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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“The Abrahamic Covenant, part II”

TRANSCRIPT

There are several things that we want to be sure to keep in mind as we continue our series of studies which have to do with Eschatology. We have been looking over the past few weeks at the covenants as they are set forth in the Scriptures and also in theology and there are specifically two or three things that I hope that we keep in mind. Number one, the covenants treat of the divine side of God’s plan. The dispensations treat of the human side of God’s plan. The covenants reflect primarily the promises of God concerning the Messianic seed and the salvation that comes through Christ. The dispensations have to do with the conditions under which God ministers to men the Messianic promises, so that the covenants treat of the divine side of the plan of God and the dispensations have to do with the human side.

A second thing that I hope that we keep in mind is this: the theological covenants should be distinguished from the historical covenants. By the theological covenants, I refer to the covenants of so-called covenant theology; a system of theology originated in the past which is very prominent in many of the theological circles of Christendom today. Those theological covenants, remember, are set forth as the everlasting covenant of redemption or the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works that was made between God and Adam in the garden of Eden which Adam broke, and then the covenant

of grace -- a covenant said to have been made between God and the elect to give them eternal life through the saving work of the Lord Jesus.

Now two of these covenants I happen to think are also biblical covenants. I do not see myself that the covenant of grace is really a Scriptural covenant, but the covenant of redemption is a biblical covenant in my opinion, and the covenant of works is a fair representation of the arrangement that God made with Adam in the garden of Eden. It has also been called the Edenic Covenant or the Adamic Covenant, as it is in the Scofield Bible.

But the theological covenants should be distinguished from this historical covenants. By the historical or biblical covenants -- those terms are practically synonymous -- I am thinking of the everlasting covenant of redemption and its outworking in time. The historical covenants are the covenants that we are studying. We are studying for example the covenant in the garden of Eden, the covenant that God made with Noah, the covenant that God made with Abraham. We shall study the Mosaic Covenant and the Palestinian Covenant. We shall also study the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant, and we will study the new covenant in its ratification by our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the historical or Biblical covenants and the historical covenants are the outworking of the everlasting covenant of redemption. So we should keep these things in mind.

Now the third thing that we said last time which had to do with the Abrahamic Covenant, and I mentioned that this is probably the most fundamental of the historical covenants, and it is an unconditional covenant. That is, it represents certain promises that God gave in which he covenanted himself to fulfill to Abraham and to his seed. That covenant is dependent for its outworking and for its fulfillment upon God and his own faithfulness and grace to his word. The promises given to Abram, then, were unconditional, but we said last time that this claim that they were unconditional is disputed by the amillennialists.

Now remember the amillennialists are those who believe that there is going to be no kingdom of God upon the earth. Premillennialists believe that the Lord Jesus shall come again at his Second Advent and shall establish a kingdom of God upon the earth. He will come before the millennium to establish that millennium and consequently that is called premillennialism. The post-millennialists -- and we dealt with them, too -- believe that as a result of the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Christian church, we shall have a kingdom and at the conclusion of the kingdom of God upon the earth Jesus Christ shall come again the second time. That theory of course is identified with the idea of progress which was so popular in liberal theology and still is popular in a great deal of liberal theology today.

The amillennialists then are those who say that there is going to be no kingdom of God upon the earth. They dispute the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant, because those who believe that the covenant with Abraham was unconditional generally believe that in the conditions of that covenant a promise is given to Abram that he shall possess the land of Palestine in the form of a kingdom of God upon the earth and so the amillennialists, amillennialists naturally would be very skeptical about unconditional promises of a kingdom made to Abraham.

There are two variations of their dispute with the unconditional character of the Abrahamic Covenant. Some of them such as Oswald Allis, who was a strong follower of John Calvin, taught that Israel's rejection of Christ canceled their promises and the New Testament church has inherited them. It is belief of Mr. Allis -- who is now in heaven a very godly man a very fine Christian man -- it was the belief of Mr. Allis that when Israel rejected Jesus Christ the promises that had been given to them were canceled and Israel lost any right or title to these promises, and the New Testament church has inherited those promises which in turn are spiritualized and refer to the spiritual blessings that we possess in redemption. That's one way in which the unconditional character of the Abrahamic Covenant has been disputed.

