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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“The New Covenant and Prophecy, part IV”

TRANSCRIPT

This is the last in our series of studies on The New Covenant and Prophecy, and we are turning to Romans chapter 11 for our Scripture.

Now for a few of you who have not been here, let me review what we have been saying with reference to the covenants. This is not only the concluding study of the New Covenant and Prophecy, but it is also the concluding study in our look into the covenants of Scripture. Our basic thesis has been this: that the historical covenants of the Bible are the outworking in time of the eternal covenant of redemption. I think that it would be well for me to repeat that in case there are some of you here who have not been listening. The historical covenants of the Bible are the outworking in time of the eternal covenant of redemption.

For example, the Apostle Paul states in Titus chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 these words: “Paul a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, in hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before the world began.” That text of Scripture the 2nd verse says that eternal life is something that God has promised before the world began.

A long time ago in our series of studies I tried to show that this was a reference to the eternal covenant of redemption made between the persons of the Trinity, and on the

basis of that compact, that eternal covenant in holy Scripture, we have the account of the outworking of the steps in the consummation of the eternal covenant of redemption. We have looked at the Edenic Covenant. We have looked at the Noahic Covenant. We have looked at the Abrahamic Covenant. We have looked at the Mosaic Covenant. We have considered the Palestinian Covenant and its relationship to the Mosaic Covenant. We have looked at the Davidic Covenant, and this is our fourth in the series on the New Covenant. It is the last then of the series of studies on the covenant and the historical covenants we have said are the outworking in time of the eternal covenant of redemption.

Our second subordinate thesis has been this that the Abrahamic Covenant is the basic historical covenant that has to do with redemption. Aside from some of, well I should put it this way. The Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant are characterized by the fact that they each are unconditional covenants. The other covenants were conditional covenant. And so it is even more important that we understand the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant. The covenants are the historical outworking in time of the eternal covenant, and the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant are expansions and developments of the Abrahamic Covenant. These two covenants, Davidic and New Covenant, supply details with regard to the Abrahamic provisions that are not specifically stated in the Book of Genesis.

Now in our study of the New Covenant we have attempted to point out these things. First, that it is made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; that is basic and fundamental. It is a covenant that is made between God and Israel and Judah, specifically stated Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 31.

We have also stated that this covenant is an unconditional covenant. It does not rest upon anything in man ultimately. It is like the Abrahamic Covenant. It is like the Davidic Covenant. It is something that God himself has said that he is going to do. I will make a covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, and included in that are certain blessings which he determines that he is going to fulfill.

Third, it is, as I said before, a reiteration and an expansion of the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants. This is specifically taught in Ezekiel chapter 37 verses 21 through 28 when in one of his great prophecies gathering together all of these details he shows the relationship between the Davidic Covenant, which has to do with the kingdom and the king, the Abrahamic Covenant which has to do with the land and the seed, and the New Covenant which has primarily to do with the forgiveness of sins or the redemptive aspects of God’s working.

Fourth, we pointed out that it is superior to the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant was as conditional covenant. It was a compact in which both God and man had certain responsibilities. Man of course failed. These others are unconditional and therefore superior to the Mosaic Covenant. Unfortunately, the Mosaic Covenant in itself was all right, but it had to do with us, and because it had to do with us it cannot accomplish the promises of God. The law can never do that. The trouble is not with the law -- it’s holy, just and good. The Mosaic Covenant was holy, just and good. The commandments, the Ten Commandments, are holy, just and good. But unfortunately, they are directed to us, and we cannot keep them because we are sinners under divine condemnation.

Fifth, this covenant stresses the forgiveness of sins. You will, as you read through the covenants of the Old Testament, discover, for example, that in the Abrahamic Covenant nothing is said specifically about the forgiveness of sin. In the Davidic Covenant, nothing is said specifically about the forgiveness of sins. It would raise the question in the minds of Abraham and his seed and David and his family. It would raise the question how is God able to do this in the light of our sinful condition. The New Covenant seeks to answer that question, pointing out that God would give forgiveness of sins through the coming Redeemer, and it would be upon that basis that he would find himself able, judicially and righteously, to convey to those intended the blessings of the covenant.

