

The People of God

A Study of the Continuity and Discontinuity Between OT Israel and the NT Church

By Chris Reeves

Moses: “For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God: Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Jehovah: “And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, *Thou art my God*” (Hosea 2:23).

Peter: “But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

John: “And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).¹

This lecture examines the biblical theme of the “people of God” as it relates particularly to Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.² In Old Testament times, Israel, made up of Jews alone, was termed the chosen “people unto Jehovah” (Deuteronomy 7:6). The Lord’s church, made up of all mankind, is termed the chosen “people of God” in New Testament times and even today (1 Peter 2:9-10).

In the future, all the saved of all time will be “his peoples” reigning with God in heaven (Revelation 21:3). The central question addressed in this lecture is this: What continuity and discontinuity exists between Old Testament Israel as the people of God and the New Testament church as the people of God?³

¹ All scripture references in this lecture are from the American Standard Version (1901).

² For a good overview of the biblical doctrine of the people of God, see the article by Richard Batey.

³ I will not address the historical debates, the theological systems, or the hermeneutical principles involved in the continuity/discontinuity discussion. Nor will I address the themes of salvation, the Law, and kingdom promises in both testaments. Chapters covering all these topics can be found in John S. Feinberg’s *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*. Another good overview of the continuity/discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments is found in David L. Baker’s *Two Testaments One Bible* (234-254), and Gerhard Hasel’s *New Testament Theology* (171-203).

The People of God Old Testament Israel

The Creation of the People of God⁴

That God has always wanted a people for himself is made clear from the beginning of time. When God created all things in heaven and earth, he chose to create mankind and make him the pinnacle of his creation. He created mankind, male and female, in his own image (Genesis 1) and gave them a place to dwell with him in fellowship (Genesis 2). In one sense, all people, saved or unsaved are the people of God in that all mankind have been created by their Maker (Psalm 95:6-7), in honor (Psalm 8:3-9), and with the ability to seek God and find him (Acts 17:26-27).

However, God wants mankind to exercise his free-will and personally respond to him in faith and God wants mankind to glorify him and give him thanks (Romans 1:21). In a special sense, then, only those persons who respond to God in trusting faith and loving obedience are truly the people of God. The heart of “biblical theology” concerns the creation, maintenance, and ultimate reward of the people of God.⁵

The Fall of the People of God

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, sin and death entered, followed by man’s shame and God’s punishment (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-24). The first people of God fell from divine fellowship and were removed from the garden. However, God revealed to the first family how they could offer sacrifice for sin and retain their fellowship (Genesis 4:1-26). Sin grew among mankind (Genesis 5) to a point where the wickedness of man was so great that God destroyed mankind with a flood (Genesis 6). The faithful people of God were few at this time but could be found among such individuals as Abel, Enoch, and Noah (Genesis 4:4; 5:21-24; 6:8-9; Hebrews 11:4-7).

The Election of the People of God

Israel is first mentioned in the Old Testament with reference to Jacob and his return home. Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel” when he wrestled with a man, the angel of God, all night and prevailed (Genesis 32:22-32).⁶ “Israel” means “he who strives with God” (32:28).⁷ While wrestling with the angel, Jacob also asks to be blessed (32:3-29).

⁴ My outline of thought here follows somewhat that of Howard Taylor in his article without accepting Taylor’s conclusions about Israel’s future (see “The Continuity of the People of God in the Old and New Testaments”).

⁵ “Biblical theology” is a term that is used to describe the overarching theme or storyline of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, with its focus on Christ and the people of God. See the article on “Biblical Theology” by B.S. Rosner.

⁶ Much later, Hosea would make reference to Jacob’s striving by saying, “and in his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed” (12:3-4).

⁷ The basic meaning of “strive with God” is accepted here, but the author understands that some debate surrounds the etymology and linguistic detail of the name “Israel”. Compare the different English versions.

In this story, we find that Jacob the man becomes prototypical of Israel the nation in two ways: First, Jacob's striving with God is typical of the nation of Israel who would later constantly strive with God. Israel strove with God and against his will as they committed immorality and idolatry (Isaiah 1:1-9; Ezekiel 20:33-36; Hosea 4:1; 12:2; Amos 2:4-5; Micah 6:1-2).⁸ Second, Jacob's blessing from God is typical of Israel's blessing from God. At the very moment that Israel strives with God, she is blessed by the very one with whom she strives. God is both an enemy to Israel and a Savior to Israel (Isaiah 63:9-10). From Deuteronomy 28 to Malachi 4, the story of Israel as God's people follows the theme of blessing and cursing (striving).

The beginning of Israel as the people of God can be traced to the call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.⁹ Here, Abraham is promised, among other things, a "great nation" who would become the people of God. The rest of the book of Genesis tells the story of how this great nation came about through Isaac the child of promise and through Jacob.¹⁰ The fulfillment of the "great nation" promise was eventually realized in the time of Moses and Israel's exodus from Egypt.¹¹ It is at this time and place that God begins to refer to Israel specifically as his people. For example, when God brought Israel out of Egypt, he spoke to Moses and said: "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exodus 6:7).¹²

Later, at Mt. Sinai, God again described Israel as his special people. Exodus 19:5-6 is key to understanding and defining Israel as the people of God at this time. This passage presents a two-fold description of God's people: 1) God's people worship God while reaching the world around them – "a kingdom of priests"; and, 2) God's people worship God while remaining distinct from the world around them – "a holy nation".¹³

The day when Israel was gathered together at Mt. Sinai as God's people, was called "the day of the assembly" (Deuteronomy 9:10; 10:4; 18:16). Israel "assembled" (Heb. *qahal*, LXX *ekklesia*) as God's people to hear God's covenant with them. Israel, as the people of God, would have a special relationship with God and with one another. This special relationship is outlined in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The book of Deuteronomy gives special attention to Israel as the people of God. First, Israel was to demonstrate unswerving, exclusive loyalty to the Lord (Deuteronomy 5:5-7). Second, Israel was to remember that she had been chosen for a special relationship

⁸ It is good to remember that Jacob himself, though the lawful bearer of a divine promise (Genesis 28:13-15), pursued his promise through human cunning, deceit, and trickery.

⁹ Paul says that God "preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham" (Galatians 3:8). See the lectures by Bob Dickey, Robert Harkrider, and Bob Waldron.

¹⁰ Genesis 12-36 tells the story of how God would choose Isaac (not Ishmael) and Jacob (not Esau) to bring about this "great nation". This is referenced by Paul in Romans 9:9-12.

¹¹ Genesis 37-50 tells the story of how Jacob (Israel) brought his family into Egypt and how they became a "great nation" there.

¹² See also Exodus 3:7, 10; 5:1; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 18:1; 32:11; and Leviticus 26:12. See the lecture by Gary Henry.

¹³ Peter's use of this passage makes it clear that God's people are to reach the world around them while at the same time remaining distinct from the world around them (1 Peter 2:5-12). See also Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

without any merit of her own (Deuteronomy 7:6; 9:4-6). Third, Israel, as the people of God, was to remember her past life of slavery and use this to promote a proper worship of God (Deuteronomy 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22). Fourth, Israel was not to repeat the social oppression that she experienced in Egypt, but rather establish a fraternal community based upon justice and righteousness (Deuteronomy 10:17-18; 24:17; 27:19).

The Struggle of the People of God

When we read the historical books of the Old Testament (Joshua through 2 Chronicles), we are given a view of Israel that is a mixture of both failure and success. However, there also is a steady decline overall and a downward trend in the spiritual relationship between God and his people (see the books of Joshua and Judges in particular).¹⁴ Israel as the people of God often fall short of what God desires and demands of them.

Open rejection of God's kingship is found when Israel asks for a king like all the other nations (1 Samuel 8). After a golden time period of being united, the people of God are soon fractured into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south (1 Kings 12). The northern kingdom of Israel would later fall in 722 B.C. with the Assyrian captivity and the southern kingdom of Judah would fall in 586 B.C. with the Babylonian captivity.¹⁵

The Remnant of the People of God

During the period of Israel's decline we are introduced to an important dimension in our understanding of the people of God. The people of God are not simply those of physical Israel; the majority or mass of Israel. The true or real people of God are the few, the "remnant", the children of Israel who live for God in faithfulness to his covenant (like the 7,000 faithful in the days of Elijah, 1 Kings 19:18).¹⁶

Different prophets at this time expose the hypocrisy and unfaithfulness of Israel as a whole, but they also remember the remnant who are God's true people. Prophets like Isaiah spoke of a remnant (1:9; 7:3; 10:20-22). It is interesting to note here that Isaiah used the phrase "people of God" to describe:

- 1) the Israelites of the Exodus (63:7 – 64:12),
- 2) the self-righteous Israelites of his day (3:13ff),
- 3) the smaller remnant of faithful Israelites (10:20-22; 11:10-16; 28:5-6; 37:30-32), and,
- 4) the people of all nations who turn to the Lord (19:18-25; 56:6-7).¹⁷

Amos (3:12; 5:14-15) and Micah (7:18) also spoke of a remnant of God's people. The remnant of God's people at this time not only returned to their land after the captivity

¹⁴ See the lecture by Rodney M. Miller.

¹⁵ See the lecture by Billy Ashworth.

¹⁶ See Paul's reference to Elijah in Romans 11:4.

¹⁷ See the article by John T. Willis for more examples of this point.

(see the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi),¹⁸ but they also returned to their God.¹⁹

J.G. Millar comments:

Remnant theology was quite complex, bringing together the themes of judgment and salvation. At its heart, however, lay the conviction that even when Israel or Judah were at their worst, there was always a small group of faithful believers who held on to true religion ... The nation/people as a whole might have failed spectacularly, but there were still some who could provide a bridge to forgiveness and restoration. It was these people, the true people of God as it were, in whom God would work his eschatological resolution.²⁰

We continue to see a picture of the remnant people of God after the captivity in the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 9:8-15; Nehemiah 1:3; Haggai 1:12, 14; 2:2; Zechariah 8:6-15). The presence of a faithful remnant of God's people would even continue past the return into the time of the inter-testamental period. These faithful ones are described as "the people that know their God" (see Daniel 11:32-35; 12:1-3, 7-10).

At this time, another element is added to the dimension of the God's people. God's people in the future would not only be from among the remnant, but God's people would be a new people. God's plan for Israel and their hope would not rest alone in the faithful remnant who returned, but in God's action to inaugurate a new people under a new covenant. The future of God's people would be found in the coming of a new people with a new covenant (Jeremiah 30-31)²¹ and a new heart (Ezekiel 36-37).²²

It is important to note the reiteration of Exodus 6:7 at this point in Israel's history. Just like in the days of Moses and the exodus, God once again proclaims: "And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Jeremiah 30:22; Ezekiel 36:28). The days would come when the people of God would not be limited to Israel, or even to the faithful remnant of Israel. The people of God in the days of the Messiah would include a new people; a remnant of much more people than the Jews and a remnant with a new law and heart. Already the concept of continuity and discontinuity is witness in the prophets of the Babylonian captivity and beyond.

¹⁸ See the lecture by J. Wiley Adams.

¹⁹ God let Israel know that he did not want outward, physical sacrifices alone, but he wanted an inward, contrite heart (Psalm 50:8-14, 23; 51:16-17; 69:30-31; Proverbs 21:3, 27; Isaiah 66:2-3; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8). This teaching should have led Israel to understand that physical nationality alone does not make one a member of God's people.

²⁰ "People of God," 685. F.F. Bruce describes the remnant of God's people this way: "The 'saved remnant' becomes the 'saving remnant' – the remnant which guaranteed the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel" (*New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, 58-59).

²¹ See the article by L.A. Stauffer.

²² See the article by Russ Bowman.

The Promise and Prophecy of the People of God

Before leaving the picture of Israel as God's people, it would be good to remind ourselves of some themes pertaining to the people of God that run throughout both Old and New Testaments. These themes, when properly understood, will set the stage for understanding not only the proper relationship between Israel and the church, but also the proper continuity between the two.

First, there is the theme of the "seed" promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ.²³ This theme runs throughout the Old Testament and it runs *forward* from the Old Testament to the New. The first revelation of God's plan to save his people goes back to the "seed" promise in Genesis 3:15 and then it weaves its way through the Old Testament always moving *forward*. Even before Jacob (Israel) comes on the scene, the stage has already been set in the book of Genesis ("beginnings") to gradually reveal the beginning of the people of God in Jesus Christ.²⁴ First, there is a universal focus presented in Genesis 1-11 (God dealing with humanity in general), followed by a particular focus in Genesis 12-50 (God dealing with Abraham and sons).

Starting in Genesis 4, we read that Abel is accepted and Cain is not. Cain's line is briefly traced then dropped (Genesis 4).²⁵ In Genesis 5, the line of Seth ("another seed instead of Abel," 4:25) is traced down to Noah. After the flood (Genesis 6-8), the storyline follows the sons of Noah (Genesis 9), Shem in particular who was the great ancestor of Abraham (Genesis 10-11). Chapters 1 through 11 of Genesis ("the book of the generations", 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; etc.) act as a genealogy of redemption to bring the reader to God's choice of one nation, Israel.

Numerous Old Testament prophecies beginning with the "seed" promise as well as numerous types/anti-types all point *forward* and are *fulfilled* in Jesus Christ. Israel played a significant role in this type/anti-type fulfillment.²⁶ Jesus (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:25-27, 44-46; John 5:46),²⁷ Paul (Romans 10:4), and Peter (1 Peter 1:10-11) made it clear that the whole of the Old Testament pointed *forward* to the Christ.²⁸ Jesus is the "seed" promise (Galatians 3:16).

²³ See the lecture by Clinton D. Hamilton and the lecture by Martin Pickup. I reference the lecture of Pickup here which has some good material in it. However, I do not agree with him on some of his remarks concerning the serpent of Genesis 3.

²⁴ See the lecture by Kent Ellis.

