going to say in the light of this brief introduction. One of the reasons that I think that it is necessary for us to take the New Testament promises as promises that are written and to be understood as a general rule as they, in a normal way, is that certain portions of the New Testament cannot be understood otherwise. I’d like for you to turn if you will to Luke chapter 1. In a moment we’re going to look at these covenants, but it’s necessary to consider some of these principles first, but Luke chapter 1. Now notice that in Luke chapter 1 we have, beginning with the 26th verse, the annunciation of the birth of our Lord Jesus. And the angel Gabriel was sent, and he was sent to Mary. And in the course of his words to Mary, in verse 31 that the angel says,

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shall bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Now notice the things that are stated. It is stated that the woman who is a virgin, shall conceive and she shall bear a son. And then it is stated that this son is going to be great. He's going to reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there is to be no end. The two important things are simply this, he's to be born of a virgin, and he's to have an unending kingdom over the house of Jacob.

Now in the light of that, I want to tell you a little story, and this is a true story of a conversation between a Christian minister who was a covenant theologian, and a Jewish man. Now they were discussing the fulfillment of the promises in Jesus of Nazareth. And of course the Jew was not a believer in Jesus Christ. But he did know something about the New Testament, and he knew something also of the contradiction in the Christian minister's theological viewpoint. So in the course of the discussion, this man had referred to the virgin birth in the Old Testament and had sought to show that Jesus Christ fulfilled those prophecies in Isaiah chapter 7, concerning the virgin birth. The Jew took the Christian's Bible and said, “I'd like to read a few verses to you.” And he turned to these verses that we've just read, Luke chapter 1, verses 31-33. And then after he had finished, he looked at the Christian minister and he said, “Do you believe that what is written in verse 31 is to be taken literally, that it is literally to be accomplished? And do you believe that what is also written in verses 32 and 33 is to be literally accomplished?” And the Christian minister said, “No” he said, “I do not, I'd rather take verses 32 and 33 in a figurative way, and take them as descriptive of Jesus Christ's spiritual reign over the church.”

Well the Jew of course then said, "Well what do you do with verse 31? For verse 31 says that Jesus Christ is to be born of a virgin." Christian minister said, "I take that literally." He said, "Do you mean to tell me that you take verse 31 literally, but you take verses 32 and 33 spiritually?" And he said, "Yes I do." And he said, the Jew then said to him, "It seems to me that we have quite a contradiction here, because verse 31 is a very difficult thing to believe, that a man is born of a virgin, and you are willing to take that as a literal fact, but verses 32 and 33, which are easier to believe, that is that a man is coming to rule and reign over the earth as the prophet of God, seems to me that this is not the way to interpret Scripture." He said, "Why is it that you believe that verse 31 is to be understood literally, whereas verses 32 and 33 are to be taken figuratively?" The Christian minister said, "Well I believe it, because it's a fact." And then the Jew said, "Well I believe, you believe Scripture because it is a fact. I believe Scripture because it is the word of God." And of course, he had the Christian minister, who was involved in a hopeless contradiction, taking one verse as literal and then the next two verses, referring to the same individual, as figurative, or spiritual without any real good reason.

Now I think that this type of interpretation does not help us to understand the word of God clearly and plainly, and consequently, I personally do not accept the so-called covenants of covenant theology as they are generally taught. The covenants, as a matter of fact, were made in Holland and not in heaven, because covenant theology really goes back just a few hundred years to some Dutch theologians.

Now while we say that, I want to now turn to the biblical side of it. It is true that there is no such thing, I do not think, as covenant theology in the sense that it is often taught, that is that Israel equals the church and that the kingdom is only spiritual and invisible, rather than spiritual and visible. While it is true that that is not Scriptural, in my opinion, nevertheless I do believe that there are important biblical covenants. And that actually the biblical covenants, those that are referred to in the Bible as covenants, are essential for an understanding of the word of God. And so tonight, we want to take a

look now at the covenants, trace them through, and see the significance they have for the purposes of God.