We pointed out that the New Covenant was ratified and established by the death of the Davidic king our Lord Jesus Christ. We turned to Matthew chapter 26 and we looked at the passage in which our Lord at the last Passover and the first Lord’s Supper, institutes the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of what he would do in a few days upon the cross at Calvary. He spoke in the light of what would be done, and when he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins, he was telling us that through his death the New Covenant would be ratified, the judicial basis upon which the promises could be given would be established, and that when our Lord cried out, My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?, bearing the punishment for sin eternally, that covenant was ratified and established forever.

Now the only thing that remains is for God to carry out in his good time the completion of that covenant and the Scriptures give us in the prophetic word both of the Old and New Testament ample indications of what is going to take place in the future. The precise time, of course, the Bible does not tell us, and therefore it’s very hazardous to go around setting dates. Many, unfortunately, and yet good Christians have attempted to set dates, and if they don’t set dates, they suggest dates. We’ve tried to keep from doing that. No one knows when the rapture is going to take place, and no one knows when the Second Advent is going to take place, but we do know that those events shall take place and the covenants shall be fulfilled.

Now the Lord Jesus not only hinted but spoke directly by saying in the institution of the Lord’s supper that he would consummate this program at the time of the Messianic kingdom, for in Matthew chapter 26 in that passage that we referred to in the last verse of the particular section that we were looking at, he said unto the apostles, “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.” It would be at that time that the conditions or the uh provisions of the New Covenant would be fulfilled.

Now we have, we are going to turn to the last passage that deals with the New Covenant in the New Testament. That is in this series Romans chapter 11, and I want to try to bring our study to a climax by pointing out that the Apostle Paul has spoken about the details of the completion of the program of God.

Now let me say just a few words by way of introduction to Romans chapter 11. We are living of course in very critical times and at the center of the world’s problems is the question of the Middle East and Israel. All of us who are Christians are interested in what is happening in the Middle East. It’s rather striking that in the Bible Israel assumes such a large place in the redemptive program, because no one looking at world history would have suggested it. It’s a rather interesting thing to me also that if you read the histories of philosophies, and particularly if you read philosophies of history, you’ll discover that many of our finest philosophical thinkers have sought to give some kind of rhyme or reason to the progress of history, and it’s striking to me that in almost all of the philosophies of history that have been written -- this discipline by the way is a relatively recent discipline -- but in almost all of the philosophies of history that have been written, no place is given to the Nation Israel at all.

The world is completely blind to the place of Israel in the divine program. The world is completely blind to the place of Israel in the history of the world. That’s a striking thing, but it’s true. Go back as far as you like, and read the philosophies of history, even Augustine’s philosophy of history, perhaps the first, *The City of God*, is deficient in this respect, for he did not understand the nature of the place of Israel in the history of man. But modern philosophies of history -- it is pitiful. Some of them say that Israel puzzles them, but they have no way to account for Israel in the history of the world.

At the center of the biblical revelation is Israel, and the question of Jesus Christ, his saving cross and the place of Israel form two of the greatest themes of the Bible, and Romans very beautifully shows us that. As you read through the Epistle of the Romans, the first eight chapters given by the apostle to the Gentiles describe for us the plan of

salvation by which an elect company has emerged as the people of God. When you reach the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and its climactic statements concerning the greatness of this program, we have the statement made, “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect.” An elect company of people have come into existence through the preaching of the gospel, but the striking thing that a Jewish man listening to Paul would have noticed is this Israel is missing from among the company of God’s elect.

