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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Divine Purpose

“The Nature of the Present Age 3: The Viewpoint of James – III” TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, again, we give Thee praise and thanks for the word of God which is worthy of all of our study and all of our meditation and all of our intense concentration, and we know that throughout all of our lifetime, it more than meets all of the attention that we might pay to it. We thank Thee for the help that Thou hast given to us in understanding the word of God and we pray, Lord, that we may continue to have the divine help of the Holy Spirit, and may we also have the desire and motivation to apply ourselves to the study of the word of God and to the carrying out of the Scriptures in our lives. We thank Thee for these portions that we've been thinking about, and we pray that we may be led into an understanding of them.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Now, for those of you who have been listening and following along in our last two studies, we're studying the nature of the present age and the viewpoint of James, the brother of our Lord, as reflected in Acts Chapter 15, Verse 1 through -- well, really through Verse 35, but we simply say it through Verse 19. We have commented upon the fact that many people consider this to be a very important citation from the Old Testament and very important for New Testament eschatology, and so we've been looking

at it with that in mind... [tape error] and very important for New Testament eschatology [tape error] and so we've been looking at it with that in mind. We tried to do it in some detail. We looked at the New Testament context of James' citation of Amos in Acts Chapter 15, and then we went to the Old Testament, and we looked at the Old Testament context of the citation of James, spending a bit of time on Amos Chapter 9, Verse 7 through Verse 10. Then on the section that contains the citation itself, Verses 11 and 12 of Amos 9, and the following context, Verse 13 through Verse 15, in which Amos goes on to speak about some of the other things that are going to take place when the Davidic covenant reaches its culmination.

We spent some time, though in not in great detail, in the comparison of the Old and New Testament texts. And for those of you who remember when we were doing that, there were one or two things that we especially paid attention to, and one was the rendering of the expression of Verse 16 of Acts Chapter 15 where we have after these things in the New Testament, but in both the Old Testament of Amos Chapter 9 in Verse 11 and in the Old Testament in both the Hebrew and the Greek, we have the expressions in that day.

We, of course, do not know because James does not tell us, that he made that change intentionally, and so we assume that he made intentionally because of one or two other factors. We cannot be absolutely certain, but generally James follows the Greek Old Testament translation. In this case, he does not. And because he does not, we assume that probably he intended to make the change. And there are some other reasons also why we may assume that this is an intentional change on his part. And if it's an intentional change on his part, then it gives us further insight into the way in which he understood the section from Amos Chapter 9. We looked at that.

We commented also upon the fact that in the New Testament the text reads, “after these things I will return,” and in the Old Testament there is no reference to I will return. In the Old Testament it is simply “in that day I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of

David.” So that we have to ask ourselves a question, did he add the words I will return as a reference to the second coming or did he intend by that simply to underline the fact that to restore the temple would be to restore it again. So that’s a question that it’s very difficult for us to answer. Probably we cannot answer that one.

The chances are we said that the expression “I will return” is probably not a reference to the Second Advent of our Lord. It could be, but if it were a reference to the Second Advent of our Lord, it would be the only place where this verb is used in that way, and so in the light of the usage, in the light of the fact that it’s not found in the Hebrew text or in the Greek text of the Old Testament, we’ll just have to put a question mark in back of that and probably say that the more reasonable interpretation is simply to say that James intended to stress that this would be a building again of the tabernacle of David, which he states in the context anyway. So those were the major points that we stress there. Some other things that are very interesting but they don’t really pertain to the question of eschatology too directly, and so we haven’t bothered deal with them. Then in our last study we came to the hermeneutical and exegetical analysis of the text, and we looked first at the amillennial analysis of the texts. It’s true of amillennialists as well as of premillennialists that not all amillennialists think that same nor do all premillennialists think the same. And so in picking out some names I sought to pick out the more prominent ones and generally those who have handled the particular question in some detail. It would be possible for me to pick out a few men and use them as strawmen. Knock them down very easily and move on, but I think that I have picked out the strongest supporters of each of these views.