²⁵ See Hebrews 11:4.

²⁶ See the article by Mark W. Karlberg.

²⁷ For a dispensational understanding of Matthew 5, see the article by John A. Martin.

²⁸ See the lecture by Frank J. Jamerson and the book by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Kaiser concludes his book this way: "As far as the case for the Messiah is concerned, the relationship between the OT and NT is one of strong continuity and progressive revelation. While the Bible does exhibit an enormous amount of complexity of revelation, this must not lead to despair in finding a stream of continuity and a pattern of wholeness that is rooted in organic and seminal beginnings that eventually emerge in the full-grown organism of truth implicit in the seed ideas announced in each of its seminal states" (234-235).

Understanding this progressive, *forward* movement and *fulfillment* theme will help us to see the continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.²⁹ Long before Israel existed and even “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4), God had a plan to save his people. This divine plan “before times eternal” (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2) would involve God’s son Jesus Christ.

Second, there is the arrangement of God whereby he saves his people from sin by grace through faith. This theme runs throughout the Old Testament. Long before Israel existed, God saved his people by grace through faith (Genesis 6:8, 22; Hebrews 11:7). Understanding this theme will help us to see that salvation by grace through faith is not something confined to the New Testament. This arrangement of God runs from the beginning of time until today. God’s people, from beginning to end, will be from among those who are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7).

Third, there is the theme of an inward heart that seeks to love God and keep his commandments. God has always wanted the inward faith and love of the heart of man. The outward actions of a man are only secondary and will proceed properly only after the heart is right. Long before Israel existed, God was looking for men with faithful hearts (Hebrews 11:4-16). God also wanted Israel to be circumcised in heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4). Understanding this theme will help us to see that God’s people are always the ones who are right with God inwardly.

When we come to the establishment of the church, we find that members of the church are found among Jews *and* Gentiles with a faithful heart. Outward, fleshly heritage (for the Jew) is not a condition of membership among the people of God, but an inward, circumcised heart is (Romans 2:28-29; Philippians 3:3). Today, God is looking for faith, not for flesh. James D. Bales wrote:

Spiritual Israel is entered by the *door of faith* in contrast with the *door of flesh* which was the door into physical Israel. The door of flesh has long been closed, and the door of faith opened with the beginning of the new covenant.³⁰

Finally, there is the theme of the remnant. The remnant theme has been mentioned above with regard to Israel but consider a few more examples here. Long before Israel existed, there existed those few, who from the beginning of time, faithfully followed God. In the days of the patriarchs, there were faithful individuals like Abel, Enoch, and Noah (Genesis 5-6; Hebrews 4-7).

In the days of Israel, there were individuals like Joshua, Rahab the harlot, the judges of Israel, Ruth and Naomi, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and the prophets. All these men and women were a part of the faithful remnant of God’s people. In the days of Jesus, there was a faithful remnant of Jews found

²⁹ Many dispensationalists do not believe that Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Christ and his church. They believe that Old Testament prophecies are for the nation of Israel alone. Oswald T. Allis answered this error in his now dated, but still profitable work titled, *Prophecy and the Church*.

³⁰ “Israel and Non-Israel Today,” 4.

among people like Zacharias, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Simeon, Anna, those who repented and accepted John's baptism, Jesus himself, and his 12 apostles (see Luke 1-3).

Understanding this remnant theme will help us to see that the people of God are always made up of those with faith, not those with fleshly heritage. When we come to the establishment of the church in the New Testament, we find that members of the church, both Jews *and* Gentiles are found among the remnant of God's people. Paul makes this point clear in Romans 9-11 (see more below). For example, it is not being a physical Israelite that makes a Jew right with God (Romans 9:6). A Jew must be a part of the faithful remnant of Jews who obey Jesus in order to be right with God (Romans 9:27 quoting Isaiah 10:22; see also Romans 2:28-29).

The Jews of physical Israel who continue to follow after "a law of righteousness" and seek it "by works" will not be a part of God's people because they reject Jesus (Romans 9:31-33). Because they reject Jesus and are disobedient they will not be saved (Romans 10:19-21). The Jews who are a part of "a remnant according to the election of grace" will be saved (Romans 11:1-6), but the Jews who are "hardened" against Jesus will not (Romans 11:7, 25).

Simply put, no member of physical Israel can be saved without Jesus, the Deliverer that comes out of Zion. "All Israel shall be saved" as they (Jews) come and obey Jesus Christ (Romans 11:26). God has an elect people, but it is the remnant of the faithful and circumcised in heart who are truly the people of God. Heart, not heritage, is what God is looking for. This has always been the case down through time whether it was in the days of Moses (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6), the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 4:4), or the days of Paul (Romans 2:28-29).³¹

The People of God The New Testament Church

The Lord and the People of God

When Jesus appears on the scene, he is not only the fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic expectation, but he is also the embodiment of what God wanted Israel to be. Jesus is the Israel that Israel herself should have been.³² In Jesus, there is found Israel's true response of obedience, worship, and love toward God. Consider a few examples.³³

When Jesus was a child, his parents were told to go to Egypt for safety from Herod. Here, Matthew applies Hosea 11:1 ("When Israel was child...") to Jesus: "Out of Egypt did I

³¹ See the lecture by Robert Jackson.

³² More and more modern Jews are accepting the historical Jewish background of Jesus, but whether or not they will come to accept him as the Messiah is yet to be seen (see the article by W. Riggans).

³³ Michael J. Vlach makes this same observation, but he also believes that God has a special plan for Israel's national restoration in the future (see his article, "What Does Christ as the 'True Israel' Mean for the Nation of Israel?").

call my son” (Matthew 2:15). Later, Jesus goes into the wilderness just like Israel had done after their Egyptian bondage (Matthew 4:1-11). John develops this theme from a different angle: Jesus as the temple of God (John 2:19-22).³⁴

It is important to note that the very first reference to “Israel” in the New Testament is applied to Jesus. It is Jesus who would be the “shepherd of my people Israel” (Matthew 2:6 quoting Micah 5:2). It would be through Jesus on the cross that God would “give help to Israel his servant” (Luke 1:54; see also 1:68-79). Simeon, who was looking for the “consolation of Israel”, would find it in Jesus Christ. Jesus would save the Gentiles and “your people Israel” (Luke 2:25, 32, 34).

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he was “manifest to Israel” as the “Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29-31). Nathanael also proclaimed Jesus as “the Son of God ... the King of Israel” (John 1:49). At the end of Jesus’ ministry, the crowds proclaimed Jesus as the “King of Israel” (John 12:13). Even the Jewish leaders inadvertently spoke this same truth when they proclaimed Jesus as the “King of Israel” (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:32). Yes, Jesus would be the one who would “redeem Israel” just as the two on the road to Emmaus hoped for (Luke 24:21).

Jesus and his 12 apostles made up the faithful remnant of Israel.³⁵ Jesus sent out his 12 apostles to preach the gospel to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6; see also 15:24) and some of them would persecute the apostles (Matthew 10:23). Through their inspired teaching, Jesus’ 12 apostles would “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). It is upon the cornerstone of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18) and the foundation of these 12 apostles that the Lord’s church would be built (Ephesians 2:20).

What negative things did Jesus say about Israel as a whole? What was his view toward the nation of Israel as a whole? Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus made it clear that there was a faithful remnant of Jews within a nation that was unbelieving. Jesus taught that the nation of unbelieving Jews would be rejected by God, but the faithful remnant of Jews would be saved. There were many clashes between Jesus and unbelieving Jews during his ministry.

Jesus was the “bridge” of continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church and the Jews of his day were supposed to put their faith in him. Jesus made it clear that unbelieving Israel was not the people of God. He taught them that they needed to be saved and they must come to him to be saved. Here are some of the important lessons and principles that Jesus taught the Jews of his day. The following lessons were designed to lead Israel to accept him as the divinely appointed Messiah:

1. He taught that he fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 5:17).³⁶

³⁴ Paul approaches the same idea using the seed promise to Abraham (Galatians 3).

³⁵ See also the faithful women who ministered to them in Luke 8:1-3.

³⁶ Matthew begins his gospel with Jesus’ Jewish ancestry (Matthew 1:1-18) and continues to write about how Jesus “fulfilled” OT scripture (Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; etc.)

2. His teaching was for Jews *and* Gentiles (Matthew 4:12-18).
3. He taught that God's kingdom would be taken away from unbelieving Israel and given to another nation made up of Gentiles (Matthew 8:11-12; 21:33-46).³⁷
4. His disciples would go to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5ff).
5. He constantly exposed Jewish unbelief (Matthew 11-12, 16:1ff), tradition (Matthew 15:1ff; 19:3ff), and hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1ff, 12:1ff, 23:1ff; Luke 11:42ff).
6. He warned his Jewish audience of concerning their hardened heart (Mt. 13:13-15).
7. The Jewish people were now to hear Jesus, just like they once heard Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-8).
8. He taught that all laborers in the kingdom, regardless of when they enter, receive the same blessings (Matthew 20:1-15).
9. He entered Jerusalem in his final days, cleansed the temple, taught against Jewish unbelief, and told them how God would reject unbelieving Israel and cause their temple to fall (Matthew 21-24; Mark 11-13; Luke 19-21).
10. He preached to the Jews to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15).
11. He taught that God sent him to save *both* Jews and Gentiles (Luke 4:16-30).
12. He told them that they should have accepted John the Baptist (Luke 7:24-35).
13. He warned against the Pharisees' love of money (Luke 16) and self-righteousness (Luke 18).
14. He cleansed the temple (John 2:13ff).
15. He told Nicodemus, a Pharisee, that he and others must be born again (John 3:1ff).
16. He taught that he and the Father act as one, the Father bears witness to the Son, and the Jews should have believed upon him (John 5:19-47).
17. He taught them that he was the bread of life and they must "eat" his flesh (John 6:22ff); they must come to him for drink (John 7:37ff); they must believe on him (John 8:24ff); they must come to him for sight (John 9:35ff); and, they must follow him as the shepherd (John 10:1ff). He taught the Jews that they must accept him to be saved and that Jewish nationality alone did not make Israel the people of God (John 8:21-59).³⁸
18. He taught that he was the light (John 12:35ff) and the true vine (John 15:1ff).

The Lord's Church and the People of God

The New Testament gospels open with two men, John the Baptist³⁹ and Jesus, who are preaching to prepare the hearts of Israel to return and be God's people. John's role is spoken of this way: "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16). Yes, Israel as a whole needed saving, and both John and Jesus preach

³⁷ This nation (*ethnos*), or race, is the "holy nation" mentioned by Peter (1 Peter 2:9).

³⁸ John the Baptist made the same point in Matthew 3:10 and Luke 3:8. Paul made the same point in Romans 2:28-29; 4:13-16; Galatians 3:7, 29; and 4:28.

³⁹ John fulfilled Malachi 4:5-6, the very last words of the Old Testament.

repentance and the nearness of God's kingdom (Mark 1:1-15; Luke 3:1-23).⁴⁰ John offered an open and scathing rebuke to the unbelieving Jews of his day in order to turn them to the Lord (Matthew 3:1-12).

So, "in the fullness of times" (Galatians 4:4),⁴¹ or when the time was complete in God's mind, a new dimension of God's people was ushered in. The announcement of this new dimension of God's people came when Jesus, in his preaching, made this promise: "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).⁴² We learn from this important passage that the church, *unlike Old Testament Israel*, would be new and yet in the future. Jesus proclaims four important truths here:

First, the Lord's church would be build upon himself and his identity as the divine Messiah⁴³ and Son of God ("upon this rock").⁴⁴ It would not be built upon the Law of Moses.

Second, the Lord's church would be something new and in the future ("I will build"). It would not simply be the same group of Jewish faithful remnant but with a new name. It would be a completely new group of people with a new law, new acts of worship, new organization, etc.

Third, the Lord's church would belong to him because he would shed his blood for it ("my church").⁴⁵

Fourth, death and Hades would not keep the Lord's church from being established or continuing ("shall not prevail against it").

We also learn from this passage that the church, *like Old Testament Israel*, would be the Lord's called out "assembly". "Church" is from the Greek *ekklesia*, meaning "called out". This Greek word is used consistently in the LXX to translate the Heb. *qahal*.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁰ See the lecture by Bob Hutto. There were those in the 1st century who thought that Jesus' kingdom would be physical in nature (Matthew 20:21-22; 27:42; John 18:33-36; Acts 1:6). However, Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom with the establishment of his church (Daniel 2:44; Ezekiel 37:24; Matthew 16:16-18; John 18:36; Acts 2:30; Hebrews 12:22-28).

⁴¹ See also Ephesians 1:10; 1 Timothy 2:10; and Titus 1:3.

⁴² Matthew 18:17 is the only other reference to "church" in the gospels.

⁴³ Many Jews in the 1st Century and today simply will not accept Jesus as the Christ (Messiah). However, the preaching of and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ or Messiah was a key point in the sermons recorded in the New Testament. See the lecture by Luther G. Roberts.

⁴⁴ See 1 Corinthians 3:11 and Ephesians 2:20.

⁴⁵ See Acts 20:28.

⁴⁶ The Greek word *ekklesia* is found 115 times in the New Testament. The majority of passages where "church" is found are references to an assembly of Christians. A few times, "church" refers to some other assembly: 1) an assembly of Old Testament Jews (Acts 7:38 and Hebrews 2:12), or 2) some other, non-Christian assembly of people (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). When referring to Christians, the term "church" is used in two senses: 1) a universal sense referring to the assembly of all Christians in all locations and in all time periods beginning with Pentecost (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 12:23; etc.); and 2) a local sense referring only to those Christians assembled in a particular locality (Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; etc.). For a detailed word study of *ekklesia*, see the articles by J.W. Roberts, K.L. Schmidt, and Roy Bowen Ward.