Another well known teacher, Albertus Peters, also an amillennialist -- a man who attacked the Scofield Bible; wrote pamphlets against the Scofield Bible; but admitted that the people who studied it were the best members of his Presbyterian Church; most faithful -- Albertus Peters also a Christian man (he was really a Christian man; he had strong convictions about premillennialism. He was opposed to it) he taught that the promises were never intended for national Israel at all, but were intended for a covenanted group of believers from both Israel and the Gentiles. That is, that there were never any promises made to the national seed of Abraham. They were all made simply to believers in Jesus Christ who are reckoned to be the seed of Abraham, whether they be Jew or whether they be Gentile.

Now there is an element of truth in this, for the New Testament does teach us that when a man becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, he becomes a child of Abraham. But the question is not whether a Gentile becomes a child of Abraham or not. The question is: were national promises given to Abraham and to his seed and we shall deal with this. But according to Mr. Peters, Israel as Israel has no claim upon the promises. Only believing men whether Israelites or Gentiles have claim upon the promises. So certain questions naturally arise concerning these Abrahamic promises.

Now we did not finish our outline last week and so I want to finish that and then go on to some questions that arise over the question of the Abrahamic Covenant. Basically in these three studies, and next week I hope will be the conclusion, we are looking at the Abrahamic Covenant in the past, the Abrahamic Covenant in the present, and the Abrahamic Covenant in the future.

Now last time we were talking about the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant. We spoke about the parties to the covenant, the promises of the covenant that God gave Abraham: personal promises, national promises, universal promises. We said a word or two about the significance of the term seed of Abraham, and we laid a great deal of stress upon the unconditional character of the Abrahamic Covenant and we pointed particularly

to Genesis chapter 15 and the little ceremony that Abraham was exhorted to undergo by God by which God confirmed the covenant to Abraham, and in which confirmation God made it very evident that that covenant was an unconditional covenant, for it was he, remember, who alone marched between the pieces of the sacrifices, and Abraham was not invited to follow. That little ceremony in which the animals were slain and divided was designed to confirm the covenant, and God indicated that the sole responsibility for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant rested upon him.

Then we also talked about the evidence of the stated conditions, the evidence from Israel’s apostasy, that Israel’s apostasy did not evidently cancel the promises, and we I think at the conclusion were speaking about the evidence from the New Testament. And I referred to one or two passages such as Luke chapter 1 verse 46 through verse 55, Acts chapter 3 verse 17 through verse 26. I think I referred to Hebrews chapter 6:13 through 18. But before we begin our study the section that we want to look at, the questions that are raised, I want to complete the amillennial argument for a conditional covenant, dealing with the claims that they make for their position that the covenant that God made with Abraham is not an unconditional covenant, but is a conditional covenant and since Israel was disobedient, those promises, whatever they were, given to Abraham are not to be fulfilled to Israel. The argument for the amillennial position is an argument from obedience and an argument from fulfillment.

Now, the argument of obedience first. It is the claim of the amillennialists that the Abrahamic Covenant had as a condition Israel’s obedience to the promises. Now, I think amillennialists and premillennialists and post millennialists would all agree that if obedience is a condition for the fulfillment of the covenant, then the covenant will not be fulfilled, for Israel has been disobedient. There is no question about that. But the real question is, Is obedience a precondition of the blessing? And I would like to suggest that the amillennial position is not scriptural.

And I want to say just a word about obedience and grace. I think and this is, I believe, rather ironical, because most of the amillennialists are men who are strong Calvinists -- that is, those who attack the premillennial position with the greatest vigor and the most perception of the issues are, generally speaking, very strong Calvinistic men in the area of soteriology, and it becomes a rather interesting thing to see them insisting upon the condition of obedience for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. For when it comes over into the realm of personal salvation, it is the Calvinist who more than anyone else points out that salvation is by grace and that even faith is not really a condition of salvation.