We discussed Oswald T. Allis for example. Professor Allis looks at the use of James --of James’ use of Amos Chapter 9 and states the issue in this context is the relationship of Gentiles to the law in the church. He says, the citation that is found in Verse 16 and 17 refers to the building up of the church and the gathering in of Gentiles into the church. And I have sought to critique that view by pointing out that, first of all,

Professor Allis does not even discuss the possibility that the issue that troubled the church in Antioch, which was discussed in Jerusalem, may well have been settled by Peter's statement in Verse 11. As you know the context of Acts 15 says they had this difficulty arise in the church at Antioch. They had a lot of debate and discussion over the matter. It was so difficult for them that they decided to send Paul and others to Jerusalem. They went to Jerusalem along the way. They told about the conversion of the Gentiles, brought a great deal of blessing to the churches along the way. They arrived in Jerusalem. There again had debate and finally after considerable debate. In fact, it was debate not a little. Then Peter arose and said after a few verses -- in verse 11, he talks about the fact we shouldn't put we shouldn't attempt to put a law on the shoulders of the Gentiles. We shouldn't test God in that way, to put upon -- a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. And further he said that individuals had been cleansed as to their hearts by faith, and then in his concluding statement he said, but through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus we believe that we're saved in the same manner as they.

Now, I think that that is something of a climax, and I laid stress upon the fact that Peter speaks as a spokesman for the consensus. He says, but we -- not simply I -- but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that was the issue that was being discussed in Jerusalem. The issue was the relationship of circumcision to the salvation of Gentiles. You could put the whole epistle to the Galatians right here because Paul takes the same viewpoint. He says that when you raise the question of whether a person should be circumcised in order to be saved, you're raising the question of the purity of the grace of God. And Paul felt so strongly about it that he felt that anyone who preached that kind of gospel should come under the curse of God. Read Galatians Chapter 1 Verse -- well really Verse 1 through Verse 9, and you will see what he has to say about that. So when Peter says, “but we believe” he's talking about the body that

through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they, they the Gentiles, we the Jews. That settles the issue it seems to me.

Now, that is a point that is overlooked by almost everyone in the reading of this passage. They are so anxious to get down to discuss the quotation that they have forgotten the flow of thought. Now, you can tell that this was a climax because the very next verse says in Verse 12 “and all the multitude fell silent,” and they began to listen to Barnabas and Paul as they related how many miracles and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. And then we read, “and after they became silent.” In other words, they had this interlude of recounting of the things that had happened, and then again the multitude became silent, it was at that point that James speaks. And James said, “Men and brethren, listen to me: Simeon.” He refers back to what Peter has said previously. “Simeon has related how God at the first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets.”

Now, notice he uses the term plural. So he suggests that this truth that the Gentiles should be saved and saved as Gentiles is a truth that one can find not simply in Amos but in others of the prophets as well. So at that point he goes on to say to this agree the words of the prophets, as it stands written after these things I will return and build up again the tabernacle of David that has fallen.

Now, Professor Allis has said that the citation refers to the building up of the church and the gathering in of Gentiles, and I’ve critiqued it by saying he fails to consider that it’s possible that Verses 1 through 11 represents the settling of the issue and that James now speaks to deal with a question that would naturally arise well, then what’s the significance of this great movement of the Gentiles that has taken place? That would be a natural question that would arise in a discussion at this point.

I further criticized Professor Allis by saying that he fails to hound the relationship of Amos 9:7 through 10. He doesn’t even refer back to it and seek to handle the context

of Amos 9:7 through 10, which is the immediately preceding context. So he doesn't deal with the relation of those verses to the present age.

Now, one of the reasons -- I don't know of course what went on in Professor Allis's mind -- but one of the reasons that might have deterred him was the simple fact that the study of those verses would not have been harmonious with his interpretation. I also criticized him by saying that he fails to see that the citation plainly teaches the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. Notice that James cites Amos, and Amos says after these things I will return and build again the tabernacle of David, which has fallen. So it's evident that what is being rebuilt is something that once stood but now has fallen and that could hardly be a reference to the church. And in the light of the use of the term David, this is a figurative expression but in the light of the use of David always as a reference to the historic David suggests that this is a reference to the Davidic dynasty and to the Davidic kingdom, and he is suggesting that after what is happening now we may look forward to the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and the Davidic kingdom. That would be particularly comforting, I suggested, to the pharisaic believing element who had raised the question first about circumcising the Gentiles. They've been rebuffed. They've been shown by the apostles to be wrong. And so it would be natural for James to say now you have come at this thinking of the preeminence of Israel and while the preeminence of Israel is a truth of the word of God, it doesn't pertain to the way of salvation in this instance, but it does have reference with regard to the future. So I could see how James might -- as I mentioned, someone has said the pharisaic element had been silenced and what they needed was soothing. And so James follows now and deals with that question. Also, pointed out that the use of these terms fallen, ruins, raise up, breeches thereof are not suitable for the church. In the case of the church, the Lord Jesus had said I will build my church in Matthew 16:18. And if you'll study the use of the term and the flow of thought in the gospels and in the acts and the epistles, I think you will see that in the case