Old Testament *qahal* (assembly) of God's people made up of Israel alone would soon become the New Testament *ekklesia* (assembly) of God's people made up of people from all nations.⁴⁷

J.G. Millar comments:

Jesus' (and the Gospel writers') understanding of his ministry rested firmly on conclusions drawn from the OT. He worked with a paradigm of fulfillment, rather than one of replacement. He came to the lost sheep of Israel ... and to realize Israel's true destiny ... Hence, Jesus' inauguration of the new covenant (e.g. Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20) means that his church can legitimately be described as the 'Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16) and the 'people of God' (Heb. 4:9; 1 Pet. 2:10, drawing on Hos. 1). It is on this simple foundation that the NT builds the rest of what it has to say about the nature of the people of God.⁴⁸

As Millar points out, the Lord's church was not a "replacement" institution to Old Testament Judaism, neither was it a "parenthesis" institution as pre-millennialists teach. The Lord's church was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.⁴⁹ The Lord's church was established on the Day of Pentecost as Peter and the other apostles preached the first gospel sermon to devout Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2).⁵⁰ Some 3,000 were baptized: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47, *King James Version*).

The early church was made up primarily of Jewish believers in and around Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22; 12:1, 5; 15:4, 22; 18:22; Galatians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4).⁵¹ It was these Jewish Christians, "the church of God", that Saul of Tarsus first persecuted (Acts 8:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6). As the gospel was preached outside of Jerusalem and Judea, Gentile believers were also added to the church. Paul writes about "all the churches of the Gentiles" (Romans 16:4).

There were local churches made up of Jews *and* Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3), the area of Galatia (Acts 14:23; 15:41),⁵² Corinth/Cenchreae (Romans 16:1,

⁴⁷ When you read the New Testament you find that there are several other metaphors and images used for the people of God in addition to church or *ekklesia*. The people of God are also described as the "body of Christ", the "bride" of Christ, the "family of God", the "house of God", the "flock of God", etc. This paper will not explore the meaning of all these descriptions.

⁴⁸ "People of God," 686.

⁴⁹ The establishment of the Lord's church on Pentecost fulfilled such Old Testament prophecies as found in Daniel 2, Isaiah 2, and Joel 2. For more examples of this fulfillment, see the lecture by E.R. Harper. For examples of the clear Jewish background to the New Testament church, see the article by Jack P. Lewis.

⁵⁰ See the lectures by Ford Carpenter, Jack L. Holt, and Jason Longstreth on preaching "to the Jew first" in the book of Acts.

⁵¹ Like the author of Hebrews (see "assembly" in Hebrews 10:25), James writes to Jewish Christians and uses the Greek word *sunagoge* (or synagogue) to describe their assembly (James 2:1-2).

⁵² See the epistle to the Galatians where Paul writes about "the churches of Galatia" (Galatians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 16:1).

16)⁵³, Philippi (Philippians 1:1), Colossae (Colossians 1:2), Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians). There were seven local churches in Asia (Revelation 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1 – 3:22; 22:16)⁵⁴ which included a local church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28)⁵⁵ and Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). Some local churches were small enough to meet in homes (Romans 16:5, 23; 1 Corinthians 16:9; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2).

From Pentecost forward, the apostles carried out Jesus' great commission to take the gospel into all the world and preach forgiveness of sins (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:23). Following the commission of Jesus in Acts 1:8, the apostles began preaching in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7), then went to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12), and "to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 13-28). The apostles preached to "them that are near" (Jews) and "them that are far off" (Gentiles).⁵⁶ They preached to "the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Jesus said: "And the gospel first must be preached unto all the nations" (Mark 13:10).⁵⁷

If Israel's role and position are supremely fulfilled in Jesus, what then can be said of Jesus' followers, the church? The Lord's church, like the Lord himself, receives the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.⁵⁸ The Lord's church, made up of *both* Jews and Gentiles, are now called "my people".⁵⁹

Like Israel, the Lord's church is a kingdom, but made up of Jews *and* Gentiles (Matthew 8:10-12; 28:18-20). Like Israel, the Lord's church is composed of the saved, but saved from among the Jews *and* Gentiles (Luke 2:30-32). Like Israel, the Lord's church is the flock of God and connected to the vine (John 10:11-16; 15:1-5). Jesus and his church fulfill the promise and prophecy of Ezekiel that God would one day have one flock under "one shepherd ... my servant David" (Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24; compare John 10:16).

The Lord's church is the new relationship which brings all the people of God, *both* Jew and Gentile, together in one flock, the one body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4-6).⁶⁰ Paul writes in Ephesians 2:11-22 how that *both* Jew and Gentile have been made "one" in Christ Jesus, in his church, in his body. Jesus "made both one" (2:14). *Both* Jews and Gentiles have been created as "one new man" (2:15). They have been reconciled *both* "in one body" (2:16). They *both* have "access in one Spirit unto the Father" (2:18). They

⁵³ See the epistles to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1). Paul writes about his work "in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17) and "in all the churches" (1 Corinthians 7:17; 2 Corinthians 8:18). Paul also writes about "the churches of Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 8:1).

⁵⁴ Paul writes: "the churches of Asia salute you" (1 Corinthians 16:19).

⁵⁵ See 1 Timothy 1:3; 3:5, 15; and 5:16.

⁵⁶ For good material on preaching to Jews and Gentiles in the book of Acts, see the lectures by Jason Longstreth, Phillip Mullins, Rich Gant, Andy Diestelkamp, Sid Latham, Scott Finley, and Charles Spence.

⁵⁷ See the article by James A. Thompson which discusses the mission of the apostles' preaching to the Gentiles.

⁵⁸ See the article by John McRay in which he describes Christianity as "Judaism internationalized".

⁵⁹ Paul applies the Old Testament promise of "my people" to the church – a promise which was originally given to Israel: "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us..." (2 Corinthians 7:1; see the "I will" promises in 6:16-18).

⁶⁰ Paul also writes about "one Spirit" and "one body" for both Jews and Greeks (1 Corinthians 12:12).

both are “fellow-citizens with the saints” (2:19; see also 3:6). They are *both* “built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (2:22).⁶¹

Just as the head controls the body, so Jesus Christ is head over his body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18, 24). This makes Jesus head over all members of his church, *both* Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, the wisdom and glory of God is to be found “in the church by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:10, 21).

The People of God The Pauline Perspective

Israel and the Church: Romans 9-11

Because Paul’s words in Romans 9-11 are especially important to our discussion of Israel and the church,⁶² I will now deal with this passage of scripture in some detail. I will not give a detailed exegesis of each verse, such as found in a commentary, but I will examine each of the major points in this section of Romans.⁶³

The first question to ask when studying this passage is this: How does Romans 9-11 fit into the overall theme of Paul’s epistle? The theme of Paul’s epistle to the Romans is stated in Romans 1:16-17: the gospel is God’s power to save mankind, both Jews and Gentiles. So, what is the central teaching of Romans 9-11? Whatever the teaching of Romans 9-11 is, it must be kept in the context of the rest of the book and Paul’s overall theme of salvation through the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). Leon Crouch makes this simple, but important observation about Romans 9-11:

The theme of Romans stated in 1:16 and 17 is continued throughout the book. That passage makes it clear that the gospel is now, in this age, the power of God to save both Jew and Gentile who believe it. Romans 9-11 should not be separated from the rest of this book.⁶⁴

⁶¹ See the lecture by J. Leslie Maydell and the lecture by Stan L. Caldwell. For a dispensational understanding of Ephesians 2, see the article by Carl B. Hock, Jr., and for a dispensational understanding of Ephesians 3, see the article by Robert L. Saucy.

⁶² The following quote from the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* is helpful in understanding why Paul may have had so much to say in Romans 9-11 about Israel: “This application of the image of Israel to the early Christian community may have been natural when the early church was largely Jewish in composition, but with the expansion of the Gentile mission and the decline of the Jewish-Christian community, the identification of the church with Israel became more difficult and required theological creativity. An extended discussion of this relationship is undertaken by Paul in Romans 9-11” (“Israel”, 431).

⁶³ The articles by David Roper and Chapter 6 in Jason C. Meyer’s book are especially good in their coverage of Romans 9-11. The article by Alexander Kyrychenko demonstrates how that Paul maintained a coherent line of thought in Romans 9-11 and how these three chapters form a consistent argument with the rest of the book. See also the lecture by Robin Haley.

⁶⁴ *An Introduction to Eschatology*, 49.

What then, is the central teaching of Romans 9-11? Paul opens each chapter in Romans 9-11 with a positive statement about ethnic Israel and about himself. Paul speaks admirably about his people, Jews, and he wants them to be saved (9:1-5; 10:1-2; 11:1-4; see also 11:14). But, Paul also closes each chapter with a painful and negative statement about Israel. Paul acknowledges that Israel (as a whole)⁶⁵ has been rejected by God because she is unbelieving, disobedient, and hardened; she will not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (9:31-33; 10:1-3, 16-22; 11:7, 23, 25).

In Romans 9-11, Paul addresses Israel's rejection by God because of her unbelief. Paul answers the basic question: How does Israel's present rejection, due to her unbelief, fit in with God's overall election and salvation of Israel? What Paul argues in Romans 9-11 between the positive and negative statements concerns God's saving work among the Jews *and* Gentiles. Paul argues in favor of four things:

- 1) God's gospel (9:7-9 [comp. Gal. 3:8]; 10:8, 15, 17; 11:28),
- 2) God's calling/election (9:11, 24; 10:12-15; 11:5-7, 29),
- 3) God's mercy (9:16-23; 10:21; 11:30-32), and
- 4) God's people (9:25-26; 10:19-20; 11:5-24).

God's gospel, calling, mercy, and people will be found among Jews *and* Gentiles. The central teaching of Romans 9-11 will come from these four main points and these chapters further amplify the theme of Romans found in 1:16-17.⁶⁶ I now turn our attention to the central ideas in each section of Romans 9-11.

Romans 9:1-5. Paul has sorrow (9:1-2) and a self-sacrificing spirit (9:3) toward his lost Jewish brethren.⁶⁷ Paul believes that his Jewish brethren "according to the flesh", though very blessed and privileged by God (9:4-5), are nonetheless lost and he wants them to be saved.⁶⁸ What follows is Paul's answer to three arguments or objections that Paul's fellow-Jews would naturally raise against him.

Romans 9:6-13. First, Paul argues that Israel's present rejection is not a violation of God's past promises. The Jew who failed to understand God's promise to Abraham would object that God's word had failed: "the word of God hath come to naught". Paul responds to this objection saying that God made a sovereign choice and he did not choose fleshly Israel ("the children of the flesh") to be saved just because they were fleshly Israel.⁶⁹ God made a promise to Abraham and he chose in particular to save "the children

⁶⁵ The "remnant" (the minority) of believing Jews who are saved implies that "the whole" (the majority) of unbelieving Jews are lost. Paul puts it this way in 11:7: "the rest were hardened".

⁶⁶ The principle of preaching God's gospel to "the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16) can also be found in Romans 9:24; 10:12; and 11:11-15.

⁶⁷ Why would Paul make such statements as found in Romans 9:1-2 if Israel as a whole was acceptable to God in their present condition?

⁶⁸ Note that the climax of Israel's privileged blessings in Romans 9:5 concerns the coming of the Christ. This illustrates how the overall role of Old Testament Israel was indeed Christo-centric (see also 1:2-4 and 10:4).

⁶⁹ There is a clear connection between Romans 9-11 and what Paul wrote earlier in the epistle. Earlier in his letter, Paul had made the point that a particular kind of Jew would be saved, not just anyone belonging to

of the promise”. God chose a child of promise, Isaac (9:6-9)⁷⁰ and God chose Jacob (6:10-13).⁷¹ God chose to save a people (Jew or Gentile) who would believe, who would have faith in him like Abraham had faith – “the righteousness which is of faith” (9:30; 10:6).

Romans 9:14-18. Second, Paul argues that Israel’s present rejection is not a violation of God’s righteousness. The Jew who failed to understand God’s promise would object that God is unrighteous to reject his people: “Is there unrighteous with God?” Paul responds with “God forbid.” Paul demonstrates that God is not unrighteous in making sovereign choices – choices the Jews themselves would have agreed upon with Paul. God was not unrighteous when he made choices with Isaac, Jacob, and Pharaoh to accomplish his purposes (9:9-17). God acts righteously and justly through his mercy and no one, including Pharaoh or the Jew of Paul’s day, can change that.⁷² God’s promise, plan, and purpose will stand! The Jew, not God, is the unrighteous one (Romans 2:8).⁷³

Romans 9:19-29. Third, Paul argues that Israel’s present rejection is not a violation of God’s power. The Jew who failed to understand God’s promise would object that God made them the way they were and then faulted them for it: “Why doth he still find fault?” Paul answers this objection by continuing his point about divine choice. Paul uses the illustration of a potter forming the clay for his purposes. (He will use the illustration of an olive tree in Romans 11). God would form “vessels of wrath” fitted for destruction from unbelieving Jews and God would form “vessels of mercy” prepared for glory from believing Jews *and* Gentiles (9:19-23).⁷⁴ Paul closes his point by stating clearly that God’s choice of “vessels of mercy” will come from both Jews (the remnant) *and* Gentiles. God calls both Jews *and* Gentiles to be his people in the church (9:24-29).⁷⁵

physical Israel (i.e., the Jew who is circumcised in heart, 2:28-29; and, the Jew who follows in the steps of Abraham, 4:1-25).

⁷⁰ Paul quotes from Genesis 21:12 in Romans 9:7 and from Genesis 18:10 in Romans 9:9. For a good discussion of the numerous Old Testament quotes in Romans 9-11 and Paul’s use of them, see Chapters 5 and 7 in Steve Moyise’s book, *Paul and Scripture*.

⁷¹ Paul quotes from Genesis 25:23 in Romans 9:12 and from Malachi 1:2 in Romans 9:13.

⁷² Paul quotes from Exodus 33:19 in Romans 9:15 and from Exodus 9:16 in Romans 9:17.