It’s not really correct, according to a Calvinist, to say that we are saved through our faith. But rather, it is much more scriptural to say that we are saved by Jesus Christ through the instrumentality of faith. It is they who stress in the greatest possible way that it is the Lord Jesus who is the Savior and that the faith that we possess which is a gift of God is simply the means by which God’s blessings come to us in free grace. And in fact, we do nothing in our salvation. It is God who does it all.

So it’s rather surprising to hear them stressing the fact that one of the great covenants of the Bible is a conditional covenant, dependent upon the faith of Israel, dependent upon their obedience, when in the realm of soteriology they are strong in stressing the fact that our salvation is by pure grace and by the promise of God which he himself undertakes to perform for us.

So I would like to take for my good Calvinistic friends with whom I have some sympathy, as you know, I would like to remind them of their on soteriology and say that that same principle by which we are saved through grace apart from any endeavor on our part, is the principle upon which God has determined that he is going to give those promises to Abraham. In other words, the promises are given to Abraham, and it is God who undertakes to do this work for Abraham, and just as he has made us certain promises, electing us in eternity past and knowing that we shall be his in the future

because he going to give us Jesus Christ and give us faith and bring us by the Spirit to trust in Christ, so he is able to give promises to national Israel and to say to Israel, I am going to do these things for you because Jesus Christ is going to come and make it possible for these promises to be given in the first place. And the Holy Spirit is going to bring the truth of the saving work of Christ to the hearts of the Israelites, and he is going to give them faith so that they do respond and receive the promises.

Now it is true that God does not give his promises and his forgiveness of sins as well as these Abrahamic promises to impenitent people. He does not do that. He gives them to people who have been convicted of their sin, and they have been brought to a sense of their need, but with his promises it is he who brings them to this place. It is he who gives them this repentance, and it is he who gives them the faith to receive the promises. So this argument from obedience is a strange kind of argument for a man who understands Calvinistic truth to offer. Obedience and grace -- why this obedience which Israel will exercise (I don’t deny that at all; Israel will obey, and when she obeys she will be receive these promises) but this obedience is something that is predestined and provided in the Abrahamic Covenant itself.

Now I want to say just a word about obedience and blessing, because it’s evident that Israel today does not have the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. Obedience is the response that Israel will make to the covenant, and it is true she has been disobedient at the present time. Obedience, however, only conditions the time of the enjoyment of the promises. It does not condition the fulfillment of the covenant itself. In other words, the covenant is an unconditional promise of God confirmed by the work of the Lord Jesus, and is certain to be fulfilled. Our obedience, Israel’s obedience, only determines the time when those conditions are met and the promises fulfilled to Israel. Israel’s disobedience does not cancel the covenant; it only delays the application of it to them.

Let me illustrate. Let’s just suppose for the sake of illustration that one of our young people reaches the age of sixteen and graduates, or seventeen, and graduates from

high school. And you as a parent are so thankful, as well as being a little rich, you are so thankful that this young lady or young man has managed to gain his diploma and you have enough money. You determine that you will give him or her a new car since they’ve graduated from school. That’s really something beyond me, because I grew up in the days of the depression, and the idea of parents giving their children a car, a new car at that -- an old beaten up car -- I can understand that a new car is something a little bit beyond me, but nevertheless it happens so frequently now I’m sure that you’re all acquainted with it and probably many of you in this room have given new cars to your children.

But since it so happens they’re only sixteen or seventeen years of age and they are still under your jurisdiction, relatively speaking, you say to them something like this, In view of the fact that you’ve managed to pass all these courses and astonish me and I am so grateful to you I am conveying to you title to a new Continental. But, I am laying down a few conditions, and one condition is this, that if you get two speeding tickets, I’m going to take back the use and enjoyment of this car. It still will be in your name, but so far as the use and enjoyment of it is concerned you will not have it.

Now there of course is a car. It is put in the name of the young student. It belongs to them they have right and title to it, but the use of their possession is determined by the obedience to the requirements which the father has set down.