of the church, we are talking about something that is being built, not something that is being rebuilt.

Now, one of the other amillennial interpreters is Anthony Hoekema, or Hookuma [phonetic] is really the way you should pronounce it. Anthony Hoekema believes that this is just a figurative statement of believers being gathered into the community of God's people. To refer the citation to events still in the future thousands -- he says thousands of years away how know they are thousands of years away I don't know, but anyway he says that's unnatural. Well, I think you can judge for yourself whether it's unnatural or not. Actually the words are simply the words of Amos. And if Amos legitimately may refer to the future in this way, I see no reason why it's unnatural to inform the people in Jerusalem that after these things, these events are to take place. Professor Hoekema makes an exegetical blunder in his brief discussion of this passage referring one of the this's to the wrong antecedent, and if you're looking for exegesis of the passage you will not find it in his book, *The Bible and The Future*.

Now, when we need to turn to the dispensational approach to this particular question tonight, and I'll try to analyze it as simply as I can. Again repeating the dispensationalists are just like anyone else. They don't always follow one another. Professor Hoekema, for example, when he was to criticize the dispensationalists, he turns to the New Scofield Reference Bible. Well, that's not a bad idea because, generally speaking, the New Scofield Reference Bible does represent generally dispensational interpretation.

In the New Scofield Bible in the discussion of Acts Chapter 15 you will find these points made. The Bible says the presence of Gentile believers on the earth at the Second Advent indicates Gentiles are not required to become Jews by circumcision. In other words, the point the Scofield Bible makes is the passage that James cites does say that the Lord is going to return, the tabernacle of David is going to be rebuilt, the residue of men are going to seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called.

So the very fact that there're Gentiles on the earth at the time of the Second Advent of our Lord and believing Gentiles who -- over whom the name of God has been called, which is a reference really to the fact that they belong to the people of God. That very fact then indicates that Gentiles are not required to submit to circumcision in order to be saved. Now, I would like to say at this point to the editors of the Scofield Reference Bible, how does that prove that. The fact that Gentiles are going to be saved and will be on the earth at the time of the Second Advent of our Lord as people of God and will come -- and Gentiles will come to know the Lord as a result of the Second Advent of the Lord, how does that settle the question of whether a person should be circumcised in order to saved now? So I find a little bit of difficulty, perhaps a lack of explanation of the significance of what the notes attempt to say. One of the things the dispensationalists have avoided saying, as a general rule, is this: They've sought to say that the Old Testament does not anywhere predict the kind of Gentile salvation that we have today. That is an election of Gentiles from the Gentile world. And many dispensationalists, therefore, make the point that this is something new and that this age is an age not referred to in the Old Testament. No question whether Gentiles should be saved ultimately but so far as the present age is concerned and so far as this elect number of Gentiles as a part of the Gentile whole, many of the dispensationalists have affirmed that the Old Testament does not predict this.

Now, if that is true, that is if that's a representation of some of their views, then one might reasonably say what application then does the citation of this particular prophetic word have to do with the problem in Jerusalem. But remember if the question is settled in Verse 11 all of that is discussion that is necessary and that more and more I have come to believe that that is the case. The issue was settled at Verse 11. Another related issue arises with Verse 12 and 13, and that's why it's impossible for anyone to relate the quotation to the problem that occurred at Antioch and was discussed in Jerusalem. And it's a striking thing, if you look at the amillennialists, if you look at the premillennialists of dispensational stripe, and the premillennialists of historic

premillennialism, not any of them are able to relate the quotation from Amos to the question at issue by grammatical historical method of interpretation. The only way in which amillennialists can be is by engaging in spiritualizing. That is, to make the tabernacle of David equal the Christian church for the people of God and that, of course, is ruled out on hermeneutical grounds.