Now the first covenant is the Noahic covenant. And I'm going to, for the sake of time, pass up the Noahic covenant, which is given for us in Genesis chapter 9, by just saying that it is an unconditional covenant, which guaranteed to mankind that there would be no flood judgment again. When you get home tonight, you get in your bed and take your Bible, read Genesis chapter 9, verses 8 through 17. It is a simple statement from God that he is not going to destroy the earth again by a flood.

Now the second covenant is more important, and we have already looked at this a little bit, but we're going to look at it again for just a moment, so turn to Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 3. Now this is the basic covenant in the Bible, the Abrahamic covenant. Out of this covenant flow all of the covenants of God, which are theological. And furthermore, if we do not understand the Abrahamic covenant, we will not be able to read the Bible with comprehension and understanding. But if we do understand it, much of the Bible will become plain and clear to us. Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, now mind you, there are a number of passages in Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 22, which have to do with the covenant. So I'm just selecting one of the chief passages, it is probably the most important because it's the first, in which the promises are stated. But this is not all of the revelation on it. Verse 1,

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Now notice, notice particularly, that no condition is placed upon these promises, they are given unconditionally. That is, God says he is going to carry out these promises, so that Abraham is going to have these blessings. Now there are three things that are stated. He's promised a land, he's promised a seed, and he's promised a royal line. Now the royal line is not given us here, it's over in chapter 17 and verse 6, where he says, “And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee.” So Abraham is given a promise. He's first of all told his name is going to be great, and I comment upon the fact that it's very striking that Abraham's name is great among the Arabs, it's great among the Jews, and it's great among the Christians. It's a remarkable thing that all of these great human systems revere the name Abraham. His name has been made great. Furthermore, he is given a land. That is stated in verse 1. That land in chapter 15 is spelled out as a big land, not a small land, from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. Israel has never yet possessed that land. At one time in their history they almost possessed it, but the promises are as made long after that, they are reiterated, evidence of the fact that in God's eyes, they never have had the land as a permanent possession. And finally, he is said to have, he's going to have a seed and a royal line, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Now in order to make this covenant unconditional and to give Abram that understanding in the 15th chapter we have the account of the making of the covenant itself. And will you turn over there and I'm just going to tell the story, because we've got a lot of ground to cover in the rest of our lesson. And instead of stopping and reading it, I'm just going to tell what the passage has. And I think if you'll check it, that what I'm telling you is accurate.

Now Abraham had these promises but he became disturbed because he knew that someone must be born in his family as his child who would be the covenant in the covenant line. For God had said, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” And he had promised that kings would come out of him. But Abram of course, does not

have any children. And so he comes to God after he has had the promises for some time, and he says to God, “Who is really going to be my heir? Is it going to be this Eleazar who’s the steward who lives, who is living in my house?” and God says to Abram, “No Abram, he’s not your seed, but someone who is going to come out of your own bowels he’s to be the heir and the recipient of the promises and the line is going to come from him.” And you’ll remember that in order to affirm this, and to confirm the covenant, he took Abram out and it was night time. And he caused Abraham to look up toward the stars and he said, “Abraham, look toward heaven and see the stars, and can you number them?” and he said unto him, “So shall thy seed be.” And if we read that Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness. In other words, he accepted the word of God and on the basis of the testimony of the word of God, God reckoned to him a righteous standing. And then he engaged in a little act, which is one of the most remarkable things in all of the Book of Genesis.

It was the custom in ancient times to confirm promises by a covenant. And in some places, it was customary to confirm covenants in this way. Animals were taken and they were divided in half. Animals were placed here, part of the animal here, part of the animal there, and then those that were making agreements passed down between the pieces of the slain animals. For example, when Alexander died, and there rose a dispute in the forces of Alexander between the infantry and the cavalry, the dispute became so bad that it looked as if there might be civil war in Alexander’s army. Finally an agreement was made and a dog was taken, and the dog was cut in half, I’m sorry dog lovers, but nevertheless this is history, the dog was cut in half and one part of the dog was placed here, and another part was placed here, and all of the infantry and all of the cavalry passed down between the pieces in token of the fact that they were to live by the covenant or agreement that had been made.