⁷³ The Gentile, of course, is unrighteous too (Romans 1:18).

⁷⁴ Calvinists often turn to Romans 9:9-23 as proof of their teaching concerning God’s unconditional election and reprobation of all mankind. In 9:11-13, Paul is not discussing the individual salvation or damnation of Jacob and Esau. Paul is talking about “two nations” and which nation God will choose to bring about the seed promise (see Genesis 25:23 and Malachi 1:2-3). In 9:16, Paul is not talking about one’s inability to use his free-will. Paul is talking about God’s choice of Isaac. God, not man, made the choice. In 9:19-23, Paul does not exclude one’s free-will in the matter of the potter and clay. Pharaoh, for example, was responsible for hardening his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34). In 9:25-26, Paul is not talking about a specific number who are unconditionally saved or lost. Paul is reminding the Jews of their own prophecy which foretold that Gentiles would be included in God’s people. For a good answer to the Calvinist’s use of this chapter, see the lecture by Curtis Cates.

⁷⁵ Note that the theme of this lecture – the people of God – is found here in Romans 9:25-26. Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 in Romans 9:25 and from Hosea 1:10 in Romans 9:26. Paul also quotes from Isaiah 10:22 in Romans 9:27 and from Isaiah 1:9 in Romans 9:29. For a good discussion of “my people” in Hosea, see the article by John T. Willis.

Romans 9:30-33. Paul now turns his attention to why physical Israel as a whole is rejected and unsaved. Why did she fail? Her rejection and failure was not by any fault of God, but by her own fault. Israel, unlike the Gentiles, did not seek a righteousness by faith; she sought a righteousness by works (9:30-32).⁷⁶ Additionally, Israel also rejected the “stone” (Jesus) who could have saved her (9:32-33).⁷⁷ Why did Israel fail? First, Israel failed because of *her self-righteousness*.⁷⁸

Romans 10:1-4. Paul repeats his desire for Israel to be saved (10:1) and then continues his thought concerning Israel’s self-righteousness (see 9:31-33). Israel was zealous,⁷⁹ but also ignorant. Unbelieving Jews did not “subject themselves” to God’s righteousness which involved believing in Jesus (10:1-4).⁸⁰ Much of Israel refused the gospel and refused to obey Jesus.⁸¹ Second, Israel failed because of *her ignorance*.⁸²

Romans 10:5-15. Paul writes that the “righteousness of faith” which Israel did not seek involves believing in the Christ who is near through the preaching of the gospel (10:5-8).

⁷⁶ Earlier in his letter, Paul made the point that a righteousness by faith justifies and a righteousness by works of law does not (see Paul’s faith – works dichotomy set forth in 3:19-30). Israel was seeking righteousness in the wrong place (in themselves, see also 10:3) and with the wrong method (works-righteousness or perfect law-keeping). Today’s liberal scholars who advocate a “New Perspective on Paul” do not believe that Paul is addressing the self-righteous, works-oriented Jew in Romans 9:31-33. For more information on this so-called “New Perspective”, see my paper delivered at the 2013 Alpharetta Bible Study titled “The New Perspective on Paul”.

⁷⁷ Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 9:33.

⁷⁸ Jesus talks about this kind of Jew in Luke 18:9. For a detailed discussion of Israel’s failures, see the lecture by Andrew Connally and the lecture by Jesse Whitlock.

⁷⁹ Paul was at one time a zealous Jew himself (Galatians 1:13-14; Philippians 3:6).

⁸⁰ Earlier in Romans, Paul had already made the point about believing and obeying the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel (see 1:16-17; 3:21-22; and 6:16-17). For a good discussion of the meaning of “Christ is the end of the law”, see the article by Ira Jolivet. For a dispensational understanding of Romans 10:4, see the article by David K. Lowery.

⁸¹ Israel’s unbelieving, disobedient, ignorant, and hardened attitude toward the Christ was no accident. Steve Patton’s remarks concerning Israel’s “identity crisis” help us to understand why it was that Israel (as a whole) rejected Jesus.

Patton writes: “The Israelites actually went through two types of identity crisis in their history. The first characterized them before their destruction by ancient Babylon. In those days they forgot why they were to be separate and distinct from the nations around them ... The second type of identity crisis is the one Israelites underwent after Babylonian captivity ... They began to think too much of themselves ... According to Romans 10:1-3, the Jew sought to establish their own righteousness because they were ignorant of God’s. Their ignorance was a willful ignorance. The Jews forgot something that was very important. They had been a special chosen people because of God’s grace, not because they earned such status. They saw themselves as God’s gift to humanity (cf. Rom. 2:17-24), not as a nation humbled by God’s choosing them out of all the peoples of the earth. They knew they were God’s people, but again they forgot why! Pride truly preceded their destruction. This pride caused them to reject the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Their national pride had become so great they could not humble themselves to accept a leader from humble Nazareth. Neither could they stoop to accept equal status with people of other nations in Christ Jesus. Their pride blinded them to the very reason for their existence as a separate nation – to provide a lineage for a Savior who would extend salvation to *all* mankind” (“The Israel That Succeeded: A Spiritual Remnant,” 118).

⁸² Ignorance was not a new development among the Jews in Paul’s day. Hosea wrote: “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge” (4:6).

Israel rejected the way of salvation: confessing and believing Jesus Christ.⁸³ Confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God would raise Jesus from the dead will bring about the righteousness that saves (10:5-10). Paul wanted everyone to know that the prophets had already announced “whosoever”, both Jew *and* Gentile, can be saved by believing and obeying the gospel (10:11-15).⁸⁴ Third, Israel failed because of *her rejection*.

Romans 10:16-21. Paul argues that Israel did not hearken to or obey the gospel (10:16-17). Israel was told by the prophets that God would also be found among the Gentiles, but Israel refused to accept this truth (10:19-21). Fourth, Israel failed because of *her disobedience*.

Paul’s argument against Israel, running from Romans 9:30 to 10:21, demonstrates clearly that Israel is responsible for her own condition of unbelief and rejection. Israel failed and was rejected by her God because of *her* self-righteousness, ignorance, rejection, and disobedience. *She* is responsible!

Romans 11:1-6. Paul now turns his attention to answering some important questions concerning Israel’s fallen and rejected state.⁸⁵ First, Paul answers a question concerning God’s people: “Did God cast off his people?”⁸⁶ Paul will answer in the negative: “God forbid”. God did not “cast off his people” (11:1-2) for the simple reason that he has graciously saved a “remnant” of his people (11:2-6). Paul, himself an Israelite, and a Christian,⁸⁷ is an example of a Jew among God’s people who belong to the “remnant according to the election of grace” (11:2-6).⁸⁸ The Jew of Paul’s day could be saved, not by fleshly descent or by working the Old Law, but by God’s grace.⁸⁹ A Jew could be saved because he was a part of the believing “remnant”.

⁸³ For Israel’s rejection of Jesus as the Christ, see Matthew 21:42-46, Acts 3:14, 4:27, 7:51-53, and 1 Corinthians 1:23.

⁸⁴ Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 10:11, from Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13, and from Isaiah 52:7 in Romans 10:15. Earlier in Romans, Paul had already made the point that both Jew and Gentile can and must be saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1:16-17 and 3:29-30).

⁸⁵ For a good summary of how Romans 11 fits into Paul’s overall thought in Romans, see the lecture by Gobel Music and the lecture by Bobby Liddell. For a dispensational understanding of Romans 11, see the article by J. Lanier Burns.

⁸⁶ Paul anticipates this question from his readership. Someone would erroneously conclude that God has cast off his people (Israel) from Paul’s examples of Israel’s disobedience in this section of Romans (9:31-33; 10:2-3, 16-21).

⁸⁷ Other Jewish Christians at this time are also examples of the Jewish remnant. The Lord’s church, at the first, was primarily made up of Jewish Christians as is evident from Luke’s history recorded in Acts 2-12. For an understanding of how modern “Jewish Christians” view themselves in relationship to the church, see the articles by William Varner and Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. See also the tract on “Spiritual Israel” by Batchelor and Wohlberg, two Jews who are believers in Jesus Christ.

⁸⁸ Paul references the story of Elijah and the 7,000 in 1 Kings 19:18 as an example of a remnant. The remnant that Paul speaks of in Romans 11:1-5 is the same as “the remnant that shall be saved” in Romans 9:27.

⁸⁹ Paul’s reference to “no more of works” in Romans 11:6 goes back to his “apart from the works of the law” argument that he made earlier in Romans 3:19 – 4:6. Paul’s “election of grace” in Romans 11:5-6 goes back to his grace/faith argument found earlier in the book (3:22,24 and 5:2, 20-21, 14). Paul will speak of the faith of Gentiles in Romans 11:20 and indirectly of the faith of Jews in 11:23. Paul makes the same grace-works argument in other of his epistles: Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9, and Titus 2:11; 3:4-7.

It is this phrase, “a remnant according to the election of grace” in Romans 11:5 (see also 9:27), that helps us to understand the relationship of Old Testament Israel to the New Testament church. It is the remnant theme (and the election by grace theme, see also 11:7) running throughout the Old and New Testament that ties all of God’s people together (see above). The common denominator, the continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church is this: the remnant. Allan Turner comments:

Despite the differences in purpose, scope, and essence of OT Israel and NT Israel, all of which necessitated a change in kingdom administration under a New Covenant, there remains a continuity between OT Israel (*vis-à-vis* the remnant) and the church, a church which is now God’s NT Israel, His new, uniquely, chosen people who are saved by grace through faith, and thus, whether Jew or Gentile, made one as “a remnant according to the election of grace.”⁹⁰

Romans 11:7-10. Paul answers a second question concerning Israel’s fallen and rejected state: “What then?” The Israel that would not be a part of God’s elect people is the Israel that is hardened.⁹¹ Unbelieving, disobedient, and hardened Israel will not be a part of God’s elect people (11:7-10).⁹² Paul had already established Israel’s unbelief in Romans 9:30 – 10:21. The simple fact is that many Jews of Paul’s day were self-righteous, ignorant, rejecting Jesus, and disobedient (see above).⁹³

Romans 11:11-15. Paul answers a third question concerning Israel’s fallen and rejected state: “Did they stumble that they might fall?” Again, Paul answers in the negative: “God forbid”. Did Israel stumble in such a way that they could never recover? Has Israel reached her final ruin? Paul says once again, “God forbid.” Israel’s fall (or trespass) in becoming hardened has (1) allowed the Gentiles an opportunity to be saved (11:11-12)⁹⁴ and (2) allowed Israel herself (individual believing Jews) an opportunity to return and be saved too (11:13-15). Jewish *rejection* by God, lead to Gentile *acceptance* by God, which in turn lead to Jewish *acceptance* by God.

Romans 11:16-24. Paul now turns his attention to the olive tree(s) illustration to make his point that Jewish rejection is not final.⁹⁵ This illustration will demonstrate how it is

⁹⁰ https://www.facebook.com/allan.turner.007/posts/573852592697220?stream_ref=10.

⁹¹ Jesus said that the Jews had brought this hardened condition upon themselves (Matthew 13:14-15).

⁹² Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:10 and Psalm 69:22. Paul had already mentioned specific causes for Israel’s hardening in 9:31-32, 10:2-3, and 10:16-21.

⁹³ It is truly sad that the same situation exists today among many modern Jews. We are witnessing 2,000 years of hardened hearts.

⁹⁴ See examples of this in Acts 13:45-46 and Acts 28:28.

⁹⁵ The grafting in (Romans 11:17, 19, 23-24) that Paul speaks of is the engrafting or implanting of a new branch (scion) into an established, but aged root or trunk. This practice is known as oleiculture. The process is basically this: first, a branch is cut off a an older tree leaving a stub a few inches long; second, the stub is split a few inches leaving a place for the new engrafted branch to be inserted; third, a small branch is cut from another tree and the cut end is shaped into a wedge that will slide into the split; fourth, the wedge end of the new branch is forced into the split and the joint is tightly bound with string to encourage the old tree and the new engrafted branch to grow together. The result of grafting is the rejuvenation of the aged stock

possible for unbelieving Israelites to be saved and have “life from the dead” (11:15). Paul uses *two* olive trees in his illustration: a “wild olive tree” and a “good olive tree” (11:24). The “wild olive tree” represents the lost Gentile world.⁹⁶ The “good olive tree” represents the saved people of God made up of *both* Jews and Gentiles. Paul focuses his attention on the good olive tree. He will present four main points concerning the good olive tree:

First, Paul says that the good olive tree has a holy “root” (11:16-18).⁹⁷ The holy “root” represents the faithful remnant of God’s saved people, from the time of Abraham to Paul’s day. It was this faithful remnant who brought about the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise to bless all nations with the coming of Jesus Christ (the “seed” of Abraham) and his church.⁹⁸ The faithful remnant of Old Testament Israel was a part of the “root” and they played an important role in bringing about the Christ (9:4-5).⁹⁹ It is this “root” that provides nourishment (11:17)¹⁰⁰ and support (11:18) to the branches (both Jewish natural branches and Gentile grafted branches).

Second, Paul says that the good olive tree has branches of two types. There are “natural branches” (11:21). These “natural branches” represent obedient, believing, remnant Jews who are saved (9:27; 11:5). These Jews trust and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (10:12-13). The good olive tree also has “wild olive” branches that have been “grafted in” (11:17, 19, 24). These “wild olive” branches represent obedient Gentiles who are saved and have been added to the body of the redeemed. These Gentiles trust and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and by doing so are allowed to participate in God plan/purpose to save mankind (9:30; 10:12-13). The faithful among the Gentiles (the branches grafted in) “become partakers with them of the root” (11:17), but they do not monopolize or displace faithful Israelites (the natural branches).