So that's one approach the New Scofield Reference Bible's approach. There're other approaches by dispensationalists. James Rosscup, who is a professor at Talbot's Seminary, a graduate of Dallas, a former student of mine actually, wrote his doctoral dissertation at Dallas Seminary on Acts Chapter 15 and the quotation from Amos. There is one point that Professor Rosscup mentions. He does not labor it, to my mind, quite as much as he might have, but he does make the point that in Verse 16 when James says adding something not found in the Hebrew and Greek text of Amos after these things he says it's possible that James has in mind the context of Amos 9:7 through 10.

Now, that's a very important insight, and I wish that Professor Rosscup had developed it more and had really made it part of his interpretation because it would have made his own case a good bit stronger. He takes the same general approach of the New Scofield Bible, but does see this after these things as a reference to Amos 9:7 through 10. I know you all know what Amos 9:7 through 10 is, and you're not even looking at Amos and so you know it, of course, but remember for those of you who left your Bibles and haven't even looked at them over this past week at Amos 9:7 through 10 the context of that is simply this. Amos, as the spokesman for the Lord God, says Israel has been disobedient. As a result of their disobedience, God is sending them off into disciplinary judgment that will take them over the face of the earth and they will be sifted in disciplinary judgment. But he says they will not be totally destroyed. All the sinners will be destroyed but the nation totally will not be destroyed. His elect people he will preserve in that sifting process. And when the New Testament comes historically into focus, Israel still abides in that discipline, as you probably know. So anyway Professor

Rosscup lays stress upon or some stress upon at least after these things. That is, after the time of discipline, worldwide discipline, when Israel is sent to the four corners of the earth, then Amos says I will return, I will build again the tabernacle of David that has fallen, and build it up and straighten it up that the residue of the men may seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles over whom my name is named.

So to sum up then what would be the point of these verses is simply this. That in Verse 14 we have selective Gentile salvation, which takes place at the present time. The Old Testament agreeing with that. Professor Rosscup does not acknowledge that, but the Old Testament agreeing with it. And further going on to say that after this the tabernacle of David will be rebuilt. That is, the dynasty of David will be restored and Israel shall enter into its covenantal blessings.

There is one man who, to my mind, has given up an exposition of this chapter that is very brief but who has offered this one insight, which may be worth more than almost anything else. It's Professor James M. Stifler. Stifler, I don't really know whether Stifler was a dispensationalist. He was a premillennialist. His commentary on the Book of Romans was one of the first that I read. In fact, look at my copy of his commentary of Romans. It's -- I think I bought it in 1942. I'd been saved in 1941. I was reading it in 1942. I first read along in big commentary on the epistle of the Romans. That kind of set me on the right road, and I liked Romans so much I was still in the insurance business that I got hold of Stifler's commentary, and every night I would go home and sit down with my Bible and open up the commentaries. First, new law on Romans verse by verse then Stifler, and studied the epistle verse by verse. This is an excellent commentary. Professor Stifler taught New Testament literature and exegesis at Crozier Seminary, a Baptist seminary in the north, a Yankee but unfortunately couldn't help that, and then he taught Romans. He says somewhere, I think, twenty-one times, fourteen from the original text and you can see from reading it that you've read the literature that was available to his time a very good teacher.

Well, he wrote a book on the Book of Acts and in his discussion of this it's not nearly as condensed and not nearly as significant a book as his one on Romans but in the Book on Acts he makes the point that Verse 11 settled the issue and that then the flow of thought moves on to James' desire to soothe the minds of the pharisaic believing men who had sought to impose circumcision out of misunderstanding upon the Gentiles as part of their salvation. He makes that important point, which I think almost everybody, has overlooked. Professor Stifler did not. He points out simply this, that Jewish supremacy is relevant-- or perhaps it would be better said Jewish predominance is relevant but not now. In fact, it's like that which Paul says in Romans Chapter 11 in Verse 24 when the apostle says -- I have to put on my new glasses. My, do you look like that? But anyway, the apostle writes in Romans 11 verse 24, "For if you (the Gentiles) if you were cut off from the natural wild olive and contrary to nature were grafted into a good olive, how much more shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

Now, we talk about that next week. So I don't want to belabor the point too much, but you can see that Paul in Romans 11 says that for Israel the promises belong to her. It's their olive tree into which Gentiles have been grafted. So that's what James wanted to say. There is a place for Jewish predominance, but it's a future thing, and it doesn't pertain to the church today where every member of the people of God is standing on equal ground before the Lord possessed of the same promises having the same destiny and the same covenant as the basis of their salvation. I hope we understand that.