Now Abram, it was night time, when Abram was asked to look toward the stars and he waited and waited, in fact apparently he waited all day long. God gave him

instructions before he waited. And he said, “Take a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a dove and a pigeon. And Abram divide the heifer, divide the she goat, divide the ram.” And Abram attained the animals, he slew them, he put part of the animals here, part of the animals here. Then he also had a turtle dove and a young pigeon and apparently these were not divided, but the turtle dove was slain and put on one side and the pigeon slain and put on the other. So there were pieces of the animals and they were separated by a path and Abram waited. Now he waited because you see, he knew that this was what was called, “Cutting a covenant.” In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament to make a covenant, the term they used was to cut a covenant. And apparently that word to cut, *karath* in Hebrew, is a word that was derived from this custom of taking the animals and dividing them. And so God made a covenant with Abram, and Abram waited. He waited for God to pass through the pieces, because you see, God had made a promise. And perhaps he also thought that God was going to invite him to go through the pieces. We do not know of course, what he was thinking. But he waited until it was night time. And we read in verse 12,

“And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. (and he heard the word of God in his sleep) Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them for four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark.”

Abram has been listening to the voice of God and suddenly, he sees something approaching the pieces and it looks as if it's a cylindrical furnace, and out of this

cylindrical furnace there is pouring smoke and flame. And Abram I'm sure was astonished and amazed, as he saw this. And you'll notice it says, “Behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.” In other words, Abram saw this come down, this smoking and burning furnace, and lamp pass right between the pieces of the animals which he had slain. Now as this strange thing happened, this undoubtedly, was accompanied then by the voice that follows in verse 18, “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying,(and now here is given the promise with regard to the land) Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:” and then the remainder of the covenant is stated.

Now this is the thing I want you to notice. That this covenant, which was made by God, promises given to Abraham regarding his name, regarding a land which is defined here as a broad land in the middle east, and also his seed that kings too would come out of him, a royal line. These promises were given by God unconditionally. Now you'll notice that Abram was not invited to pass down between the pieces. Now that simply meant this, that God was undertaking on his own to fulfill the promises that were made to Abraham. In other words, Abram, these promises are going to be fulfilled to you unconditionally. They do not depend upon Abram's good works, they depend upon the grace and power of God. And he guarantees, he himself, that these promises shall be fulfilled to Abram. In other words, the Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant, unconditional. It is God who says that he will fulfill the covenant.

Now of course, later on, there are certain factors that pertain to faith, that are introduced because Israel shall not enjoy the promises that they have until they exercise faith. But it is God who guarantees to bring to pass the time that Israel believes and has her promises. So the Abrahamic promise then, the Abrahamic covenant, is the basic promise of the Bible. I want you, just for one moment, to turn to Luke chapter 1 and to show you how much it meant to the believers in our Lord's day. You know of course, of the Magnificat of Mary, this marvelous song that, that is, prophetic song that she sang,

after the promises had been given to her. And I'm just going to read a few verses beginning with Luke chapter 1 and verse 54, Luke 1:54, this is in the Magnificat and notice, how the Abrahamic covenant looms before Mary as she thinks about the seed, which is promised her. Verse 54, “He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” “To Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” In other words, Mary sees in the coming of Jesus Christ the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises.

Turn over to Acts chapter 3, Acts chapter 3, and after the day of Pentecost, Peter has been responsible for the healing of the lame man and now he preaches his second sermon. And he's talking to disobedient Jews, but he says in verse 25, “Ye are the ch” this is Acts 3, verse 25,

“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

In other words, Peter too sees in the coming of Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the promises which were made to Abraham. So the Abrahamic covenant then, is the basic unconditional covenant of the Bible.