Now that would raise an immediate problem, because he knew enough about divine revelation to know that divine revelation had at its center the Nation Israel. So he’s faced with a dilemma. The Apostle Paul has stated that here is an elect company of the people of God who are the object of the purpose of God, and Israel is missing.

Now Paul’s gospel, if that is true, must be false, because any kind of message of God that leaves Israel out can hardly be the true message of God. I think that Paul knew quite well far more than I do; I’m sure that this 9, 10, and 11 of the Epistle of the Romans was a necessary thing in the light of what he had done. So Romans 9, 10, and 11 is written in order to make some points. What he wants to do now is to explain why Israel is not among the elect and why the promises of the Old Testament may still be valid.

The first point he makes in 9, 10, and 11 is that Israel’s failure is due to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency, and specifically failure to read the Scriptures properly. In other words, Israel if they had read the Bible properly, would have discovered that the promises of God are given to believers in Israel. They are not given to Israelites apart from faith. They are given to believers in Israel and one only has to read the history of the Old Testament to see that. He starts out in the 9th chapter by saying, It’s in Isaac that thy seed is called, and then he says that it is Jacob whom I have loved but Esau I have hated. So the line of promise begins with Abraham, proceeds to Isaac and to Jacob. Not every Israelite is going to experience the blessing of God. It is those who walk in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham who are the objects of the divine promise. Israel has misread the Bible. They have thought that those promises addressed to Israel

included all the Israelites, and if a person was an Israelite, why that meant of course that he was the recipient of the promises. No, the promises are given to Israelites; they’re not given to Gentiles, those Abrahamic promises that he speaks of there. They are given to Israelites, but believing Israelites. So the apostle makes the point, you haven’t read your own Bible correctly.

The second point that he makes in the 11th chapter is that Israel’s failure is not total. Even in Paul’s day there are Israelites who are being saved, and Paul says in that first ten verses of chapter 11 -- I’m one of them, I’m an Israelite, I’m of the tribe of Benjamin, and God has not cast off his people, because I’m saved. That’s what he means when he says, has God cast away his people? God forbid! I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. God hasn’t cast away his people whom he foreknew, but of course his people include the believing Israelites.

Now in the section that we are going to look at he says that Israel’s rejection or failure is not final. There is coming a day in which all Israel shall be saved. Now we’ll deal with that question, all Israel shall be saved a little later. So in this climactic section which we’re going to consider, Paul puts it all together. He outlines the purpose of Israel’s present fall. He gives a parable to warn the Gentiles of similar possibilities, and finally he prophesies Israel’s restoration.

I think if we were to catch the mood of what Paul was saying here in chapter 11 it would be something like this. There is a damper in the father’s house as long as the elder brother refuses to come in and that is the picture of Israel that we find here.

Now will you listen as I read beginning at Romans 11:11:

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid:
but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles,
to provoke them to jealousy. (Now notice what Paul is saying here
he is saying that salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke them

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Israel to jealousy.) 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 fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am
the apostle of the of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.”

By the way you often have people saying that referring to the office of an apostle; that’s
not a biblical expression at all. But doesn’t he say that here I magnify mine office. All
you have to do is open up the Bible and take a good look. By the Bible I mean the
original text.

Now you open up the original text and you discover that the word is not office at
all it’s really a word that means service. In fact, in all of the occurrences of the word
office in the New Testament all of them are wrong. That’s a strange I know that I know
what you’re thinking you’re thinking that’s wild. That word, office, doesn’t occur. I
magnify my service.

Now I’m not against calling an elder an officer or a deacon an officer, but the
New Testament stresses their function more than their position. And in the case of the
apostle we know from other passages that apostleship was not an office it was a gift. It’s
referred to as a spiritual gift. That’s what it is. So I magnify mine office, but it’s really, I
magnify my service.