All right. We will say then that the dispensationalists have failed to see that point. They have also failed, in my opinion, to link the present salvation of Gentiles today with the Old Testament. That is not one of the stresses of this particular passage, but it's one of the failures of dispensational premillennialism.

So we come now to historic premillennialism, and let me, first of all, define the terms. Some of you may not understand the meaning of the term historical

premillennialism. Historical premillennialism is a term that is used to define, in general, the premillennialism that characterized the Christian church historically through the centuries until the beginning of the nineteenth century when dispensational premillennialism arose. Dispensational premillennialism is about a hundred and fifty years old. Amillennialism is older. The oldest form of eschatological interpretation is historical premillennialism or premillennialism. So premillennialism, so far as we know, was the view of the early church those closest to the apostles so far as we can tell from the literature that we have were premillennialists. There were some who were not, but they didn't write anything that we can read and so consequently that difference of opinion they had and how and what kind of difference of opinion it was, we don't have any documentation for it. The earliest proponents of eschatological viewpoints were premillennialists. So we'll call that historic premillennialism; dispensational premillennialism arising around 1830. So a hundred and fifty years is the age of dispensationalism.

Amillennialism goes back to Augustan as probably its founder although some ideas existed before him in Titonius and one or two others. Modern amillennialism is a relatively recent phenomenon, too. Postmillennialism is also a relatively recent phenomenon. Premillennialism, so far as we can tell, is the historic viewpoint of the early church.

Now, I want to discuss one man at least as representative of this viewpoint. If we have time, I'll look at another. But one of them is very important, and we will refer to him because he is recognized as probably the most significant propounder of historical premillennialism. The man's name is George N. H. Peters. Might surprise you he was a Lutheran. Lutherans have been historically opposed to premillennialism. Luther was made some very condescending remarks concerning chiliasm, which is another form for premillennialism, another name. Chiliasm is the term built upon the Greek word *chilioi* which means a thousand. Premillennialism is built upon the Latin word *millea*, which

means a thousand. The two terms are the same. Luther and the Lutherans have generally had some derogatory things to say about premillennialism. On the other hand, there have been some well-known premillennialists who were Lutherans, Zis for one and George N. H. Peters.

Peters wrote three volumes. I've referred to them before. They are three big volumes. In fact, to read one of them is quite a task. To read three of them is real task. They are about twenty-one hundred pages -- and there are about twenty-one hundred pages in the three volumes and about half of the pages are small print. So it's the equivalent of about thirty-one hundred pages. And there's a whole lot of repetition in it too, which isn't useful for maintaining the greatest interest and, therefore, it's not easy to read George N. H. Peters, but it's very worthwhile to read it. He has a lot interesting things in it. Professor or Mr. Peters referred to this particular passage in eight or ten or twelve different places in his *The Theocratic Kingdom*, which is the title of his work.

Look up all of the references just specifically again in order to see everything that he had to say on this, and this is what he had to say about it. He points out that the context of both Amos and Acts indicate the rejection and overthrow of the Davidic kingdom by God on account of Israel's apostasy.

Just think of the situation. Here we have Israel has crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. The great enemies of the faith in the time of our Lord and in the time of the apostles the great enemies are part of the nation Israel. It's true that the Gentiles from time to time persecute the apostle as he makes his missionary journeys but the real most significant enemies of the Christian faith are found in Israel. Further, as you read this particular chapter, Acts Chapter 15, it becomes evident from the statements of Paul and Barnabas and Peter and James that there has been a Jewish remnant preserved, and they represent that remnant is what Paul talks about in Romans 11 when he says the remnant according to the election of grace. He's talking about Jewish people who were saved. So Peters

points out then that the context of both Amos and Acts indicates the rejection and overthrow of the Davidic kingdom by God on account of apostasy.