Now God in his word has said with reference to the promises that he made to Abraham, these promises are going to be fulfilled. He will give a Palestinian covenant which we will study in which he determines that Israel will enjoy the possession of the land as long as they are obedient to him. If they are disobedient, then there are certain a certain series of judgments that God will in discipline meet out to Israel, and in fact if they persist in their disobedience, he will chastise them and disperse them to the four corners of the earth.

Now he does not by disobedience cancel the promises. He only determines the time when Israel enters into the full enjoyment of them. So when we speak of obedience and blessing, we should remember that while obedience is a condition of enjoyment, it is not a condition of title to the promises, and that God in his grace and in his divine purpose determines that at a future time he will work faith in Israel and bring Israel in to not only the title to these promises which she has, but into the blessing of them.

Therefore, the argument from obedience is the kind of argument that no Calvinist should ever have thought of. I can think of an Arminian thinking of that kind of argument but a Calvinist should never have thought of it, and if an Arminian should bring it up, I remind him only of the fact that our salvation is by grace, and God operates in connection with Abraham. And his promises are the same principle of grace set forth so fully in Galatians chapter 3 and Romans chapter 4.

Now the second argument is a different kind of argument. It is claimed by some for example Mr. Allis that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises has already taken place. That is that there has been a multiplied seed of Abraham, and further, that the land promises have already been fulfilled. And I want you to turn with me to the passage which is often used as a passage in claiming that that the promises have been fulfilled. It is 1 Kings chapter 4 verse 20 and 21. We are talking about the time of Solomon. 1 Kings chapter 4 verses 20 and 21. We read in 1 Kings chapter 4 verses 20 and 21 these words. This of course has to do with as my Scofield Bible has for a paragraph heading, The Greatness and Security of the Kingdom. “Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.” Now remember that God promised Abram that he would have a seed that was as numerous as the sand which is by the sea. And further we read in verse 21, “And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.”

Now you can see from this a tremendous claim is made that Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river (that is, the Euphrates river) unto the land of this Philistines and unto the border of Egypt they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Now this is a serious claim, for it’s evident from this that Abraham’s seed has become very numerous, and it’s also evident that the kingdom of Israel is very large, and does possess practically all of the land that was promised to Abraham. But there are some things that we must say in opposition to this very clever argument, for it is a very clever argument. It lets us know that Mr. Allis and others have sought to look into the Scriptures to see if it is really true that these promises have not yet been fulfilled.

I would like to mention this. The boundaries of Genesis chapter 15 verse 18 which were the boundaries that were promised to Israel, in the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying, unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt unto the great river the river Euphrates. The boundaries of chapter 15 verse 18 were attained only in David’s reign and then not as a national homeland, but simply as an empire. In other words, the kind of possession that Solomon had over that land is not the kind of possession that is set forth in the Abrahamic promises, and further, and most significantly, the prophets who follow after 1 Kings and write about the promises to Abraham are ignorant of the fact that the promises have been fulfilled because they still write in their prophecies of the future fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

And if we had time, I just give you one text to look at: Amos chapter 9 verses 13 through 15, and I think you will see from that that it is evident that the prophets do not regard that kingdom of Solomon as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. I do not think they are that that statement is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in the sense in which it was given to Abraham, and the prophets also still talk about the future fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. So then, from all the evidence that we have looked at I think it’s fairly plain that the Abrahamic Covenant is a conditional covenant,

and those conditions have not yet been met, and it is a natural anticipation from the study of Scripture that the promises remain to be fulfilled in the future.

Well this brings up certain questions, and in the remainder of our hour, I want to deal with these three questions which arise as a result of the claim of Abrahamic promises being unconditional and unfulfilled. The first claim is this. Has Israel been disinherited? And I want to look specifically at Mr. Allis’ claims after briefly dealing with a related matter the promises and the physical seed.

Has Israel been disinherited? Is it true that the promises which God made to Abraham and to his seed no longer belong to Abraham and to his seed, and are they now the promises of those of us who are in the Christian church? That’s the question. But first I want to say a word about the promises and the physical seed. Can we really say that the promises were given to Abraham’s physical seed? It is the claim of Mr. Allis and others that the promises were never given to Abraham’s physical seed; they were only given to Abraham’s spiritual seed; those who would believe. Never given to his physical seed.