“If by any means I may provoke to jealousy them who 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, 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, being a wild olive tree the Gentiles,
wert grafted 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 grafted in. I give the stress of the original text. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear you Gentiles: 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 who fell, severity Israel; 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 grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. (Now the illustration itself suggests of course that Israel has a future.) For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, who are the natural branches Israel, be grafted into their own olive tree? Whatever the olive tree means it belongs to Israel. It’s their own olive tree into which Gentiles have been grafted and which Israel may be into which Israel may be regrafted. 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 not totally to all of Israel blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Now let me give you a kind of overview of what Paul has been saying. The first thing that he points out in verses 11 through 15 is the purpose of Israel’s fall. The heart of Paul’s meaning is found in the use of an Old Testament text, Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 21. I’m going to turn back to text, and if you want to put it in your notes, you can, and if you can find it by the time I read it, fine. But I’m going to turn and read it because some of you may delay four or five minutes trying to find Deuteronomy. Here is what Deuteronomy 32 verse 21 says, “They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” God says in this great song of Moses that the time is coming when he by reason of Israel’s unbelief is going to provoke by those who are not a people by those who are Gentiles.

The apostle uses this text in more than one place in Romans 9 10 and 11. It evidently was a basic thought of his theology that the present age is taking place in the purpose of God in order that God might provoke Israel to jealousy through the conversion of you Gentiles. In other words, even in the present period the primary and ultimate purpose of God is to win Israel again.

Now that’s a little humbling isn’t it? But that’s the teaching of the apostle. That’s what he has in mind. He wants to provoke Israel to jealousy in order to win them, and so he uses you and me as means by which we can provoke Israel to jealously.

Now there is little in the history of Christendom that would suggest that Israel has been provoked to much jealousy. Nietzsche once said of Christians in general, “You will have to look and live more redeemed before I believe in your Redeemer.” And undoubtedly, one of the reasons from the human standpoint, the human standpoint only, one of the reasons that I can make a statement like that is that there isn’t, there is little in the history of the church down through the centuries that would provoke Israel to

jealousy. One of the reasons that I can make that statement is because we have failed in our part of the task too.

So he states then that I am saving Gentiles in order to provoke Jews to jealousy that they might be saved. Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid, but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy. Isn’t that interesting? Do you not think that that is why Paul said that the gospel was a gospel that was to go first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles? Do you not think that that is why he preached the gospel to the Jews and then to the Gentiles? It was his hope that by virtue of the preaching of the gospel, the Jews might be won in order that the program of God might reach its consummation.

He states in the 12th verse, “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world”—that’s the present time the; riches of the world; that is, salvation among the Gentiles and some Jews – “and the diminishing of them (the riches of the Gentiles), how much more their fullness?” If we have seen a worldwide preaching of the gospel which has touched Gentiles all over the world, and Israel is in a state of rejection, then how much more shall we see of world blessing when Israel comes into the place where God will ultimately bring them? In other words, if by the rejection of Israel we have great world blessing, how much more world blessing will we have when Israel comes back into the experience of the blessings of God?

He develops that. “I’m speaking to you Gentiles because I’m an apostle of the Gentiles and I’m magnifying my service. If by any means I may provoke to jealousy them who are my flesh.” I can just imagine Paul coming to a Jewish man saying, God has saved me an Israelite. Jesus Christ was the Messiah. You can see it in the salvation of not only the Jews the apostles and others in the earliest stages of the church, but look, the gospel is going out to the four corners of the earth and the Gentiles are flocking in -- doesn’t that make you jealous? Wouldn’t you like to have some of this divine life that we

have? If by any means I might save provoke to jealousy them who are my flesh and might save some of them.

Now the apostle recognizes by that word some that at the moment he was not expecting to see all Israel saved. This is the day in which some of Israel is saved. That of course has been fulfilled down through history, and we have as you know, there has never been a time when there have not been Jewish Christians. Down through the years there have been a remnant according to the election of grace. He has spoken of them up here in the 5th verse, a remnant according to the election of grace, and there have been many of them. I was taught Hebrew by a member of the remnant according to the election of grace Dr. Charles Feinberg, and many others we have had ever since I’ve been at Dallas Seminary, and that was since the time of Noah [laughter].