The third covenant that I have put here is the Mosaic covenant. Now the Mosaic covenant is the covenant that was made on Mt. Sinai. If you'll look at the map of this chart for a moment, by the way as I said to those who came in early, this chart is not inspired at all, this is simply my understanding. And some of the things, if I had a larger chart, I'd like to modify and clarify a little, but it basically I think it's true to the Scriptures. This represents Sinai and the giving of the law. When the Mosaic covenant was given remember it was given to Moses and it included the Ten Commandments, it also included

the ceremonies, the offerings, the sacrifices, the priesthood, and then it included civil law, by which Israel lived as a nation, civil and political law. So it really was made up of three types of law, moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law. Now the law was a conditional covenant. That covenant was given and it was valid as long as Israel was obedient. In fact in Exodus chapter 24, when the covenant is confirmed by a sacrifice, the animal is slain and the blood is sprinkled upon the covenant promises representing God, those that God had given Moses, and then the blood was sprinkled on the people, because they were responsible to keep the law. And if they did not keep the law, the covenant of the law was broken.

Now we don't have time to devote to the age of the law, let me just say this. The law was given for two basic reasons. The moral part of the law was given to show men that they were sinners. Paul says, “By the law, is the knowledge of sin.” You see the Ten Commandments were never given to save anyone, they were never given anyone as a means of salvation. Of course if someone could have kept the Ten Commandments from the time that he drew his first breath until the time that he drew his last, he would have inherited eternal life. But no one was able to keep the law, because we all are born with a sin nature. The only person who ever kept the law was our Lord Jesus Christ. The law was designed to show men their sin. And if you were really honest with God, and if you tried to live by the law, it wouldn't take you but just a few moments to realize that you couldn't keep the law either. Particularly, if you see the law as Jesus interpreted it, as a law that pertained not only to the outward, but pertained to the heart as well. So that when a man looked upon a woman to lust after that was adultery. When a man hated someone else, that was murder. Now, the moral law then was given to show men their sin.

The ceremonial law was given men to give them a giant size continuous object lesson of what would happen when Jesus Christ came. Every time an animal was slain, it was God's way of saying, “There's a Lamb coming from God who is to take away the sins

of the world.” Every time the priest slew one of the bullocks for a sin offering, that was designed to tell men that atonement comes only through sacrifice. So down through this long period of time, this was the age of Israel’s instruction, instruction in grace by the ceremonies which pointed forward to Christ, instruction in righteousness, by the moral law, which they constantly broke. In fact, they broke it immediately after they were given it. So the Mosaic covenant then was a conditional covenant which Israel broke, and finally, as a result of their breaking of the covenant, they came under the judgment of the great dispersion. Now the law was given on Sinai, and the law came to an end when Jesus Christ died on the cross at Calvary, for there the veil of the temple was rid and torn from top to bottom and that was God’s visible way of saying, “All of the ceremonial law and all that went with that has been done away with.”

By the way, some people have great difficulty in the fact that with this of course, the Ten Commandments were done away with as a way of life. And some people have the greatest of difficulty with that because you see, they’re bound by custom to things which they’ve been taught ever since they were a child in Sunday school, and I was taught those same things too, and it’s difficult to throw them off. And when we read something in the Bible like Romans chapter 6 and verse 14 that we’re not under law, but under grace, we have a problem with that. We’ve been taught the other way so long. But let me remind you, that God got along very well for thousands of years before the giving of the law and he is just as able to get along after that. As a matter of fact, nine of the ten Mosaic covenants of the moral law are repeated in the church age as exhortations anyway. The only one that is not is the Sabbath law, which pertained to the seventh day, Saturday. So don’t say on Sunday, that this is the Sabbath, it isn’t. Tomorrow is the Sabbath, the seventh day. Sunday may be a day of rest, a Sabbath, but it is not the Sabbath. The law had been done away with. That’s why, by the way, the believers met on the first day of the week, because they celebrated the resurrection of Christ. Sunday is

the Lord’s day, the first day of the week. So the Mosaic covenant was a conditional covenant, broken by the nation and as a result, they suffered dispersion.