Well let’s think for just a moment. To whom were the promises confirmed after they had been given to Abram? Well they were confirmed to Isaac were they not? Why you remember that. In Genesis chapter 17 and verse 19 they were confirmed to Isaac. What the relationship of Isaac to Abraham? Well of course, we all know that Isaac was the son of Abraham. Those promises were also confirmed to Jacob in Genesis chapter 28 verses 13 and 14. What’s the relationship of Jacob to Abraham? Well we know that Jacob is the son of Isaac who in turn was the son of Abraham. He’s Abraham’s grandson.

Well there’s no need for us to go down through the Old Testament and trace the seed of Abraham, because we read in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1 was the seed of Abraham. And he is not only the spiritual seed of Abraham, he is also the natural seed of Abraham. He is the seed of Abraham, physically, and as a matter of fact, in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 4 in that passage that we looked

at last time you’ll remember that God said, Abram someone who comes out of your loins is going to be the seed who inherits the promises. I read from Genesis chapter 15 verse 4, “And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own loins shall be thine heir.”

The truth of the matter is that the promises that God gave to Abraham were promises that were given to Abraham’s natural seed, but also it was anticipated that the natural seed that inherited the promises of Abraham would also be his spiritual seed. We are not talking about natural seed *or* spiritual seed; we are talking about natural seed *and* spiritual seed believing Israelites. That will be made plain when we turn to the New Testament.

Well we want to refer to two crucial texts in debating the question, was Israel disinherited? And the two texts are Matthew chapter 21 verse 43 and Romans chapter 11 verses 1 through 10. So if you have your Bibles, I hope you have, turn with me to Matthew chapter 21. We want to look for just a moment at verse 43 to answer the question, Has Israel been disinherited? The text reads, [sic, Matthew] chapter 21 and verse 43, in our Lord Jesus Christ’s parable of the householder. Perhaps we shall read through it while you are finding it.

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and leased it to tenant farmers, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the farmers, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the farmers took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. (These of course were the prophets that were sent by God to Israel.) Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them. Last of all he sent unto them his son, (this of

course is the coming of our Lord) saying, They will reverence my son. But when the farmers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. (Now of course the figure this illustration has to do with the leaders in Israel who are in unbelief the disbelieving Israelites. They wanted that kingdom for themselves.) When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those farmers? (The people blurt out for they are listening to our Lord tell this story and, in the East when a man in those days was speaking before a crowd and was telling a story like this, and he stopped and asked a question the audience answered, just as some preachers say, well what to you say to that, and you sit there and say nothing, they say, well cannot anybody say Amen? What do you say to that? Amen. Well they have something to say to this.) They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will lease his vineyard unto other farmers, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. (And our Lord answers, sensing that they have sensed the spirit of the thing) Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it.”

Now that’s our text: The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. Does not this text say that Israel has been disinherited? The kingdom of God is taken from you and is given to a nation that bring forth that brings forth the fruits of it.

Well not necessarily. It certainly suggests that Israel’s place is undergoing a tremendous change in the program of God. It suggests that Israel who is in view here, that Israel evidently has had the kingdom of God in some sense, and the kingdom of God is being taken from them and is being given to others. Luke simply says, to others. That’s true. That is specifically said, but nothing is said about those promises not ultimately being Israel’s. Something is said about the present status, and of course what is involved is the removal of Israel from the sacred, theocratic stewardship of the kingdom, for Israel was given these promises with a view to becoming the means of blessing to the whole of the world, and because of their disobedience, it is true that God has taken from Israel the stewardship of the kingdom and has given the stewardship of the kingdom to another nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.

What is that other nation? Well there are two explanations that have been offered. Some have said this nation that brings forth the fruits of it is the generation of Israelites in the future who shall respond in faith and thus receive the promises themselves and be the means for worldwide blessing. On the other hand, there are other commentators who say that the nation that brings forth the fruit of it is the church of Jesus Christ, and I am inclined to that opinion.