We have had Jewish Christians in our student body, and we also have had Jewish Christians on our faculty. But we have not seen yet the fulfillment of, “and so all Israel shall be saved.” Paul labors it a little more in the 15th verse by saying, “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world salvation is gone out to Jew and Gentile, what shall the receiving of them be (the Greek text is rather vivid here) what shall the receiving of them be but such a thing as life from the dead?” It’s going to be like a resurrection. It’s going to be such a miraculous, earth shaking event when the Nation Israel comes to faith in Christ.

Now then to illustrate his point, he turns to a rather obscure statement in the Old Testament made in Numbers chapter 15. We don’t have time to take a look at it -- but I thought I had put it here on the in the outline – yes, Numbers chapter 15 verses 17 through 21, and on the basis of a couple of Old Testament figures he illustrates what has happened.

Now this parable of verses 16 through 24 is a parable of admonition. In other words, the primary force of this section is to warn Gentiles, because he’s writing primarily to a Gentile group. He wants to warn the Gentiles that they if they do not realize that

they are simply instruments to the accomplishment of God’s great program for Israel and the kingdom, they would tend to fall into spiritual pride.

Now of course that has happened historically. This is very truly in the Christian church. There have been times in the Christian church when the Jewish nation has been regarded as the enemies of God and to be persecuted. Now you don’t have to know much about world history to know that this is true in many of the countries of this world.

Now of course we as Christians may qualify that by saying, yes that’s true, but they were largely professing Christians. I grant that, I grant that. They were not Bible believing Christians who performed this persecution. Of course, Israelites don’t know the difference. They think everybody who’s not a Jew in the United States is a Christian. They don’t know the difference between a Gentile and a Christian practically speaking. Some of them do. The great majority do not. They do not know how to make this distinction because they are blinded just as Gentiles don’t know how to make the distinction between a man who’s a member of a Christian church and a genuine Christian. We don’t know how to make that distinction either, until we are born again. So Paul is trying to warn them and to see how this has been fulfilled. That is, they have not listened. You should read some of the curses -- many of them have never been translated into English, so many people don’t know they exist -- but they still are valid curses in the literature of the Roman Catholic Church, curses pronounced upon the Jews. And if you could read Latin, you’d be astonished at the things that are stated in these curses -- official pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church. So this is a warning to the Gentiles that they not fall into spiritual pride because God is dealing with them now. They should remember that he’s doing this with a view to the fulfillment of his program.

Now the figure of the olive tree then is designed to be a kind of illustration by which Paul will admonish the Gentiles. Now we don’t have time in the time that we have to support all of the detail the minor points that I want to make. I want to simply state in general what this olive tree represents. I think I can prove it if we had time, but most of

you probably will accept what I say because I think that you recognize that this is probably the teaching too. The olive tree in this passage is designed to represent the Abrahamic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant in its origin with the fathers, in its development, and in its fulfillment at the end of the times of the Gentiles. So the figure or illustration of the olive tree and the branches is designed to represent the Abrahamic Covenant.

Now we have already spent a great deal of time on the Abrahamic Covenant. The important thing to remember is that that covenant was an unconditional covenant in which God himself took it upon himself to make certain inviolable promises which he guarantees on the basis of his faithfulness to his word to perform. Remember, when we were discussing the Abrahamic Covenant, we went back to Genesis chapter 15, and we spent a great deal of time on that ceremony by which God inaugurated the Abrahamic Covenant, demonstrating so clearly that it was a unilateral covenant in which God himself was guaranteeing the fulfillment of his promises.