Third, Paul says that the good olive tree has branches that have been “broken off” and “cut off” through unbelief (11:17, 20). The “broken off” natural branches represent the disobedient and unbelieving Jews who are rejected by God (11:17, 19-21). These Jews refuse to trust and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and are hardened and rejected (9:31-33; 10:3, 21; 11:7-10).¹⁰¹ The “cut off” wild branches represent once-believing Gentiles (once grafted in) who are now unbelieving (11:21-22). These Gentiles have stopped trusting and obeying the gospel of Jesus

and the production of useful fruit. For more on Paul’s usage of this illustration, see the article on the “Olive Tree” by W.S. Campbell.

⁹⁶ See Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 2:11-12; 4:17-19; 1 Peter 4:1-4; etc.

⁹⁷ Paul actually uses two metaphors in 11:16, one referring to the “firstfruit” of the grain (see Numbers 15:17-21), and the other referring to the holy “root” of a tree.

⁹⁸ Jesus would put it this way: “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). See the lecture by Clinton D. Hamilton.

⁹⁹ Old Testament Israel is likened unto an olive tree that has been cultivated by God (Jeremiah 11:16-17 and Hosea 14:4-6).

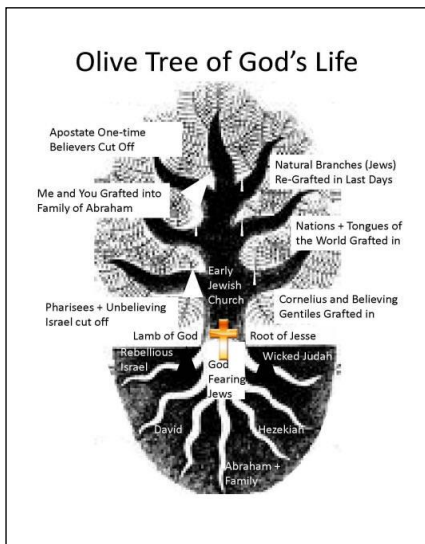
¹⁰⁰ The NIV reads: “the nourishing sap” (11:17). This is a reference to the sap that flows up from the root into the trunk and then out into the branches.

¹⁰¹ Paul writes about his fellow-Jews: “their minds were hardened” (2 Corinthians 3:14), and “the minds of the unbelieving” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Christ and God will not spare them.¹⁰² Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, can become unbelievers thereby being lost. The dual nature of God’s character – “goodness and severity” – causes all this to be (11:22). All the branches (both the natural and the grafted) are of the same nature; both remain in by faith, both are removed by unbelief. The branches (both natural and grafted branch) remain attached to the “root” by grace through faith (11:5-6), not because of ethnicity or any other quality.

Fourth, Paul says that the good olive tree is made up of branches that have been “grafted in” to its root (11:23-24). Gentiles have been “grafted in” through their faith (11:20). They trust and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (9:30; 10:12-13).¹⁰³ Once-unbelieving Jews can also be “grafted in again” through belief (11:23). They can turn to trust and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they can have “life from the dead” (11:15). Unbelievers, whether Jews or Gentiles, can become believers thereby being saved. The grafting in again of broken off branches is a truly unnatural activity showing that it is none other than the great providential activity of God (Rom. 11:29-32) – a divine activity worthy of praise (Romans 11:33-36).¹⁰⁴

Paul’s Olive Tree Illustration¹⁰⁵



It is important to note here before moving on, that Paul used the olive tree illustration to demonstrate how the remnant of Israel (9:27; 11:5) would be saved. Individual Israelites, “whosoever,” would be saved as they are joined together with Gentiles by faith in Jesus Christ (10:11-13).¹⁰⁶ It is the remnant of believing Jews and believing Gentiles that are grafted together into the olive tree. G. Schrenk writes:

The new turn in Paul is that the remnant is now related only to the Christ who has appeared. The remnant has its existence only in Him. It consists, not only of those who are faithful to Yahweh, but rather of those who

¹⁰² Paul also wants to humble his Gentile readers by dealing with the potential for boastful, arrogant, pride among them: “glory not over the branches...” (11:18) and “Be not high-minded, but fear” (11:20). Whereas unbelief would cause the Jew to fall (11:11-12), pride over their engrafting would cause the Gentile to fall (11:20-23; see Proverbs 16:18 and Romans 12:3). Even though Paul does not deal specifically in Romans with Gentiles once saved but now unbelieving, the admonitions in Romans 12-16 would certainly apply to this situation. What Paul has to say in his other epistles would also apply to saved Gentiles and their need to remain faithful.

¹⁰³ The Gentiles who were once “out” (Ephesians 2:12) are now “in” (Romans 11:17).

¹⁰⁴ This is truly the work of God. Jesus said: “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

¹⁰⁵ This chart approximates the teaching of Paul in Romans 11. It is not exact in every way. For example, Paul speaks of a “root” (11:17-18) and this chart shows roots. This chart was found at: <http://deadsoulsyndrome.com/images/Tree%20of%20God's%20Life.jpg>.

¹⁰⁶ Paul argues this same point in Romans 3-4 and Galatians 2-3.

believe in God's righteousness in Christ. The λίθος ἐν Σιών of Is. 28:16 f. is Christ alone, and those who believe in Him are the remnant.

Paul's concern is with conversion to the present Christ. Hence in a full use of prophecy he can do justice to two elements which are truncated in apocalyptic, namely, that of the conversion of the remnant (Is. 7:3; 10:21 f.; Am. 5:15) and that of the condition of faith (Is. 7:9; 10:20 ff.; 11:4; 28:16). The *sine qua non* of belonging to the remnant is faith in righteousness through Christ, R. 10:4. But to be saved is to be raised from the dead, R. 10:4, 9. On the presupposition that conversion and faith are the other side of God's appointment ... one must maintain that the remnant exists on the condition of faith. God's appointment is thus correlated with man's decision in such a way that the one entails the other. Faith is the operation of the God who so activates man to the work of faith that faith is man's own act under grace. It is not a self-produced ἔργον which guarantees the continuity of grace. But the fact that it is man's act must not be minimized. Paul, too, speaks first of the salvation of the remnant and only then of its conversion or faith. Cf. R. 9 with R. 11. But in view of R. 11:23: κάκεινοι δὲ, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπιμένωσιν τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ, ἐγκεντρισθήσονται (cf. also 11:20), one has to say *sub conditione fidei*. If Paul immediately goes on to say: "For God is able to graft them in again," this is the other side of the same fact.

... Paul is aware of the universal triumph to which his line of thought leads. Here again prophecy is taken into account, Mi. 5:6 f.: the remnant of Israel among the nations. The position in apocalyptic writings is very different. In 4 Esr. 13:49 the destruction of the nations runs parallel to the preservation of the remnant of Israel. In R. 11:11 f., however, we have the new and characteristic view that salvation comes to the nations through the hardening of all Israel (apart from the remnant). Again, in apocalyptic there is a harsh dissonance between Israel and the Gentiles. Paul, however, ventures a comprehensive prophecy in respect of all the nations and all Israel together, R. 11:25 f., 31 f. Thus, in his use of the remnant concept Paul avoids all particularism and sectarianism. He sets the concept to work in the service of comprehensive missionary activity which summons all men under the dominion of grace. Though he does not expressly refer to Is. 6:13; Jer. 31:7; Mi. 2:12, in the spirit of this message he views the remnant as a holy seed, as the root of a perfected community. But this is closely related to his hope for the whole Gentile world. Hence Israel loses its special position, and everything is swallowed up in mercy on all.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, Paul's olive tree illustration in this section of Romans shows clearly both the continuity and discontinuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. There are two points of continuity that should be noted:

First, continuity is located in the "root" of the "good olive tree". Jesus is "the root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1, 10; Romans 15:12; Revelation 22:16) and when he established

¹⁰⁷ "Remnant", 213-214.

his church, the first members who were joined to the “root” were Jews who were a part of the faithful remnant of Israel (Acts 1-12).

Second, continuity is also found in the condition of “grace” (11:5-6) and “faith” (11:20, 23). It is the combining of God’s grace and man’s faith that form the common denominator of all of God’s people, from Old Testament Israel to the New Testament church.¹⁰⁸

W.S. Campbell observes:

In the image of the olive tree the continuity (and to a lesser extent the discontinuity) of the people of God is underlined. There is no total destruction of the old tree, nor is the planting an entirely new tree envisaged ... Paul’s concern in his use of the olive tree is to stress the continuity in God’s community of salvation ... Only as the church sees itself in continuity with Israel and learns from God’s interaction with Israel as recorded in the Scripture can the church truly designate itself the “people of God.”¹⁰⁹

What about discontinuity? There are two points of discontinuity that should be noted:

First, discontinuity is found in Paul’s illustration of the branches that are “grafted in” from the “wild olive tree”. The New Testament church was first made up of Jews (Acts 1-12) followed by members from among the Gentiles (Acts 13-28). The addition of Gentiles adds a new, discontinuous element to the people of God. God’s people are no longer “from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles” (9:25).

Second, discontinuity is found regarding the manner in which Jews would be saved. Unlike the Jews of the Old Testament period, Paul wrote that the Jews of his day would have to believe in and obey Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the “end of the law”, the fulfillment of the Old Law, is the new way for Jews to be righteous and saved (9:30 – 10:15).

Romans 11:25. Paul now concludes his thoughts about Israel’s fallen and rejected state. What Paul wrote in 11:11-24 is explanatory. What Paul wrote in 11:25-32 is a summary of his explanatory section. As he summarizes his thought in 11:25-32, Paul will use statements that are parallel to what he has written earlier in the chapter.

Paul wants his readers to understand and not be ignorant: “For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant...” He writes about “this mystery” (Gr. *to musterion touto*)¹¹⁰ which is a reference to what he has been saying in chapter 11.¹¹¹ The “mystery” is this:

¹⁰⁸ Paul argues the same point in Romans 4:16 and Ephesians 2:8.

¹⁰⁹ “Olive Tree,” 643-644.

¹¹⁰ See Romans 16:25.

¹¹¹ Some would say that the “mystery” refers to all that Paul has been saying since chapter 9.

- 1) the salvation of a remnant of Israel (11:1-6),
- 2) the hardening that has befallen the nation of Israel (11:7-10),
- 3) the salvation that has come to the Gentiles (11:11-22), and
- 4) the prospect of Israelites who can still be saved (11:15, 23-24).

Paul's conclusion is actually positive. He does not want his Gentile audience to be proud ("wise in your own conceits"; see also 11:18 and 11:20), so he outlines how fallen and hardened Israel can be saved. The "hardening in part" (Gr. *porosis*) refers back to what Paul wrote concerning Israel's unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ (9:31-33; 10:3, 21; 11:7-10, 20, 23). The remnant of Jews, like Paul, had not rejected Jesus, but the rest of fleshly Israel had, and were "hardened" (11:7). Maurice W. Lusk III remarks:

That a hardening of a part from among Israel had come about is precisely what Paul has stressed in 11:1-9. In 11:5 and 9:27 he mentioned a remnant (a part) of Israel who had believed in Christ, but the larger part were insensible or obstinate; hence, they had rejected God in rejecting his Son the Messiah (cf. John 3:18; 8:24; 14:6; II John 9); consequently God had rejected them.¹¹²

Paul also writes, "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (11:25). Israel's "hardening" would take place "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in". From the time that Paul wrote these words "until" (Gr. *achris hou*) the fullness of the Gentiles come, Israel would experience a "hardening in part".¹¹³ The "fullness of the Gentiles" (Gr. *pleroma*) is a reference back to what Paul wrote about the Gentiles believing and obeying the gospel (11:11-15). The "hardening" of the Jews opened the door for the Gentiles to believe and obey the gospel.¹¹⁴

Note that Paul does not say what would happen *after* the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, nor does Paul equate the fullness of the Gentiles to the time period of the second coming of Christ. Paul is simply reiterating what he has already said about Israel and the Gentiles in Romans 11:11-24.

Romans 11:26-27. Paul sums up the state of fleshly Israel when he writes: "and so all Israel shall be saved". What is the meaning of these words in this much debated passage?¹¹⁵ Three questions concern us here: Who?, When?, and How? First, *who* is "all

¹¹² "An Exegetical Analysis of Romans 11:26", 24-25.

¹¹³ Note a similar use of "until" in these verses: Acts 7:18; 27:33; and 1 Corinthians 15:25. The word "until" does not tell what will follow the event mentioned. Many scholars (especially those of the premillennial persuasion) assume that there will be *no hardening* on the part of Israel *when* the "fullness of the Gentiles" is complete at the second coming of Christ. This however, is just an assumption.

Wilson Copeland comments: "The Jews were needed to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and firmly establish the churches. Yet, once this occurred, the percentage of Jewish Christians dropped dramatically. It is as if today an almost 'total hardening' by the Jews has taken place. This passage in no way shows that Israel as a nation, as a whole, will ever completely turn to the Lord" (131).

¹¹⁴ See Acts 13:44-49; 18:5-6; etc.

¹¹⁵ For a good discussion of the meaning of this passage in its immediate context, see the article by Craig Cooper. This passage is often misused by millennial theorists and others to prove a conjectured conversion of "all Israel" to Christianity, following a massive return of Jews to Israel sometime in the future.

Israel”? Is this a reference to the nation of Israel as a whole, individual Jews who are a part of the faithful remnant, or Jews and Gentiles in the church?¹¹⁶ Second, *when* will “all Israel” be saved? Is this a reference to Paul’s day, or some future time when Christ returns?¹¹⁷ Third, *how* will “all Israel” be saved?” Will her salvation be accomplished by the gospel that Paul speaks of in Romans 1:16-17, or by some plan of salvation other than the gospel?

First, *who* is “all Israel”? This is a reference simply to fleshly Israel, Israelites who respond in faith to the gospel. Paul has been speaking about his Jewish brethren in Romans 9-11 (see 9:3-5; 10:19, 21; 11:1,7, 14), so a reference to Israelites best fits the immediate context. Paul wants his fellow Jews (9:24) and Israelites (11:1) to be saved.