By the way, the term nation, is never used of Israel in the Gospel of Matthew. That word *ethnos* is never used of Israel, and therefore I do not think that we can interpret a nation bringing forth the fruits of it as a future generation of Israel. On the other hand, we read in 1 Peter chapter 2 of the church, in verse 9 and 10, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation.” And so we do have in the New Testament believers in the present age being called a nation. Therefore I think that what we have here in Matthew chapter 21 verse 43 is simply a statement that by virtue of Israel’s disobedience and rejection of the Lord Jesus, their privilege of being the stewards of the kingdom of God, and the revelation of God and being the instrumentality for the bringing of the truth of God to the world -- that privilege is being taken from them and is

being given to another company of people who are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ: the church of which we are a part. And we now have the stewardship of the kingdom. But this says nothing whatsoever about the cancellation of these promises to Israel. It says nothing whatsoever about the future, and the fact that God will again work in Israel and bring them to the possession of their promises bring them to faith and the possession of them.

Now I don’t have time to go into the details of that, but let’s turn to our second passage in Romans chapter 11 verses 1 through 10, for I think here what we’re saying will become even clearer. Romans chapter 11 verses 1 through 10. Now remember the Apostle Paul has been discussing the disobedience of Israel and how they have failed to attain unto the justification which he has expounded in the first eight chapters of the epistle, and so the natural question arises, since Israel has been disobedient, has God cast them away? Have they been disinherited from their promises? Is Israel today no different from Gentiles? And Paul asks the question and answers it.

Notice the first verse where he asks the question. “I say then, Hath God cast away his people? They have been disobedient; therefore has he cast them away. Will he have nothing further to do with them?” Why Paul’s answer is, God forbid. Now in arguing his point, he reminds his readers of some very obvious things which show that God hasn’t cast away his people. First of all he says, I’m an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. It’s obvious that God since he was worked in my life and has brought me from disobedience to obedience, and since I am an Israelite, he hasn’t cast way Israelites I’m saved. God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew. That is he has foreknown because he has foreordained that Israel will in the future come to faith in Jesus Christ.

He has not cast them away, though they abide in disobedience at the present time and in loss of privilege. God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what the Scripture said of Elijah, how that he made intercession to God against

Israel saying, “Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and dug down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” Even in the time of Israel’s great disobedience in the time of Elijah there was a remnant who had not abandoned the truth, and when anyone ever believes in God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit -- it can be said to be the work of God -- and thus the fact that Paul is a Christian, a believer, in the fact that seven thousand believers in the day of Elijah is evidence of the fact that God has not cast away his people and finally he talks about the present time.

He says even so then at this present time there is also a remnant according to the election of grace. There are individuals now who are Israelites who are in the church of Jesus Christ, and the fact that there are saved Israelites now is evidence of the fact that God has not cast away his people. Now this argument is completely convincing. God has not cast away his people. Here’s Paul. Remember the days of Elijah. At the present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And by the way, he means a remnant of Israelites, so he regards these promises as being made to national Israel; a remnant at the present time according to the election of grace. Did you notice that the reason they are a believing remnant is because there was a gracious election? I didn’t talk about that -- that was Paul. So don’t say Dr. Johnson got off on election again tonight [laughter]; it’s Paul that you want to criticize. There are a remnant according to the election of grace.

And then he talks about grace. He says, “And if by grace, it’s no more works.” Otherwise grace is no more grace. Now the last part of that verse is not genuine, but it’s good theology nevertheless. “But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” So you can see that he is stressing the fact that salvation is of grace, and further, that the fact that there are Israelites today who are believers shows that God hasn’t cast them away, and further that they belong to God, because he has brought

them in grace to the knowledge of himself. Precisely what he will do in a greater way in the future.

And of course you know in this very same chapter in the 25th verse he says, “For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.” And so all Israel shall be saved. So the answer to the question, Has Israel been disinherited? is the answer of Paul: God forbid. He doesn’t deny his word.