Remember when Abram parted the animals and the furnace, the flaming furnace passed between the pieces, remember it was the custom in making such a covenant for both parties to the covenant to pass between the pieces, because each ordinarily had obligations when they made a covenant. But in this Abrahamic Covenant, God himself in the form which he appeared to Abraham passed between the pieces, and Abram was not invited to follow, because God was making certain promises which he would fulfill and they did not depend ultimately upon Abram. That’s grace. That’s grace. That’s why you’re saved, because God has in eternity passed, out of his own good pleasure, determined that some people and he has discriminated -- discrimination may be a bad word today on the earth, but it’s a beautiful word in spiritual things -- he has discriminated and determined that you if you’re a believer should belong to Jesus Christ.

Now that determination does not rest upon the fact that he has foreseen that you would believe, for it doesn’t rest on you, it does not rest upon any holiness or good

works which you may have or perform. It rests upon on the good pleasure of his will. So you don’t like that? I love it. I love it. Because if it rests upon the good pleasure of his will then I’ve got it -- cannot lose it. Well that’s what God was saying to Abram when he passed between the pieces and Abram was not invited to follow. He was saying Abram I’m going to fulfill those promises, and they don’t really, ultimately, depend upon you. Your activities may delay the fulfillment, but the completion of the covenant is certain.

Now that’s the background of the illustration. This is the Abrahamic Covenant in its origin with the fathers, its development and its fulfillment at the end of the times of the Gentiles. It’s a parable from horticulture. Now most of you who are not experts in horticulture like I am will not understand this very well. In fact, some of the commentators, who often fulfill that Scripture, all we like sheep have gone astray, do not understand this. They occasionally accuse Paul of not knowing much about horticulture, because one of the first lessons you learn about horticulture is that if you want to do some grafting, you do not graft a wild slip or scion into a cultivated stock. That’s the reverse. You take a cultivated scion or slip and you graft it into wild stock.

Now the reason I know that is not because I’m so intelligent. It’s because I saw my father doing it in Charleston, South Carolina years ago. He grew Camellias, and he occasionally would take a clipping off of a Camellia bush, a cultivated scion, and graft it into wild stock. That’s the way most of the Camellia bushes are grown. Wild stock, cultivated scions.

Now Paul is going to talk about the grafting of wild branches into the stock. That’s contrary to nature. But Paul knew a little bit about horticulture. In fact, I think he probably knew more than some of his critics, because he states in verse 24, if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, so he knew what he was doing. He knew what he was talking about.

Well now then I’m going to read very quickly through these verses again and just make a few comments again so that you’ll catch the force now of what we’ve been talking about. This is the Abrahamic Covenant. The branches of course are Israel. The root is Abraham and the fathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The promises were made to Abraham confirmed to Isaac confirmed to Jacob.

Now then in verse 17 or verse 16. “If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.” In other words the promises made to Abraham communicate their relationship to the branches. “And if some of the branches were broken off, and you (you Gentiles), a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them.” Now notice that. It says that the Gentiles are grafted in among them. Now what does that mean? Well that means that they are the recipients of the Abrahamic promises. That’s why we are called the children of Abraham. Now we are never in the New Testament, called the children of Israel. Israel is always Israel. Judah’s always Judah. Those national relationships are always true. God has Israel as an election, and he has the church has an election, but we are children of Abraham because we do participate in those promises.

We are grafted in among them notice it, “And with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if you boast, you don’t bear the root, but the root bears you. (In other words your blessings come from Abraham.) You will say then, I The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: (You have a very tenuous relationship. The promises were not made to you they were made to Israel.) And in his grace he has grafted you in among them. 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 who fell Israel, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off. And they

too, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.”

He says it’s possible, it’s within God’s power to bring Israel back into the possession as a nation of the Abrahamic promises. “For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature in a good olive tree:” In other words if he’s done the strange thing and the difficult thing how much more shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? The original text there is a great deal of stress upon that. It’s their own olive tree. It’s not your olive tree. It’s their olive tree. In other words, it’s more to be expected that God would restore the Jews than it is that he would save Gentiles. And he’s already saved Gentiles.