The Palestinian covenant is described for us in Deuteronomy chapter 30, verses 1 through 10, and I’m not going to have time to read it, but you put down Deuteronomy chapter 30, verses 1 through 10, and Leviticus chapter 26, verses 1 through 46. Now let me tell you about the Palestinian covenant. This covenant, which has not been given a great deal of attention, but which should have had a great deal of attention, was a covenant that concerned the possession of the land of Palestine, as you can see, the land that was promised to Abraham. The Palestinian covenant is an unconditional covenant too. It is a covenant that guarantees that the nation Israel shall ultimately have the land that has been promised to them. But the interesting thing about the Palestinian covenant is that contained in this covenant is also the condition for the enjoyment of their promises regarding the land. You might ask the question, “Why is it if God has given that great land to Israel, why is it that today they do not have it? If he has unconditionally promised it in the Abrahamic covenant, why is it that they do not have it today?” The Palestinian covenant explains why, because the Palestinian covenant states that, while they have title to the land by the Abrahamic promises, they do not enjoy their land unless they are, as a nation, in belief. In other words, if they are in unbelief, they do not enjoy it. As long as they are disobedient, they do not enjoy it, even though it’s their land. But that Palestinian covenant goes on to say that when they are, when they are removed from unbelief into belief then God shall restore them to their land.

To illustrate, suppose I were to say to one of my children, after they graduated from high school, they’ve long ago graduated from college, but suppose I were to have said to them, “Grace, since you’ve done so well in high school, and you’ve managed to get through, and you’re only sixteen and you’ve made all A’s, well, I’m going to give you an automobile. And I’m going to put this in your name. But Grace, I want to remind you, that there are laws to be obeyed, and if you get more than two tickets speeding,

even though the car is your car, remember, you are living in my house and I still have jurisdiction over you until you're twenty-one,” that's what I used to tell my daughter, “As long as you're in this house, I have jurisdiction over you.” Once she reached her twenty-first birthday, when she was going to SMU, she knew that I was going to send her a telegram that she was no longer, that she was twenty-one, that she was now an adult, but she was still under my jurisdiction because she was still actually in my house. I had a lot of fun over that. But anyway, suppose that I tell my daughter that, and I say, “In other words, Grace, as long as you are obedient, you can have your car and use it. But if you are disobedient, even though the car is yours, it's in your name, I'm going to take away the use of it from you. I'm going to ground you.”

Now that is precisely the condition in which Israel is with respect to their land. God said, “As long as you are obedient to me, you shall have the land and you shall be able to enjoy that which is rightfully yours.” But of course Israel immediately launched into unbelief. And the reason that Israel has never had the land to this time is because she, as a nation, has not believed yet, in the Messiah. But the promises still are there, and the land is theirs, title to that land belongs to the nation Israel, and the Bible tells us of a future day, when Israel shall believe in the Messiah, and then the land that is hers by title, shall become hers by possession.

Isn't it a startling thing that Israel having received the law, having been told of the Palestinian covenant, immediately began that long descent into unbelief, which led to the seventy years captivity, do you remember it? Now the seventy years captivity was a captivity because of national unbelief. And they went into captivity in Babylonia for seven years and finally a remnant of them came back, but only a remnant. And the remnant was back in the land when Jesus came. Now when the Lord Jesus came, Israel rejected him, they crucified him, which was their crowning sin. And at 70 A.D. we had the dispersion, the beginning of the dispersion to all the nations of the earth. Today,

Israel is dispersed to the four corners of the earth. And this has been going on for nineteen hundred years.

You know if you were a Jewish person, you were not a believer and you could listen to reason, I'd like to ask you a question. This is what I would ask you, “If because of unbelief, national unbelief, God sent you for seventy years into captivity, pray tell, what sin must it be that has produced, now, a dispersion that has gone on for nineteen hundred years? If national unbelief, before the time of the coming of the Messiah, may produce a captivity of seventy years, then the sin that you have committed must be infinitely greater than that sin of the Old Testament. Pray explain to me what that sin could possible be.” You see there is no answer. The reason that Israel has been nineteen hundred years in dispersion is because the sin that has been committed is infinitely greater than the unbelief of the Old Testament. For in the full light of the complete revelation of God in Jesus Christ, Israel rejected that revelation, was responsible, with Gentiles, for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And as a result, has been sent into a dispersion that has lasted nineteen hundred years.