In other words, what Amos prophesized many hundreds of years ago has now come to pass. Israel's in rejection. They've been cast off. They've been scattered to the four corners of the earth. They are under divine discipline. The situation is plain. Peters goes on to point out that in the case of the salvation of the Gentiles, we have an elect number of Gentiles who've been chosen by God and called to salvation. They are identified with the remnant of Israel in the church. So in that sense, they are in the church as fellow members of the church with the apostles and the others who made up the Christian church at that time. Further, they are in the church, and they are the recipients of the blessings of the covenant of Abraham and the covenant of David. The Davidic dynasty is in ruins as Amos had said, but these individuals are united together in this one body, which Acts calls the church. Peters goes on to point out there is not a particle of proof that the Davidic kingdom is reestablished in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Peters goes on to point out in other places that that's the foundation for the establishment of the Davidic kingdom in the future, and that is an absolute essential upon which the reestablishment of the kingdom in the earth will be built, but that there is not a particle of proof that the Davidic kingdom has been reestablished in the death and resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, he says if you appeal to the passage in Luke Chapter 1 in Verse 31 through Verse 33 where we read at the birth of our Lord remember these words, “And, behold, you shall conceive and bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. And this one shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob under the ages; and of his kingdom there shall not be an end.” If you appeal to the text as the basis for the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom at this time in the ministry of our Lord, then, in effect, you are saying that the house of Jacob --see

our text here says he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever that the house of Jacob has really been cut off forever and further he has not really the king of the Jews as it is stated. You kept the point he's making here is a very, I think, a very significant one because that text says he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. But if he's reigning now, where is the house of Jacob? If the church is supplanting the house of Jacob, then the house of Jacob has been cut off. And if the house of Jacob has been cut off, then what about those promises in the Old Testament in which that specifically is stated would never happen. So that's the point that he wants to make. He says the apostles did not preach that the kingdom had been established, and he goes on to discuss Acts Chapter 2, Verse 14 through Verse 36 where Peter preaches there, then Acts Chapter 3, Verse 12 through Verse 26.

You'll notice when you read these passages that Peter does not say that the kingdom has been established. He says, if you will turn to the Lord, then he will send from the Lord Jesus from heaven and then the promises of God from the Old Testament will be fulfilled. Times of refreshing shall take place and so on. So the preaching of the apostles is not the preaching of an established kingdom. It's the preaching of a kingdom to come providing the nation Israel responds to the messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. So he makes that point.

Now, Peter's view has some advantages. In the first place, it was the view of the early church and, secondly, there's less discontinuity between Israel and the church, which is one of the characteristics of dispensationalism that I think, may suffer in this particular context. In other words, the presence of Gentile believers in the present day as an elect people of God is a necessary result of Israel's scattering to the four corners of the earth.

Now, James doesn't lay great stress on that because, after all, you looked out over the Jerusalem gathering and you would see every indication of what had taken place. Israel is the enemy of the truth.

Here is the remnant, and the remnant is there and a great number of Gentiles are pressing into the Christian church. Well, that would, according to Amos' prophecy and other prophecies, be in accord with what the Old Testament had said all the way back as far as Deuteronomy 32. Do you remember what God said in Deuteronomy 32:21 through Moses to the children of Israel? Well, we'll talk about this a bit next week, but I think maybe I should mention it right now. In Deuteronomy 32 and what is the song of Moses, this is what we read Verse 15,

“But Jeshurun...” That's a name for Israel. “...waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness...”

by the way this is the song of Moses is Moses telling the children of Israel what will befall them in the latter days. Notice Verse 29 of Chapter 31,

“ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.”

So in the prophecy of the song in verse 32 he's explaining what's going to happen.

“Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” He talks about how they provoked him to jealousy with strange God's and so on. The very same thing that Amos talks about finally at the latter stages of their apostasy in Amos 9. And then in Verse 20 we read, “he said, I will hide my face from them. I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not

God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities:” Now, notice, “...and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.”