Second, has the church inherited Israel promises? This is the position of our friend Mr. Allis again. Since Israel has been disobedient, Mr. Allis has said, Israel’s promises have been canceled, and the church has inherited the blessings promised to Israel except they’ve been spiritualized. They were never intended to be promises of the land. They’ve been spiritualized, and they now belong to the church, and the term Israel in the New Testament is to be understood, not as a reference to Israelites, nationally, but to people who believe. So as Mr. Allis, if he were here -- he’s not here; he’s in heaven now -- if he were here, he would look out and he would say, you are the Israel of God. You are Israelites according to New Testament teaching.

Well now, we want to answer this question, and first of all I want to say a few words about the term, Israel, in the New Testament. Now I did something that I think everybody ought to do when they study the Bible. Have you got a concordance? How many of you have a large concordance? Not a little tiny concordance. I don’t mean one in the back of your Bible either. If you’ve got nothing else of course that that would be of some use to you how many of you have a *Young’s* or a *Strong’s Concordance*? Would you raise your hands? Well that’s not bad. I’m surprised.

Now I’m not going to ask you how many of you use it every day of your life, because I don’t want you to make any statements that you may have to go home and

confess as sin to God. [Laughter] But if you want to know any kind of biblical, the answer to biblical questions one of the things you must always do it to use that concordance.

Now last night I was thinking about this again, and I thought I knew the answer but in fact I’ve said this many, many times in the past. There is no place in the New Testament where the term Israel means anything other than an Israelite. That is, a descendent of Jacob. But just to be sure in the New Testament (did I say New Testament? I meant New Testament) but just to be sure I took down my Greek concordance, not my *Young’s* or *Strong’s* -- I have a *Young’s*. I didn’t use the concordance of your English text, because I wanted to be sure that what I said was absolutely right, so I took down my Greek concordance and I looked up the occurrence, every occurrence of the word *Isra’el* in the Greek text of the New Testament and read each one of those lines in the concordance, and if there were any passages that I was not sure of the context of them, I turned to them, but there was no passage that I was not sure of the context of, so I didn’t do anything but just read the line. There is not one place in the New Testament where the term *Isra’el* means anything but an Israelite. There is no place in the New Testament where the term, *Isra’el*, refers to a Gentile.

Now there are many places where the term Israel refers to an unbeliever but he is an Israelite. And there are a few passages where the term Israel refers to believers or many passages where it refers to believers, but they are always Israelites. So whether it refers to a believer or an unbeliever, they are Israelites. So the term is used only of Israelites, though it is used of unbelieving Israelites as well as believing Israelites.

I have a book which has just been, the past few years, has been written by a young man who went to Cambridge University to do his doctoral work there. It’s called *Israel and the Apostolic Church*. He’s an amillennialist, so he’s not a man who has my axe to grind that I would have, but Peter Richardson in his book *Israel and the Apostolic Church* has made a few points that are very interesting, particularly for a man who doesn’t hold my viewpoint, who really would like to attack my viewpoint.

He has made the point that the church was never identified with Israel in Christian theology until around the year 160 A.D. when Justin Martyr wrote his dialogue with Trypho the Jew. It was only then that the idea of taking New Testament promises, taking promises that referred to Israel and attributing them to the Christian church, it’s only at that time that that kind of theology arose. In other words, it’s not until after the middle of the Second Century that the Christian church begins to take things that refer to Israel and apply them to themselves, not until then.

He writes, “Even then the term, Israel of God, is absent.” So the idea of taking promises that refer to Israel and referring them to the church is not an apostolic idea at all, and it’s not an idea of the church that arose just after the apostles. He says, “Israel is not applied to the Christian church (that is the term) though all Christians become a part of Israel by virtue of their faith in Christ (that of course represents his view that last part). The first part Israel is not applied to the Christian church.” In other words, the idea that Mr. Allis and other have that these promises that refer to Israel are to be applied to the church is an idea that’s not found in the New Testament, nor in the Apostolic church, but grew up later when Israel and the church became enemies in many ways over the world of the East.