Well, we'll have to go on. The next covenant the Bible speaks of is the Davidic covenant. Now the Davidic covenant is set forth for us in 2 Samuel chapter 7, and also in 1 Chronicles chapter 17. The Davidic covenant, and all of these you see, are covenants that proceed out of this Abrahamic one. See Abraham was promised, remember, a land and the Palestinian covenant conditions the enjoyment of the promise of the land. Abraham was also told that out of his seed would come kings, in chapter 17 and verse 6 of Genesis. And that promise is expanded in the Davidic covenant. It is stated that out of David, for David was a descendent of Abraham, David was in Abraham's line, he was Abraham's seed in his day, from David, the promise is made that someone shall come to rule and reign upon a throne over all of the house of Jacob. So the Davidic covenant promises a king. By the way, in the Davidic covenant too there is also the same condition that was in the Palestinian covenant. As long as you believe, this promise shall

be fulfilled, but if you are in disobedience, then the promise shall not be fulfilled, so that here we have the conditions with respect to the king.

So finally, we come to the new covenant, and will you turn to Jeremiah chapter 31, this is the last of the great covenants, Jeremiah chapter 31. You know according to my watch I started four minutes after eight and it's two minutes to eight according to my watch. So I'm going to take six minutes before we stop, because we ought to take a look at this new covenant of Jeremiah chapter 31. Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31, now when you look at it, it's very important in the Epistle to the Hebrews this becomes an extremely important revelation. Verse 31 of Jeremiah 31, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:” By the way, the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews, when he sees this new covenant, he knows that the old covenant made at Sinai is going to be done away with and he argues on this basis. He says, remember Jeremiah said a new covenant, and the fact that he said a new covenant meant that the old covenant was insufficient, was invalid, would one day be done away with. And you Jews are in, you Jewish professing Christians who are in danger of going back to Judaism, you're going back to a covenant that is no longer valid, as the Old Testament prophesied.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, 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. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Will you notice that last statement? You see, all of these covenants, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Palestinian, the Davidic, have omitted one very significant thing. And the thinking, spiritually thinking Israelite, perhaps would have thought of it. Lord, how is it possible for me to ever inherit any promises from Thee, for I am in sin, I deserve judgment. What about my sins? Now all of these promises, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, have nothing to say about the forgiveness of sins. And that is supplied by the new covenant, for in the new covenant, the primary thing promised is that God is going to forgive sin. And because sin is forgiven, then the Davidic promises may be fulfilled, the Palestinian may come to pass, and the Abrahamic, the mother of all the covenants, may reach its fruition. So the new covenant then promises forgiveness of sins.

Now will you turn to the New Testament and we just want to see, before we close, how Jesus Christ has fulfilled the new covenant. He has inaugurated it. Matthew chapter 26, and verse 26, Matthew 26 and verse 26, you know if the disciples had been great students of the Bible I don't think they would have been able to contain themselves when they heard our Lord at the last supper, institute and inaugurate the new covenant. And he does it of course, in figurative fashion. He does it at the Lord's supper. Because you see, he still has to suffer at the cross. But in the light of what is going to come to pass, he says in verse 26, Matthew writes,

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. For I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

So you see, what Jesus Christ did was to come in fulfillment of the promises, he was the seed of Abraham, he was the seed of David, he came, was incarnate, he went to

the cross, before he came to the cross he sat down with the apostles, instituted the Lord's supper as a memorial of what he would do. Finally he came as the sacrifice, the animal slain on which the covenant was cut, made. He died on the cross at Calvary crying out, “My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken me?” That was the final fulfillment of what was pictured in Abraham's sacrifice of the animals, when the Lamb of God came. On the basis of this sacrifice, God providing the Lamb, the promises, all of the promises of the Old Testament, have been inaugurated in the mind and purpose of God. In other words, the basis for the forgiveness of sins, the basis for the preparation of the people for the reception of the promises has been accomplished in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