Now I imagine you’re about as confused as the old verger who said, Saint Mary’s Anglican Church in Oxford where the Bampton Lectures are held, he said “I’ve been in this here church (used to say this to the visitors) I’ve been in this here church for forty years I’ve heard every sermon and every lecture delivered in it and thank God I’m a Christian still.” [Laughter]

Now we look at the prophecy of restoration. Now he has said it is possible to faith in the 23rd verse that those natural branches should be grafted in again. He has stated that it is probable, because it’s more natural in the 24th verse. Now he will simply come right out and say, it’s prophesied in Scripture, and so all Israel shall be saved. He declares it in verse 25 and 26, “For I don’t want you to be ignorant brethren of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles be come in.” God has had a purpose within a purpose, and his purpose is that a certain number of Gentiles should enter in among those branches and possess the root and fatness of the olive tree. But blindness has come to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. So it’s blindness in part; it’s not complete, and it’s until the full number of the Gentiles be come in. But then he states in the first part of verse 26, “And so all Israel shall be saved.”

Now this does not mean every single Israelite. One might think that immediately. Every single Israelite. But we know from other passages of Scripture that there are divine disciplines during the time of the Great Tribulation in which many unbelievers in Israel shall be cut off. Well then how many is “all Israel”? I am inclined to think that what we are to understand by this is the same thing that we are to understand when we say Israel rejected Christ. Not every Israelite rejected Christ. The apostles didn’t. Above five hundred brethren, Paul refers to, saw the resurrection. There was quite a good little number who responded to the message of the Lord Jesus who were Jews. But what did happen was this, that the leadership in Israel, and the great mass of the people turned against their Messiah, but not every individual. I gather then that the same principle holds with reference to the future. It’s not every single Israelite who shall be saved, but it is the leadership of the people and the great mass of the people.

Now if we had time I could turn to passages like 1 Kings chapter 12 and 2 Chronicles chapter 12 and prove that that term, all Israel, is a term in the Old Testament which does not include everybody. Those passages contain those terms. All Israel. And yet in the same context it is evident that some Israelites do not participate in the particular action referred to. As a matter of fact, Rabbinic literature uses the term in the same way. For example we have in Sanhedrin 10:1 this statement, “All Israelites have a share in the world to come.” But then in the immediate context of that statement the author goes on to say, “All Israelites have a share in the world to come, but these are excepted,” and then he lists various types of people particularly guilty of certain heinous sins that are not going to have a share in the world to come. So the term had a meaning in Israelitish thought of the nation as a whole, whatever it may be -- the entity as a whole, but not necessarily the ever single individual.

Now then for a few moments I want to say a word about what Paul means when he says, “And so Israel shall be saved.” It’s evident from what you have been hearing me say in this series of messages which has been going now for a long time that I have taken

a premillennial interpretation of prophecy. We talked about the basis of premillennialism over a considerable period of time. We talked about amillennialism. We talked about post-millennialism. Many of you were not here and so you don’t know that we spent -- this is our twentieth lecture on in this series and six or eight of them were spent on this topic. We tried to show why the premillennial system is the biblical system.

Now when we reach a statement like this, all Israel shall be saved, and we say that means simply that Israel as a national, ethnic Israel has a nation has a future, we are not giving the unanimous interpretation of Protestantism or of Christendom. John Calvin as great as he was, did not have a great deal of understanding of the prophetic word. He thought that the term, Israel, meant church and so he interpreted all Israel shall be saved as a reference to the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. That’s the way he understood it. Now that of course is contrary to the use of the New Testament term *Israel* or Israel. It’s contrary to the context here where we have never had in this context Israel in the sense of Israel and Gentiles Paul’s been carefully distinguishing Israel and Gentiles. We must abandon that interpretation.