Well what are their texts? Well let’s look at Romans chapter 9 verse 6. Romans 9 verse 6. This is, there are two texts that amillennialists claim teach that we are the Israel of God. Romans chapter 9 verse 6. Paul is just bemoaning the fact that Israel is in disobedience, and they had all these great promises so he says in the 6th verse, “Not as though the word of God hath taken no effect. For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel.”

Now notice what he is saying in this text. It is the claim of the amillennialists that this text says that Gentiles may be called Israelites. They are not all Israel who are of Israel. So in other words, there may be some Israelites from among the Gentiles, people

from among the Gentiles who may be called Israel. They are not all Israel who are of Israel.

Now that isn’t what Paul is talking about? Paul is not making the claim that a person who is a Gentile may be an Israelite. What he is saying here is that in Israel there are two kinds of Israelites. There are those who are believers and though there are those who are unbelievers, and it’s the believers who are the real Israel. That’s what he is saying. But it’s the believing Israelites who are the real Israelites.

What does the rest of the context go on to say? “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” And so the decision, the division is made between Ishmael and Isaac, and Isaac is said to be the true seed of Abraham. But Ishmael was his son, too.

And then he goes on to talk about Jacob. “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” But both of these are from Jacob -- I mean from Isaac. So he’s not really talking about Gentiles at all. He’s talking about the fact that in the true seed that has come down from Abraham which is called Israel, later, there are those who are unbelieving Israelites, and there are those who are believing Israelites. He doesn’t say the Gentiles are Israelites at all. It doesn’t have anything to do with that at all.

Now will you turn over with me to Galatians chapter 6 verse 15 and 16, for this is the other text. We have referred to this text before, according to my memory, and I hope you remember it, too, because we don’t have but about two minutes before our hour is up. In this text verse 15, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor

uncircumcision, but a new creation.” Remember the Galatian Gentile Christians had been disturbed by Judaizers who came in suggested to them that it was necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved. They were in effect bringing a gospel of good works and religious works for salvation other than grace and faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

And Paul adds in the 16th verse, “And as many as walk according to this rule, (that is, the rule of the new creation that we have died and we are now we are now new creatures in Christ Jesus) as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” And it is the claim of those who hold to the fact that the church has inherited Israel’s promises that here the church is called the Israel of God. Mind you, remember I looked through that concordance I could not find a single place -- this is their last refuge, Galatians chapter 6 verse 16.

What does this mean? Well Paul is talking to Gentile Christians for the most part who have been troubled by Judaizers. Now it’s evident as this was the case in all of the Gentile churches that Jews were also in the church. That is a remnant according to the election of grace. Now Paul having said that we are not under law, we have died, we passed into a new sphere, we walk according to the new creation not according to the law, adds, “As many as walk according to this rule (delivered from the legalism of the Judaizers) peace be on them and upon the Israel of God.”

Now what is the Israel of God? Why the Israel of God is a reference to the true Jewish believers who are not entangled in the legalism of the Judaizers from Jerusalem. That’s why he calls them the Israel of God. True believing Israelites. The text doesn’t have anything to say about Gentiles at all. It’s Israel, true Israel.

Now it’s also possible to take this in a different way, and as a matter of fact, this is the way I do take it. I take this Israel of God to be a reference to the future Israel that shall come to faith in Christ, and you remember -- I don’t have time to defend this if someone will remind me I’ll defend it next time a little bit. That last clause really should

be translated “peace be upon them, comma, and mercy also upon the Israel of God.”

That is, the Israel of God who in the future shall come to faith in Jesus Christ. As many as walk according to this rule peace be upon them and upon future believing Israel who shall experience the mercy of God at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus and come to faith and possess the Abrahamic promises.

We’ll finish this next time and we will conclude our study of the Abrahamic Covenant by attempting to look at the fulfillment of it in the future. Our time is up. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the promise of the word of God and particularly for these Abrahamic promises, because we ourselves are also included in the great promise made to Abram, in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed.

We rejoice Lord that in mercy Thou hast included us in Thy purposes and in Thy plan. Now depart go with us as we depart enable us to represent Him who loved us and gave himself for us in a way that will bring glory to Thy name.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.