In other words, I'll use the Gentiles in order to bring Israel to jealousy and ultimately to return to the blessing of God. That Paul, in Romans 11, will lay great stress upon. He cites that very passage in Chapter 10, Verse 19. Refers to it in Chapter 11, Verse 11 through Verse 15. So in other words then, this is the view of the early church. It makes room for the presence of Gentile salvation today provoking Israel to jealousy. It's in harmony with Israelitish apostasy at the present time as reflected in the context of Acts Chapter 15. It harmonizes with passages in the Old Testament like Deuteronomy 32 and many other passages of the prophets and with the whole covenantal system.

So I think maybe we've got about ten minutes. I would like to have some questions from you. So we'll discuss some of the things we've been talking about. I was trying to rush through so we'd have time for a few questions. So if you raise your hand, I'll be glad to try to answer your questions. All right, Warren.

[Question] If I understand it correctly you're saying...

[Johnson] Be sure and speak loud. You are speaking loud enough, but be sure to speak loud enough so everybody can hear.

[Question] James, if I understand correctly. James is in agreement with the passage in Amos 9 in that Amos 9 is talking about the scattering of the nations and James seeing the events that are taking place at this time to deal with being scattered and disciplined. What James is seeing --

[Johnson] And Gentile salvation too.

[Question] Gentile salvation is taking place, but -- and that is what he's referring to when he says after these things.

[Johnson] No, when he says after these things, he's going on to talk about the future.

[Question] The future, right, that's what he sees. After these things is after what's taken place in the after.

[Johnson] Right.

[Question] So this future is an event. And what he saying is something that's happening down the road a ways.

[Johnson] Right.

[Question] Is there any...what is your opinion as to when this is going to take place? [Johnson] Well, I wish I could tell you. I wish I could tell you. Professor Hoekema says if you say a couple of thousand years, that's unnatural. We don't know that question. Obviously the Bible doesn't anywhere say -- give us any clues of how the return of the Lord.

[Question] That was my question because you were saying the I-will-return phrase may or may not refer to.

[Johnson] Yes, I think that question of whether that phrase refers to the coming of the Lord may be decided either way since there's no objection to it that is other than usage of the term, but that doesn't necessarily mean it couldn't be the place which it could be. So I just wouldn't want to lay any stress on it.

So what James has said is simply this: Peter has told us how God for the first time has visited Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. Up to this point every Gentile had to become a Jew through circumcision. So there was no movement to Gentiles specifically, but now this movement has begun and he says to this agree the Old Testament prophets. Unfortunately for us, to settle this question, he doesn't give us a list of the prophecies to which we can point. Evidently they have discussed them so much.

Now, we know what Paul says in Romans 11. In fact, right at this point if we were legitimately able to do this in biblical exegesis and in one sense we can do this. We

could say Paul's treatment in Romans 11 explains everything that's happening here. In other words, what he says in Romans 11 is completely in harmony for what we're talking about, for he talks about the present day being the day of Israelitish rejection. It's the day in which the full number of the Gentiles are entering in remember. It's not the day of worldwide Gentile salvation because he refers to that in another place, but it's the day of Gentile election of the smaller number to be followed by what James says here, the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David. That is the restoration of the dynasty and the establishment of the kingdom in which Israel has a predominant place.

Yes, John.

[Question] I would like to understand better --

[Johnson] Speak a little louder because I'm -- it's my hearing. It's not your voice.

[Question] I would like to understand a little better what the rule is [inaudible]...

[Johnson] Well, I wish I could do that in a few minutes, but I don't think that could be done in a few minutes. Let me just suggest that naturally in prophetic -- in the prophetic sections of the Old Testament we have certain pictures that are given to us, different pictures, the details we're just not given too many of the details. But to answer your question, I think if you studied passages in Isaiah -- from Isaiah chapter -- particularly Isaiah Chapter 40 through 66, Zechariah -- almost the entire book of Zechariah because Zechariah was a student of Isaiah, and then the minor prophets Micah in certain sections, Amos, of course, we have this one in Amos Chapter 9. Amos goes on to talk about some of the things that are going to happen. He talks about the fruitful things that are taking place upon the earth. He talks about Israel being replanted in their own land never to be removed from it and things like that. So my suggestion to you is that it's hard to say, since the Old Testament has so much to say about the age of the kingdom. Isaiah Chapter 11 is another chapter that is very important for that topic.

[Question] How would you respond to the amillennialists in stating [inaudible] characterize in reestablishing --

[Johnson] Reestablishing what?