But, what are we to make of the “all” in “all Israel”? Does Paul use the word “all” in the absolute sense of the salvation of the entire nation of Israel, every single Jew in every period of time?¹¹⁸ Paul’s use of “all Israel”, must of course, be kept in its context. The

Proponents of this view differ in some of the details but all are in agreement that there will be a special dispensation of grace to the nation of Israel in the future. On the other hand, liberal scholars appeal to this passage to show that “all Israel” will be saved within Judaism without belief in Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁶ A. Andrew Das discusses in detail these options in his book, *Solving the Romans Debate* (pages 235-260).

¹¹⁷ Just as Calvinists misuse Romans 9, so Premillennialists misuse Romans 11. Premillennialists often use Romans 11:25-26 to teach their doctrine of Christ’s return to Jerusalem and reign there for 1,000 years where he will have a special relationship with nation of Israel. However, there are several points that Paul makes that refute Premillennial error. First, consider that the of Old Testament citations that Paul quotes in Romans 9-11, he applies to *his* day and age when God is saving both Jews and Gentiles through the gospel of Christ (see 9:25-29, 33; 10:6-8, 11; 11:19). The two prophecies from Isaiah mentioned in Romans 11:26-27 should not be viewed any differently. Clearly, Paul does not apply the prophecies found in Romans 9-11 to a future time when Christ returns. Second, Paul indicates what time he is speaking of when he uses the words “at this present time” (11:5), “unto this very day” (11:8), and “they also may now obtain mercy” (11:31). Paul writes in the present tense that “God is able to graft them in again” (11:23). Third, consider what Paul writes about Jesus Christ. What Jesus is, he is at the time that Paul is writing. Jesus is Lord *now* (9:5), he is the end of the Law *now* (10:4), he is preached *now* (10:6-8), he is called upon *now* (10:11-13), and he is Zion’s stone and Deliverer *now* (9:33; 11:26). Paul does not say that Christ “will be” these things, but that Christ “is” now these things. Simply put, there is no future age when God will have a special plan of salvation for Jews apart from the gospel of Christ. Nowhere in Romans 9-11 do we read about a future earthly reign of Christ on an earthly throne in Jerusalem, a future restoration of Jews to Palestine, a future superior position of Jews over the Gentiles, a future era of national Jewish glory, or a future large-scale conversion of Jews to Christ by the gospel or some means other than the gospel. These items are simply assumed and asserted into the text by Premillennialists. To see how Romans 11 is interpreted differently by millennialists, see the articles by Craig A. Blaising, Kenneth L Gentry, Jr., and Robert B. Strimple. To see how some millennialists within the Restoration Movement used Romans 11:25-26, see article by Victor McCracken.

¹¹⁸ Wayne Jackson writes: “The theory that Paul expected a mass conversion of Israel is flawed on several accounts: (1) It contradicts his entire line of argument in Romans 9-11. (2) It leaves as inexplicable the throbbing anguish for his brethren in the flesh, which saturates this entire section ... Why – if he knew that a national conversion of Israel was an ultimate reality? The premillennial concept of the ‘nation of Israel’ is clearly erroneous. There is no promise of a national conversion of Israel in the Bible. The gospel is still God’s power to save both Jew and Greek (Rom. 1:16), and all who possess hearts that are ‘honest and good’ (Luke 8:15) will accept it. The only ‘hope’ for Israel is in the cross of Christ (see Acts 26:6-23)” (177-178). See also “Israel and the Bible” by Wayne Jackson.

following comments by Maurice W. Lusk III, though lengthy, are a helpful reminder of this context:

... all Israel (*pas Israel*) here is to be understood in the light of reason and sensible exegesis. If this statement is to be understood in an absolute or universal sense as the premillennial expositors aver, then we are speaking of all Israel dead or alive, past, present, and future. Or is that to be taken as all Israel from the first century to the conjectured point in time when this special dispensation of grace should come? If this “prophecy” only refers to a future Israel, then what consolation would such a prophecy be to Paul in the first century? What good would such a prophecy do the millions of Jews who have died in their sins in the interval? Where is the justice of God in this? How can it justly be said that he is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11)? Perhaps we should seek a more intelligent interpretation than this; and one which does not depict the God of revelation as the author of absurdity and contradiction. Such a system of interpretation as this is not exegesis at all; it is nothing more than fanciful conjecture.

‘All Israel’ here is the Israel as a whole as she stands in need of salvation (exclusive of the remnant). ‘And in this manner (*houtos*) all Israel shall be saved’ ... This is the identical form found in Mark 16:16; all Israel shall be saved as every creature shall be saved; i.e., by belief and baptism into Christ. There is no other manner (*houtos*) by which Jew or Gentile shall be saved. The gospel, and the gospel alone, is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16); a fact Paul has already affirmed and set out as the thesis of this epistle. Why would he break forth with a revelation of “*musterion*” here which contradicts the very thesis he has set out to prove?

The coming of the Messiah (the Deliverer) out of Zion, the turning away of ungodliness, the establishment of the new covenant, and the taking away of sins has all been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. If the Jew will not believe him to be the Messiah they shall not be saved; neither in the present, nor in the future.¹¹⁹

Second, *when* will “all Israel” be saved? In the immediate context of Romans 11, Paul has been writing about the salvation of his unbelieving fellow-Jews within the nation of Israel. He hopes that he can “save some of them” (11:14). He is writing in the present tense about unbelieving Jews who can be “grafted in” if they do not continue in their unbelief (11:23-24). This salvation of Jews would occur during the time of his ministry and soon after. Romans 11:25-26 is a continuation of Paul’s thought.

These verses are not a “prophecy” which point to some distant future event when Jews will be blessed as a nation at the second coming of Christ.¹²⁰ These verses point to the

¹¹⁹ “An Exegetical Analysis of Romans 11:26”, 25-26.

¹²⁰ For an example of this kind of thinking, see the article by Harold W. Hoehner, the article by Thomas R. Schreiner, and the article by Michael Vanlaningham. R.L. Whiteside offers a good comment concerning the proposed salvation of the Jewish nation: “No people as a nation will or can accept Christ. Any people as a nation must act as an organized government; those in authority determine what shall be done. But no constituted authorities can decide that the nation shall accept Christ; that is an individual matter. But even if

fallen and rejected state of the Jews in Paul's day and throughout the gospel era.¹²¹ "All Israel" will be saved "if" (not "when") Israel (individual Jews) decides to stop her unbelief and obey Jesus.¹²²

Third, *how* will "all Israel" be saved? Paul writes, "and so all Israel shall be saved" (11:26).¹²³ The words "and so" do not mean "and then". Paul is not saying that *when* the "fullness of the Gentiles" comes, *then* "all Israel shall be saved". The words "and so" (Gr. *kai houtos*) are an adverb of manner meaning "and thus" or "in this manner or way". "All Israel" will be saved *in the manner* in which Paul has just described in the preceding chapters; that is, saved by God's grace (11:5-6) and faith (belief) in Jesus Christ (9:30, 32; 10:4-6, 8-17; 11:20, 23).¹²⁴

Taking the words "and so" in connection with all that Paul has said in Romans 9-11, Israel's salvation would be *in the manner* that Paul has described in Romans 9-11.¹²⁵ Paul is not looking to the distant future when Christ comes again. Paul is concluding a particular argument that runs from Romans 9 through Romans 11. As individual Israelites cease their self-righteousness (Romans 9:31-32; 10:3; 11:6), cease their ignorance of God's righteousness (10:3), cease their unbelief toward (rejection of) Jesus (Romans 9:33; 10:4-15; 11:20, 23), cease their disobedience (10:16-21), and cease their hardening (11:7-10), they will be saved. As individual Israelites respond in faith to Jesus (Romans 10:4-15), as God grafts them into his good olive tree along with Gentiles (Romans 11:17-

a nation could through its proper authorities accept Christ, the Jews could not do so, for they have no one with authority to speak for the whole people on anything" (*The Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy*, 60).

¹²¹ Some scholars recognize the importance of considering Paul's present tense approach to Jewish salvation, but then they proceed to suggest, without warrant, that Paul may have in mind a future eschatological application as well.

Daniel J. Harrington, for example, writes: "If the Jewish rejection of the gospel has meant the reconciliation of the Gentiles ... to God, then the Jewish acceptance of the gospel will mean 'life from the dead' (v. 15). Paul may be hinting here that the ultimate reconciliation of Israel will take place on 'the Day of the Lord' – in the eschatological display of God's power when the dead are restored to life. That would suggest the salvation of 'all Israel' in v. 26 is an eschatological event to occur when all creation acknowledges God as the Father of Jesus Christ. But at this point in his argument Paul is still primarily interested in the present ... The qualification made in v. 23 regarding the reinsertion of the broken branches ... seems to speak against this being a strictly eschatological event affected by God alone (see v. 15). It appears to suggest that the way of reinclusion is through the faithful appropriation of the gospel, in the here and now, not in the eschatological action of God" (*God's People in Christ*, 63-64).

¹²² Paul's words in 11:23 must be remembered: "if they continue not..." Paul wrote "if," not "when". It is not really a question of "when", but a question of "if".

¹²³ For a good discussion of the proper meaning of this phrase, see the articles by Furman Kearley and Rue Porter. To see how a liberal member of a Church of Christ would use this phrase, see the article by David Fleer.

¹²⁴ Paul's point about faith in Romans 9-11 is consistent with one of the major themes of Romans: "justification by faith" (3:28; 5:1; etc.).

¹²⁵ Keep in mind Paul's theme of salvation set forth back in Romans 1:16-17. Israel would be saved according to the gospel plan of salvation that is presented all throughout Romans (1:16-17; 3:21-28; 6:3-4, 17; etc.), not just that which Paul presents in Romans 11:25-27.

24), and as they receive God's grace (11:5-6) and mercy (Romans 11:28-32), they will be saved.¹²⁶

In the more immediate context of Romans 11:11-24, Paul has been discussing the conditions of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. Note the word "if" throughout this context (see also the word "if" in 10:9). "If" individual Jews have belief (faith) in Christ, they can remain as branches in the tree. "If" individual Jews have unbelief, they cannot be branches in the tree. "And so" (11:26), all Israel will be saved based upon the condition of belief.

The salvation of "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 will be accomplished in the same way or manner that Paul has been discussing throughout the chapter: the manner of God's grace and man's faith (see in particular 11:5-6, 12, 14-15, 23-25). Paul is not addressing the salvation of *the nation of Israel at a future time*, but the salvation of *individual believing Jews at the present time*.

Taking the words "and so" in connection with what immediately follows, Israel's salvation would be *in the manner* that Paul describes concerning the coming Deliverer, "even as it is written..." (Gr. *kathos gegraftai*). Paul wishes to establish validity and authority for his point, so he quotes from the LXX version of Isaiah 59:20 ("There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer") and from Isaiah 27:9 ("And this is my covenant unto them").¹²⁷

Jesus was the Deliverer who came out of Zion and he provided the covenant of forgiveness (Matthew 1:21). Jesus promised to build his church (Matthew 16:18) and he delivered Israel from their sins by shedding his blood and establishing his new covenant (Matthew 26:28). Starting on the day of Pentecost, Jews were saved and added to the Lord's church all *in the manner* of believing, repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:37-47). During Paul's day,¹²⁸ Jews had their sins taken away all *in the manner* of hearing, believing, and obeying God's saving gospel (Roman 1:16-17; 10:8-14).¹²⁹

Peter's sermon in Acts 3 helps us to understand Paul's words in Romans 11:26-27. Paul writes about:

- 1) the Deliverer out of Zion,
- 2) his turning away ungodliness from Jacob,
- 3) God's covenant, and
- 4) God's removal of their sins.

¹²⁶ Peter made the same point in Jerusalem when he said: "But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they" (Acts 15:11).

¹²⁷ See the tract by Edward Fudge.

¹²⁸ For Paul's preaching of the gospel to Jews, see Acts 9:5, 22; 13:5, 14, 46; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:1-4, 6, 19; 19:8; 21:26; and 28:17, 20.

¹²⁹ Foy E. Wallace, Jr. argued along similar lines in his sermon on "The Hope of Israel" dated, January 23, 1945. He said that conversion of Israel "must come within the scope of the Great commission ... must come within the scope of the New Covenant ... must take place before the second coming of Christ" (*God's Prophetic Word*, 120-129).

Now hear Peter's words applied to Jesus in Acts 3. All four of Paul's points are found in Peter's sermon to the Jews:

- 1) Jesus was the promised Deliverer to Israel (3:11-18),
- 2) Jesus would turn away (via repentance) ungodliness from Israel (3:19-23),
- 3) Jesus was the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel (3:24-25), and
- 4) Jesus provides forgiveness of sins to Israel (3:19, 26).

Romans 11:28-32. Paul continues his summary concerning Israel's fallen and rejected state. He continues to use statements that are parallel to what he wrote earlier in the chapter. From the standpoint of the gospel, the unbelieving nation of Israel "are enemies for your sakes". Israel, as God's "enemy", rejected his gospel and this brought about an opportunity for Gentiles to be saved (11:11-15).

But, from the standpoint of God's choice, unbelieving Israel is "beloved for the father's sake". Israel is "beloved" because of her elect state going back to the "fathers" like Abraham (9:4-5). Israel can still be saved "if" she will respond to God's grace (11:5-7) through faith (11:23). Paul writes: "For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of". God will not go back or revoke his promises to Abraham. God wants Jews to be saved and he gives them every opportunity to do so.

Paul's main line of thought is this: Israel's disobedience resulted in Israel's rejection by God and God showing mercy to disobedient Gentiles (11:30). In turn, God's mercy shown to disobedient Gentiles will allow God to show mercy to repentant Israel (11:31). In 11:32, Paul writes that both Jews and Gentiles have been "disobedient" to God¹³⁰ and both are in need of God's "mercy".¹³¹ This has been Paul's point beginning back in Romans 1. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and the gospel is God's power to save sinner; "to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

Romans 11:33-36. Paul, in a closing doxology, praises God for his divine choice (Romans 9), his divine acceptance (Romans 10), and his divine mercy (Romans 11). Paul opens (9:5) and closes (11:36) this portion of his letter with a hearty "Amen"!