And now, we live in the church age, we celebrate the Lord's supper. We of course, when we believe in Jesus Christ, we are baptized in token of the fact that we have believed in him, we come into the local church, we observe the Lord's table in token of the fact that we recognize that Jesus has instituted the new covenant with the forgiveness of sins. But you might ask me, “Well how do we get to do this? Was not this Israel's covenant? Was not this her forgiveness of sins?” Well we cannot go into all of the details of this, but you'll remember the passage I read in Romans. In the Old Testament God said that Israel was called, and called to this great task of salvation and testimony in order that others might be reached with the good news. If you'll read the book of Isaiah you'll read over and over again that Israel was a nation that was a missionary nation. Through them the Gentiles were to be converted, in other words, God never had Israel as the aim, I mean as the goal, simply in mind. He had them as a means to an end, the salvation of the Gentiles. And so, since Israel has been disobedient, they have been dispersed, the Gentiles have been grafted into the promise, into the olive tree and they partake in the present age of the promises that have been made to Israel. This does not mean that the church equals Israel, but simply that the church has entered into these promises because the church is in Christ, and Christ is really the seed, as Paul has stated in Galatians chapter 3.

Now the Bible also states that Jesus Christ is going to come again the second time. And when he comes again the second time, he will make visible the truths that are now true, but yet are invisible. That is, he will come and manifest himself as king. He will restore Israel to her promises by means of great tribulation, which shall come to pass upon the earth. Israel shall be brought by this great judgment. They shall be brought to faith in the Messiah to come. And when the nation comes to faith, then as Paul stated, all Israel shall be saved. Our Lord shall come and shall establish the kingdom and the Abrahamic promises made hundreds, thousands of years ago, shall come to pass in the Kingdom of God. Abram, his name shall be great. His people, his seed, shall have a land. They shall have a king, who is Jesus Christ.

Now one last thing, you'll notice I have on the board here, the Lord and the church in the air. The Bible teaches that, we who will live in the church age have the hope of the rapture, the hope that Jesus Christ is going to come from heaven and catch up the believers, so that they escape the time of great tribulation upon the earth. Paul writes of this in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10. He says, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come to pass on the earth, to try all who dwell upon the earth." And so we look for the second coming of Jesus Christ in the air, at any moment. He might come tonight, he might come tomorrow. And the believers in the church of Jesus Christ shall be caught up to meet him in the air. Shortly thereafter, apparently, the time is not really specified in the Bible, the tribulation begins. And God fulfills, by means of this, the promises made to Abraham, confirmed through the Palestinian, Davidic and new covenants.

Now that's a lot of material. And if your head's swimming a little bit, that's perfectly normal, and natural. I've been very plain of course, it's because your thinking is muddled, that you don't understand it all, naturally. [Laughter] But, the facts are that this is the story of the Bible in a nut shell. And if you will get this frame work, it will help

you to understand all Scripture. And of course, as you read and study the passages of Scripture will fall into their proper place, in time. So don't be disturbed if you don't understand everything. I'm sure that a great deal of it has already become yours. Let's close with a word of prayer, and then if you have a question or two you can ask them.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this great section of Scripture on the covenants. We think of the fact that the promises which Thou hast made for us are promises made by a God who does not go back on his word. And while Lord it seems very, very irrational to expect these things today, looking at it from a human stand point, we know that Thy word is true and that Thou wilt fulfill them, all of these promises. And so we pray that as we read and study the Bible, the Spirit may enlighten us and give us understanding in these things. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Now if you have any questions, feel free to fire away. Yes ma'am.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] The question is, “Are we going to study the second coming?” Well next time I think the subject for next time is the kingdom isn't it, the Kingdom of God on the earth? Does someone got a schedule? Here's one, Kingdom of God on the earth. So we will, I'll introduce it with a discussion of the second advent to the earth. We will not study this in the sense as spend a lot of time on it. You know when you try to cover all of the Bible in twelve lessons. [Laughter] A few years back I gave ninety-five messages on the Gospel of John, just the Gospel of John. And I really hurried a little bit there. So, to do the whole Bible in twelve is quite a difficult task.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No I don't think you can say that all of the things are satanic, necessarily. I do think that some of the things are probably satanic. That is, they're not of God.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] I think we should get excited in this sense, that the Bible says that there will be a nation Israel upon the earth in the last days. We went hundreds of years, remember, without any nation of Israel in the land of Palestine. And then in 1948 in May, suddenly, the nation Israel came into existence again after nineteen hundred years. Well that's a, that's an interesting thing because the Bible does say there will be a nation Israel on the earth. So it does appear that we may have seen, in our lifetime, the laying of the foundations for the fulfillment of the promises. But now strictly speaking according to the Bible, something might happen tomorrow. Russia may, or China may decide to go over and gobble up all of their territory. There's nothing in the Bible that says that couldn't happen. Then we would be back where we were before 1948, that's possible, but it does seem after nineteen hundred years, nothing like that having happened, that now that Israel has her land, that this is a significant fact.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] In unbelief, in unbelief. They, in other words, the providence of God may be laying the foundation, or the ground work, for the fulfillment of the promises. I think also there are other things too. Let me just mention one thing. As you know the Old Testament is written in Hebrew for the most part. There are a few chapters in Daniel and Ezra, written in Aramaic. Now, Hebrew had a history very much like English. If you