[Question] the dividing wall

[Johnson] Oh, the dividing wall is the Mosaic Law.

Remember in Ephesians Chapter 2 he talks about the mental wall of partition. He's talking about the law. The law has been done away with. The law will not be reimposed. There's nothing in the Old Testament prophetic word that suggests the reimposition of the Mosaic Law, and that's how I would answer that. There have been dispensationalists. I don't know of historic premillennialists, but dispensationalists who have treated Ezekiel Chapter 40 through 48 as if something like a reimposition of the Levitical system will take place. My own personal opinion is that those chapters are to be interpreted in a different way.

Dr. Chafer made some, to my mind, unfortunate statements. He made statements that were strongly suggestive of the fact that we would move back into an age in which the law was imposed upon people in the age of the kingdom. In fact, many interpreting the Sermon on the Mount even the present president of Dallas Seminary -- if you go back and read his dissertation that he wrote, he takes the viewpoint that the Sermon on the Mount has to do with the kingdom and of course, there are lots of things in there that would cause you to question that interpretation. But everybody learns is to study the Bible. I would hate to be held responsible for all my past sermons and all the past things that I've written. I don't know whether that answers your question, John, but that's all I can say about that. I would lay stress upon the fact that the mental wall of partition is a reference to the imposition of the Mosaic Law. That was done away with when our Lord died on the cross. That's not simply, by the way, a dispensational viewpoint. That's the viewpoint, I think, of New Testament exegesis generally -- modern New Testament exegesis.

Yes, sir, Dr.

[Question] I'm still not quite clear on what the phrase tabernacle of David actually refers --

[Johnson] Okay. As I've mentioned a couple of times last week as well as this week, that expression is a figurative expression. The word simply means hut, tabernacle. It's probably an allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles, but it's a reference to the establishment of Davidic kingdom. The tabernacle of David is just a figurative expression for that. All commentators of whatever persuasion agree that the expression tabernacle of David is a figurative expression. The question is...

[Question] (inaudible)

[Johnson] Huh?

[Question] (inaudible)

[Johnson] No, there are passages -- there are passages in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, which suggests some kind of rebuilding of a temple. Paul refers to one in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. Our Lord does in the sermon on the olive discourse in Matthew Chapter 24. That temple however, is a pre-kingdom temple in both cases, and you remember the references made to the anti-Christ who is worshipped in that temple.

Those are points of biblical prophecy that are not quite as significant as some of these other broader issues. The tabernacle of David is a figurative expression generally thought to refer to the dynasty of David and ultimately the Davidic kingdom. Tabernacle is a place where people live, and so it would be natural for the Davidic people to be embraced in such a figure of speech.

Yes, Edwin.

[Question] (inaudible)

[Johnson] A little louder.

[Question] olive tree, (inaudible) taken place in the future?

[Johnson] It has begun to take place. Right. In fact, that's the explanation of what has taken place at the present time according to Paul. If you -- that point we will, of course, discuss, next week the Lord willing, if I can get any of you to come back next week. [Laughter] We won't go into quite as much detail on that one passage as we have with reference to the Amos passage, but here in Verse 17 of Chapter 11 Paul says, “if some of the branches were broken off” that's a reference to the nation Israel, the natural branches. And “you being a wild olive, were grafted in among them.” You see he refers to it as past. Were grafted in among them and have become a fellow partaker of the fat root of the olive tree. So he refers to it as that which has already taken place, the Gentile, the salvation of this elect company of Gentiles.

One more question.

[Question] (inaudible)

[Johnson] Is that what you were talking about? I'm sorry if I misunderstood your question. In Verse 17, he talks about the grafting of Gentiles into the olive tree. In Verse 24 when he says, “grafted in again” that is the regrafting of the mass of Israel back into the olive tree. In other words, they were cut off as a national whole. They will be regrafted in the same sense in which they were cut off.

[Question] (inaudible)

[Johnson] He doesn't say after the church age. He says that it is going to happen in the future, and they will be grafted in. He goes on to talk about the salvation of Israel. You see you raised the question when you say church age and just precisely what is the church age, and I wouldn't deny the general sense of what you were saying. Well, I think it's time for us to stop, and let's close with a word of prayer. [end of tape]