Another interpretation the interpretation an interpretation that is quite common today among Reformed men who are amillennial is the interpretation of William Hendrickson. Mr. Hendrickson or Dr. Hendrickson understands the term Israel to be the total number of elect Jews throughout the centuries down through the years. He does not believe that there is going to be a great influx of Israelites in the future, a national conversion. He says, and so all Israel shall be saved, is a reference back to the preceding context and simply refers to the remnant of Israelites who have come into the church down through the centuries, and it’s in this matter; that is by being provoked to jealousy by Gentiles, that all Israel shall be saved. So Israel has no great ethnic future; they’ve had it down through the years in the dribbles of Jews who have come into the body of Christ. I wish I had time to deal with this at great length. I don’t.

But the verses in verse 11 through verse 15 definitely show that this interpretation cannot be true, for Paul states in these verses that there is going to come a time in the future which he calls their fullness, or such a thing as life from the dead, which can only be explained by a magnificently tremendous infusion of Jewish people into the plan and program of God. So I must abandon that interpretation; I’m sorry I don’t have time to talk in detail about it.

A third interpretation is that of John Murray, also an amillennialists. A man whom I refer of whom I referred a few weeks ago, reminding you or saying to you that he had died, a very fine interpreter of Scripture but a amillennialist. Mr. Murray commented to a friend of mine not too many years ago that he had formerly held that interpretation, that Israel referred to the total number of elect Jews throughout the centuries, but he had finally come to believe that Israel first of all meant Israel, and that Israel had a national future based on those very verses that I referred to. And you will find in his commentary on Romans an outstanding commentary that he affirms that this means, all Israel shall be saved. And so he looks forward to a future for ethnic Israel. Now Dr. Murray did not believe in a kingdom of God upon the earth, but so far as he goes he is true to the teaching of Scripture.

Now Paul attests this and so all Israel shall be saved and he cites Scripture to do it and I want to close with this. I want you to notice the texts that he quotes. He says, “For all Israel shall be saved as it is written.” Now there are three passages in the Old Testament that are referred to here. They are most interesting. Paul welds these three passages together into one statement from Scripture. First of all, he cites Isaiah chapter 59 and verse 20 and states that “The Deliverer shall come out of Zion.” The Deliverer text in the Old Testament, the Redeemer shall come out of Zion. That is a statement that refers to the Davidic king, the Messiah. In other words, the Deliverer shall come out of Zion and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and he refers in that to that great messianic passage in Isaiah 59 which locates the coming of the Redeemer at the Second Advent just

before the establishment of the kingdom, and since he is described as the Deliverer of the nation, it’s evident that he refers to the Messiah who is to be the Davidic king. In other words, that’s an allusion to the Davidic Covenant.

Now then having said that Paul goes on to say that he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Now that is an allusion to Isaiah chapter 27 and verse 9 in which also in a Messianic passage, reference is made to the coming of the kingdom and what the Messianic king would do. But the statement, “For this is my covenant unto them which goes with that” is a word that is taken from Genesis chapter 17 and the Abrahamic Covenant when God spoke to Abram and said this is my covenant unto you. So alluded to in this is also the Abrahamic Covenant. And the final words in verse 27, “When I shall take away their sins” is as you probably recognize an allusion to Jeremiah chapter 31, when he says that he is going to forgive their sins and their iniquities so that there will be no more need for sacrifice.

So what we have in this statement of Paul is a gathering together of the Davidic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant, and Paul is suggesting that it is all going to come to pass when the Messiah comes again to the earth at his Second Advent. This is the completion of the kingdom program of God, and the covenantal program of God. It is the fulfillment in the sense that it is brought to fruition and the kingdom follows with all of the promises that God has promises unconditionally. Well my time is up. I must stop. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee Lord for the privilege of the study of the word of God, and we ask Thy blessing upon us as we conclude this study of the New Covenant that only awaits time for its ultimate complete fulfillment to Judah and the children of Israel.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

“The New Covenant and Prophecy, part IV” by S. Lewis Johnson
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