were to go back and read Chaucer, you know, it's very difficult to make sense of it. It's English, it's pure English, pure English in Chaucer's day. But you need a dictionary in order to read it. At least I do, you may be a scholar. But I need a dictionary to read Chaucer, because the English language, being a spoken over many hundreds of years, has undergone change like every language does. Now take Hebrew, Hebrew of course, began to, was spoken in ancient times. And then when the Jews went into captivity in Babylon, they began to speak Aramaic, spoke the language of the Chaldeans. They dropped their Hebrew, not entirely, but they learned a new language. And they stayed there seventy years and they came back speaking Aramaic. Some still spoke Hebrew, but generally speaking, they spoke Aramaic. But their Bible was written in Hebrew. Now all of these years, the Hebrews have not been speaking Hebrew. And strictly speaking of course, unless they went to the rabbi school or some other school, they were not able to read their Old Testament very well, the Jews. It was written in Hebrew. But of course, when they came back in the land, Hebrew became the national language again. Now I've taken modern Hebrew. And modern Hebrew is very closely related to biblical Hebrew. In other words, anyone who can speak Hebrew in the land of Palestine today can also read the Bible, the Old Testament. Isn't that an amazing thing? In other words, all of those years of transition in language did not go on in Hebrew, because it was not spoken. And now, after all this time, they go back and they are relatively in the language as they were back as they went into the Babylonian captivity. I would say, it seems to me that's purposeful, it's the providence of God, so that they would be prepared for the reading of the Scriptures. Just things like this you know, would seem to indicate that we may be living in momentous times.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] That's what Paul says you remember, in chapter 11 and verse 32. He speaks about mercy being shown to them, and through the mercy shown to them, we Gentiles have been blessed. In order that, through the mercy shown to use, ultimately, they might be made jealous and return to the fold. That's the program of God you see. Gentiles had the promises back here. Then the Jews had it when Abraham was called out, and his family, now the Gentiles. And the result has been that we have Gentile unbelief and Jewish unbelief, in order that God might show mercy upon all, so that both Jews and Gentiles will recognize that God's salvation is by way of mercy. That's what he means, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," that he's worked out this overall plan. So that individuals who are brought to faith in Jesus Christ know his mercy, and nations too, know the mercy of God, so that the kingdom is going to be composed of Jews and Gentiles who know the mercy of God.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Yes, as far as we can tell, of course many details of prophecy are not too plain, but as far as we can tell, the kingdom is differed only by believers. But since they do have children and since we know at the end of the kingdom, Revelation chapter 20, verses 7 through 10, there is a rebellion against Jesus Christ, amazing thing when you think about it, and read Revelation chapter 20. So, unbelief must arise in the kingdom when Jesus Christ was here. It's God's last movement to show men how sinful they really are. That's one of his great purposes down through the ages is to show man his sin. And finally in...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**

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