What can be said by way of summary to Paul's teaching here? Consider three divine principles set forth by Paul in Romans 9-11:

First, there is the principle of divine choice (election). No one, including God's chosen people – the Jews, can dictate *who* God mercifully saves (both Jew and Gentile). God makes this merciful choice, not man. God has the sovereign right to choose or elect whomever he wants for the accomplishing of his purposes. God

¹³⁰ Paul had already argued earlier in Romans that both Gentiles and Jews had sinned and been disobedient (see 1:18 – 3:20).

¹³¹ Paul had already argued earlier in Romans that both Gentiles and Jews were in need of God's mercy (see 2:4; 3:23-24; 5:8; 9:15-23; 11:22).

chooses that only a part of Abraham's descendants will be his people (Romans 9:6-8) and God chooses that his people will include Gentiles, not just Jews (Romans 9:24). The fact that many Jews of Paul's day do not accept God's choice in this matter does not change this principle. This is Paul's main point in Romans 9.

Second, there is a principle of divine acceptance. When it comes to salvation, *all* mankind – “whosoever” – are saved by God in the same manner. There is no distinction or respect of persons with God. God chooses *who* will be saved (both Jews and Gentile, 9:24) and God chooses *how* they will be saved (belief in Jesus Christ). *All* mankind, both Jew *and* Gentile, must believe in and confess Jesus as Lord. *All* must call upon the Lord (Romans 10:11-13).¹³² The fact that much of Israel in Paul's day is disobedient to the gospel call does not change this principle. This is Paul's main point in Romans 10.

Third, there is the principle of divine mercy. God is good, faithful, and merciful to his people Israel. He has not cast them off. God is good to Israel by saving a remnant from among them through his mercy and grace (Romans 11:5-7). God is also good to Gentiles by allowing them to be saved in the same manner with the remnant of Israel (Romans 11:22). In fact, God wants to “have mercy upon all” (11:32). The fact that much of Israel in Paul's day refuses God's good, merciful, and gracious gift does not change this principle. This is Paul's main point in Romans 11.

The People of God Continuity and Discontinuity

Israel and the Church: Continuity and Discontinuity

Returning to our original question: What then, is the relationship between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church?¹³³ “Israel” is found 66 times in the New Testament¹³⁴ and “Israelite” is found 9 times¹³⁵. For the most part, references in the New

¹³² See Peter's words in Acts 15:11.

¹³³ You will find in Geoffrey W. Grogan's article some books and booklets going back about 30 years that address this question.

¹³⁴ *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament*, 477-478. There are many references to the people, “house”, children, or commonwealth of Israel (Matthew 2:6; 8:10; 9:33; 10:6; 15:24; 27:9; Mark 12:29; Luke 1:16, 54, 80; 2:25, 32, 34; 4:25, 27; 7:9; 24:21; John 1:31; Acts 1:6; 2:36; 4:10, 27; 5:21, 31; 7:23, 37, 42; 9:15; 10:36; 13:17, 23, 24; Acts 9:6, 27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, 25, 26; 1 Cor. 10:18; 2 Corinthians 3:7, 13; Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 2:12; Philippians 3:5; Hebrews 8:8, 10; 11:22; Revelation 2:14; 7:4; 21:12). There is one reference to the land of Israel (Matthew 2:20-21). There is one reference to the cities of Israel (Matthew 10:23). There are two references to the God of Israel (Matthew 15:31; Luke 1:68). There are two references to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). There are four references to Jesus as the King of Israel (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:32; John 1:49; 12:13). There is one reference to Nicodemus as the teacher of Israel (John 3:10). There is one reference to the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20).

Testament to “Israel” are references to Jews.¹³⁶ But, what about applying the term “Israel” to the church made up of Jews and Gentiles?

Nowhere in the New Testament is the church described as “true Israel,” “real Israel,” “spiritual Israel,” “new Israel,” “renewed Israel,” or the like. And, with the exception of Galatians 6:16 and Revelation 7:4, nowhere is the name “Israel” applied directly to the church. However, is it incorrect to speak of the church as “Israel”? The answer is “No.” We may speak correctly of the church as “Israel” in this *accommodative* way because of the many images of Israel found in the New Testament which are applied to the church.¹³⁷

Several Old Testament images of Israel as the people of God are picked up and developed by New Testament writers and then applied to the church. The following quotation is taken from the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*:

The Bible uses the image of Israel as God’s chosen people to speak of those who have been called by God into a special relationship. In the OT there was strong emphasis placed on the ethno-religious community established through the gracious acts of Yahweh in the exodus from Egypt and the conclusion of a covenant at Mt. Sinai. In the NT the church adopted the language and images associated with Israel to assist the development of its self-understanding. This stressed the continuity with its Jewish heritage, while at the same time acknowledging the novelty of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Israel became a defining image for the self-definition of the Christian community.¹³⁸

Designations which once belonged to Israel are applied in the New Testament to the church. We will consider some of these themes now and by doing so we will witness a clear continuity and discontinuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.

The Israel of God: One versus Many. First, there is continuity and discontinuity regarding the name “Israel” for God’s people. Old Testament Israel, named after Jacob, was one

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 478. See John 1:47; Acts 2:22; 3:12; 5:35; 13:16; 21:28; Romans 9:4; 11:1; and 2 Corinthians 11:22.

¹³⁶ There have been a few strange theories through the years that make “Israel” a reference to someone other than Jews, but these theories have never been taken seriously by sound exegetes of scripture or by competent historians. For example, the British Naval officer, Richard Brothers (1757 – 1824), invented the teaching of “Anglo-Israelism”. Mr. Brothers taught that the British nation is the descendent of the “ten lost tribes” of Israel. According to Brothers, the Anglo-Saxon people are the true Israel today. For more on “Anglo-Israelism” see the articles by Yater Tant, William S. Cline, and Tim Ayers, and see the booklet by Henry D. Houghton. Another strange theory comes from Herbert W. Armstrong. Armstrong, in similar fashion, taught that Britain was “Ephraim” and the United States was “Manasseh” (see Armstrong’s booklet titled *The United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy*). For more on the beliefs of Armstrong see the articles by Lloyd Moyer and Michael Light.

¹³⁷ Our brethren in the past who have written of the church as “spiritual Israel” or the “Israel of God” have done so correctly. See the articles by Ozment, Farish, and Welch.

¹³⁸ “Israel”, 431.

nation, the church of the New Testament, the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), is made up of the chosen from many (all) nations.

I am aware that the phrase “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16 is much debated by scholars.¹³⁹ Basically two positions exist concerning the “Israel of God” in this passage: 1) It refers to the church, either 1a) Jew *and* Gentile Christians, or 1b) Jewish Christians alone (the Jewish remnant) within the church; and, 2) It refers to the ethnic nation of Israel (non-Christian Jews). Based upon the immediate context surrounding Galatians 6:16 (i.e., “a new creature” in 6:15), and the broader context of Galatians as a whole (i.e., the unity in Christ of Jews and Gentiles in 3:28), I take the position that the “Israel of God” refers to the united body of Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church. Paul argues in Galatians for an “Israel” that is not defined by circumcision or by physical descent. Paul argues for an “Israel” based upon faith (Galatians 3:6-7).¹⁴⁰

The New Testament church, in terms reminiscent of Old Testament Israel, is described this way:

In Acts

“a people for his name” (Acts 15:14)

“flock of God” (Acts 20:28-29; cf. John 10:14, 16, 26; 1 Peter 5:2)

In Paul’s Epistles

“saints” (Romans 1:7; etc.)

“beloved” (Romans 1:7; etc.)

“circumcision” (Romans 2:26-29; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11)

“children of God ... heirs of God” (Romans 8:16-17)

“my people” (Romans 9:25-26; cf. quoting Hosea 2:23)

“temple of God” (1 Corinthians 3:16)

“sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7)

“Abraham’s seed ... heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29)

“children of promise” (Galatians 4:28; cf. Romans 9:8)

“Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16)

“household of God” (Ephesians 2:19)

“the circumcision” (Philippians 3:3)

“God’s elect” (Colossians 3:12)

“house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15)

“a people for his own possession” (Titus 2:14)

In the General Epistles

“the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9)

“the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23)

¹³⁹ For more details about the exegetical and theological issues involved in this debated passage, see the article by S. Lewis Johnson.

¹⁴⁰ This is the position taken by G.K. Beale, Christopher W. Cowan, Andreas J. Köstenberger, Michael Marlowe, and O. Palmer Robertson (see the writings of these men in the bibliography).

“twelve tribes” (James 1:1)¹⁴¹
“heirs of the kingdom” (James 2:5)
“a holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5)
“an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (1 Peter 2:9)
“the people of God” (1 Peter 2:10)
“sojourners and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11)
“the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17)

In Revelation

“a kingdom ... priests (Revelation 1:6; 5:10)
“the servants ... a hundred and forty and four thousand ... every tribe of the children of Israel” (Revelation 7:3-4; see also 14:1,3)
“the temple of God ... witnesses ... servants the prophets” (Revelation 11:1-19)
“the first-fruits unto God” (Revelation 14:4)
“wife” (Revelation 19:7)¹⁴²

Concerning the phrase “people of God”, H. Strathmann writes:

The transfer of the title λαός (sc. θεού), the nation of God, from Israel to the Christian community is only one of the forms which express the certainty of early Christianity that it possesses and is the fulfillment of OT prophecy, the realization of the goal of the religion of Israel, the essential reality corresponding to the figurative intimation. If Christ is the fulfillment toward which the Law and prophets move, His community is the true λαός (sc. θεού), the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16; 1 C. 10:18; R. 9:6), the true seed of Abraham (Gl. 3:29; cf. R. 9:7 f.), the true circumcision (Phil. 3:3), the true temple (1 C. 3:16), the true קֹהֵל יְהוָה (→ ἑκκλησία). It is the true λαός within which God dwells and which has access to Him because, sanctified by Christ, it is holy. In all these phrases there is expressed with unsurpassable succinctness a certainty which historically binds the Christian community and its religious heritage just as firmly to the OT community as it divides it from this preliminary and superseded stage on the basis of the redemptive act of God in Christ.¹⁴³

Concerning “Israel” or “Israel of God” being applied to the church, Walter Gutbrod offers these balanced remarks:

In none of these passages do we find any extension of the term to cover the new people of God. Yet the thought is present, for the parable of the olive-tree in R. 11 suggests some such possibility.

¹⁴¹ Jesus told his twelve apostles that they would “sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:30). In the book of Revelation, saints in the church are “sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel” (7:4-8).

¹⁴² See also 2 Corinthians 11:3.

¹⁴³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:56-57.

There is also a step in this direction in R. 9:6, where membership of the people of God is not just equated with physical membership of the race of Israel. On the other hand, we are not told here that Gentile Christians are the true Israel. The distinction at R. 9:6 does not go beyond what is presupposed at Jn. 1:47, and it corresponds to the distinction between Ἰουδαῖος ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ and Ἰουδαῖος ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ at R. 2:28 f., which does not imply that Paul is calling Gentiles the true Jews.

Nevertheless, the term Ἰσραήλ opens the way more readily for this extension, since it denotes the inner essence of the people of God. Hence Paul can use this word marginally and negatively for the new people of God when he speaks of Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα at 1 C. 10:18, (He has in view the religious aspect, for the reference is to the worship of the former community, which is represented as an example.) On the other hand, there is no specific contrast between this Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα and an Ἰσραήλ κατὰ πνεῦμα. That there can be no transfer of the title to the new community at the expense of the old is shown particularly clearly by the image of the olive-tree in R. 11:17 ff.; Israel is the one community of God into which Gentiles are now engrafted.

The one passage where it is most probable that Ἰσραήλ has this new meaning is Gl. 6:16. Here Ἰσραήλ τοῦ θεοῦ is used of those who follow the rule of Paul, to whom circumcision and uncircumcision are of no account, and for whom the world is crucified by Christ. It should be noted, however, that this statement is used against those who think that the heritage of ancient Israel, especially circumcision, is a necessary prerequisite of Christianity, and who believe that membership of the people of God is only possible on this condition. Here too, then, the expression is in a sense to be put in quotation marks.

Apart from this polemical passage and 1 C. 10:18, Paul does not seem to use Ἰσραήλ for the new community of God. For, as we may see from R. 9–11, he neither could nor would separate the term from those who belong to Israel by descent.¹⁴⁴

The Elect: Service versus Salvation. Second, there is continuity and discontinuity regarding God's called, chosen and elect people. Old Testament Israel was termed "my chosen" (Psalm 89:3; Isaiah 43:20; 45:4; 65:9, 15, 22).¹⁴⁵ Israel was a people for God's "own possession" (Deuteronomy 7:6) and they were elect by God's grace (Hosea 11:1). Because they were God's elect, God expected them to be holy as he is holy (Lev. 11:44; 19:2) and God held them accountable for their sins (Amos 3:2). As God's elect, Israel was to show the other nations the one true God (Isaiah 45:14-25) and they were God's suffering servant (Isaiah 42:1-4).

¹⁴⁴ "Israel", 387-388.

¹⁴⁵ God's choosing of Israel goes back to God's calling and choosing Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4), and Jacob (28:13-15; 35:11-12). God calls Abraham "my servant" (Genesis 26:24) long before he calls Israel "my servant".

Jesus was also termed “my chosen” by his Father (Luke 9:35; 23:35).¹⁴⁶ He is God’s “elect” corner stone of God’s new building (1 Peter 2:4, 6). He is God’s suffering servant (Isaiah 53). His church is made up of God’s “called and chosen and faithful” (Revelation 17:14), “God’s elect” (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; Titus 1:1).¹⁴⁷ Like Old Testament Israel, the church, as God’s people, is elect by God’s grace (1 Peter 1:2). The church is to be holy (1 Peter 1:15) and they are “a people for God’s own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). As God’s elect, the church will “show forth the excellencies of him who called you” (1 Peter. 2:9) and they will be a suffering servant of God (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:19; 3:13,14; 4:12-19; 5:10).¹⁴⁸

Whereas Israel was *one nation elected to be a servant*¹⁴⁹ in bringing the Christ and blessings to all (Romans 9:4-5), the church is made up of *all nations elected to be saved from sin*. Israel was elected *unconditionally* to her service of bringing about the Christ (Romans 9:11-13),¹⁵⁰ but the church is elected *conditionally* to her salvation upon faith and obedience to the gospel (Romans 10:4-15).

Clearly, God’s election of the church is based upon his grace (“the election of grace,” Romans 11:5-7, 28). However, God’s gracious election is not without condition. God’s elect in the church have been chosen because they respond to the gospel call in obedient faith (see “your election” in 1 Thessalonians 1:4).¹⁵¹ We must remember that “many are called, but few chosen” (Matthew 22:14).

Man’s obedience to God’s gracious call, choosing, and election is absolutely necessary.¹⁵² What were the Jews of Israel, and later the Gentiles, told to do to be saved from their sins? In response to Jesus’ commission to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19) and to preach the gospel to the “whole creation” (Mark 16:15), the apostles began in Jerusalem to preach the gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Luke 24:47).

¹⁴⁶ We are told in Matthew 12:17-22 how that Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the Lord’s servant and chosen one: “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1).

¹⁴⁷ See also Matthew 24:24, 31; Mark 13:22, 27; Luke 18:7; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:4, 6, 9; 5:13; 2 John 1, 13.

¹⁴⁸ See the lecture by John Humphries.

¹⁴⁹ God called Israel “my servant” (Isaiah 41:8-9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 49:3, 6).

¹⁵⁰ Bible students sometimes call this “general election”. “General election” has to do with God’s election/selection of the *nation* of Israel to bring about the Christ. “Special election” has to do with God’s election/selection of *individuals*, “the Israel within Israel” (Romans 2:28-29; 9:6), the faithful remnant from within the nation whom he saves.

¹⁵¹ The context surrounding the words “your election” in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 clearly shows that the Thessalonians (1) responded to gospel preaching, (2) with repentance, (3) with obedient faith, and (4) with continual service to God (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10). Paul makes a similar point in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15. Peter also reminds us that God’s election comes with the condition of obedience to the gospel (1 Peter 1:1-2, 22-25; 2:7-10). One’s election is also conditioned upon continual, faithful service: “Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble” (2 Peter 1:10).

¹⁵² Robert F. Turner writes: “The ultimate people of God are not puppets: (1) condemned by a depravity inherited from Adam; (2) unconditionally elected; (3) to be among the “limited” (?) number for whom Christ died; (4) saved (or lost) by an irresistible force (*that makes God partial – a respecter of persons*); nor (5) preserved, regardless of the individual’s rebellion against God’s will. Not one item in this Calvinistic doctrine is true” (*People of God*, 51).

On this occasion, Peter told “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36) to repent and be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38). The very Jesus that the “peoples of Israel” rejected (Acts 4:27), would be the Jesus that could and would save them. Peter also told the Jews this about Jesus: “Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins” (Acts 5:31). It was Jesus, Peter said, that preached “good tidings of peace” to the children of Israel (Acts 10:36).

Paul, like Peter, would also preach salvation through Jesus Christ to both Jews *and* Gentiles. Paul was a “chosen vessel” of Jesus to preach his name “before Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).¹⁵³ When Paul preached to the “men of Israel” in the synagogue at Antioch, he preached Jesus as David’s seed: “Of this man’s seed hath God according to the promise brought unto Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:23) ... “Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins” (Acts 13:38).

Paul himself was an “Israelite” of the “stock of Israel” and he obeyed Jesus and was baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 9:18; 22:16; Romans 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:3-14). He wanted his fellow-Jews and Gentiles to follow his example of conversion (1 Tim. 1:12-16).

The Covenant: Old versus New. Third, there is continuity and discontinuity regarding God’s covenant and law for his people. God, from the beginning of time, has always had a law for his people. Adam and Eve had a law from God (Genesis 2:16-17). Abraham had a covenant (Acts 7:8) and law from God (Genesis 26:5).

Israel, of course, had a covenant-law from God. Israel was the great heir of “the covenants” (Romans 9:4; Ephesians 2:12).¹⁵⁴ First, the covenant-law given at Mt. Sinai was for Israel alone (Deuteronomy 5:2-3).¹⁵⁵ Second, the covenant-law given at Mt. Sinai was to last until the new covenant was given to the “house of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Therefore, the Mt. Sinai covenant-law was limited in scope (to Israel alone) and in time (until the new covenant came).

Jesus lived and died under the Old Law (Galatians 4:4-5). He said, “Think not that I came to destroy the law of the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). This does not mean, as some today teach, that the Old Law is still in force or binding today. This means that Jesus did not come to remove the law until it had been fulfilled. Jesus lived under the law, he kept the law, and encouraged his fellow-Israelites to do the same (Mark 1:44). However, once Jesus fulfilled the Old Law, he removed it upon his

¹⁵³ See also Acts 26:23.

¹⁵⁴ See also Hebrews 9:4 and Revelation 11:19.

¹⁵⁵ See the lecture by L.A. Mott Jr.

death. There is, therefore, continuity and discontinuity evidenced between the passing of the Old Law and the establishment of the New.¹⁵⁶

Jesus shed his blood to establish a new covenant and to provide remission of sins for all mankind, including Jews (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20).¹⁵⁷ The cross was the point at which the old covenant-law was removed and the new covenant-law was put in its place (Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 2:14). In establishing a new covenant-law in Jesus, God was actually remembering (Luke 1:72-73) and fulfilling (Acts 3:18-25) the covenant promise he made with Abraham to bless all nations through Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁸

Paul writes much about the Old Law and new covenant.¹⁵⁹ The Lord's supper taken by Christians is for remembering "the new covenant in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25).¹⁶⁰ The old covenant-law given to the children of Israel by Moses was indeed glorious, but the Old Law is that "which passeth away" (2 Corinthians 11:11). The Old Law is "done away in Christ" (2 Corinthians 3:14). The new covenant-law given to all mankind by Jesus, not only remains, but even surpasses the old in glory (2 Corinthians 3:1-18).¹⁶¹

When Paul argued against the Judaizers of Galatia, he wrote that the Law was added after the Abrahamic promise for a purpose (Galatians 4:15-22).¹⁶² When the Law's purpose was fulfilled, it was done away and its binding force upon the Jew was removed (Galatians 3:23-25). Paul wrote about "two covenants" (Galatians 4:24). The old covenant from Mt. Sinai brings bondage, but the new covenant from Christ brings freedom (Galatians 4:21 – 5:1).

The argument of the Hebrew writer demonstrates the passing of the old law and the establishment of the new. Jesus has "become the surety of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22). The new covenant-law was just that, "new", not like the covenant made with Israel (Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:16-17).¹⁶³ Jesus is "the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 9:15-17) because he shed his "blood of the covenant" (Hebrews 10:29). Jesus is the final sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 9:28; 10:26); therefore, the author of Hebrews writes: "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9). Jesus is "the

¹⁵⁶ There are elements and principles of the Old Law found in the New Law. For example, nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament (the Sabbath command is not repeated) and the principle of loving your neighbor (see passages like Romans 13:8-10). For a discussion among evangelicals of some the aspects of discontinuity in law-covenant, see the articles by Mark W. Karlberg.

¹⁵⁷ I am not here advocating what is called in evangelical circles "New Covenant Theology" (see the article by Richard L. Mayhue.

¹⁵⁸ Paul reminds the Judaizers in Galatia that the *addition* of the Law of Moses *after* the covenant promise to Abraham (fulfilled in Jesus Christ) did not *disannul* the covenant promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:15-22).

¹⁵⁹ See the article by Philip C. Smith for a discussion of how Paul used the new covenant principles of Jeremiah 30-31 in Romans without actually quoting from Jeremiah.

¹⁶⁰ Compare "blood of the covenant" with Exodus 24:8 and Zechariah 9:11.

¹⁶¹ See the lecture by Walton Weaver.

¹⁶² See the lecture by James L. Yopp.

¹⁶³ The Hebrew writer makes it clear that the "new covenant" of Christ is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31-34. See the lecture by Homer Hailey. For a dispensational understanding of this passage, see the article by Bruce A. Ware.

mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24). This new covenant-law will never be amended or added to because Jesus’ blood is “the blood of an eternal covenant” (Hebrews 13:20).¹⁶⁴

The Tabernacle: Building versus People. Fourth, there is continuity and discontinuity regarding the tabernacle and temple where God’s people worship. Moses was given a pattern by God concerning the building of the tabernacle for Israel, the place where God was to be worshipped and where God would show his presence (Exodus 25-40). Israel worshipped at a physical tabernacle (Acts 7:44-45; Hebrews 9:2-3, 6, 21)¹⁶⁵ and later in a physical temple (Acts 7:46-50).¹⁶⁶ These structures were built by men.

For all Christians, Jew or Gentile, there is no longer a physical tabernacle or temple within which to worship. When God restored Israel by rebuilding “the tabernacle of David”, he did so in establishing the church (Acts 15:16; quoting Amos 9:11-12).¹⁶⁷ Jesus “dwelt” (lit. tabernacled) among men (John 1:14), established his church, and gave mankind a place in his church to dwell together with God. Jesus took his blood into “the holy place” of heaven, into “the greater and more perfect tabernacle” (Hebrews 9:11-12, 23-26).¹⁶⁸ One day, faithful Christians will dwell with God in heaven where he will “tabernacle” with his people there (Revelation 21:1-4).¹⁶⁹

As for the temple, the Lord of heaven “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). The Lord’s church, his body of believers, is “a holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:21).¹⁷⁰ In heaven, no temple will exist because “the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof” (Revelation 21:22).

The Lord’s “house” for Israel was the temple, but the Lord’s “house” for the church is the people of God themselves. The church, the people of God, is the “household of faith” (Galatians 6:10), the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), the “house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17), and God’s “spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). The church, for all mankind, fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy: “My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples (Isaiah 56:7).¹⁷¹

The Priesthood: Physical versus Spiritual. Fifth, there is continuity and discontinuity regarding the priesthood of God’s people who offer sacrifices to God. The priesthood of

¹⁶⁴ The Book of Mormon is not “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” for two reasons. First, the “new covenant” (called “the second” in Hebrews 10:9) is an “eternal”, age-lasting covenant. There has been no promise of a “third” testament called the Book of Mormon. Second, according to Hebrews 9:17, Jesus would have to shed his blood again to establish “Another Testament of Jesus Christ”; something Jesus has never done.

¹⁶⁵ See also Hebrews 13:10.

¹⁶⁶ See also Matthew 23:16, 17, 21, 35; 26:61; 27:5, 40, 51; Mark 14:58; 15:29, 38; Luke 1:9, 21-22; 23:45; John 2:9 [Jesus’ body], 20-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; and Revelation 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17 [temple in heaven].

¹⁶⁷ See the article by Royce Dickinson, Jr.

¹⁶⁸ See the lecture by Rick Liggin.

¹⁶⁹ See also Revelation 13:6. See the lecture by Phil Roberts.

¹⁷⁰ See also 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 3:12; 11:1.

¹⁷¹ See the lecture by Bob Waldron on “House of Prayer for All Nations”.

Aaron and Levi within Old Testament Israel offered grain and animal sacrifices on a literal altar (1 Corinthians 10:18).¹⁷² These Old Testament sacrifices were of a physical nature involving animals and other offerings.

All New Testament Christians offer “spiritual” sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5-9)¹⁷³ of worship (Hebrews 13:15-16) and daily service to God (Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:17; 4:18).¹⁷⁴ Whereas the priesthood of Old Testament Israel was limited to the house of Levi, all Christians are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9).¹⁷⁵ They are made “to be priests unto his God” (Revelation 1:6; see also 5:10).¹⁷⁶

Aaron and his sons were the High Priest to Israel on earth, whereas Jesus is High Priest, “after the order of Melchizedek”, in heaven to all Christians (Hebrews 7:23 – 8:5; 9:23-26).¹⁷⁷ Aaron and his sons offered physical sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1-4), whereas Jesus offered himself as a “better sacrifice” (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:23; 10:5-18).¹⁷⁸

The City of Jerusalem: Earthly versus Heavenly. Sixth, there is continuity and discontinuity regarding the dwelling place of God’s people, the city of Jerusalem. The holy city of Jerusalem belonging to the Jews was and still is, earthly. Paul described this city as “the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children” (Galatians 4:25).¹⁷⁹ It was the earthly Jerusalem that Jesus wept over and predicted her destruction (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

On the other hand, the Jerusalem belonging to the church is heavenly, not earthly. Paul described it this way: “the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother” (Galatians 4:26). The new Jerusalem is the city built by God that Abraham desired (Hebrews 11:10).¹⁸⁰ It is this “heavenly” country that Abraham desired (Hebrews 11:16). Christians are “come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” (Hebrews 12:22).¹⁸¹ Christians are seeking after “*the city* which is to come” (Hebrews 13:14). This is the “new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:2).¹⁸²

¹⁷² See also Matthew 9:13; 12:7; Mark 9:49 [and margin]; 12:33; Luke 2:24; Acts 7:41-42; Hebrews 5:1; 7:27; 8:3; 9:9, 26; 10:1, 8, 11.

¹⁷³ See the lecture by William M. Shanks on “Offer Up Spiritual Sacrifices”. For a dispensational understanding of 1 Peter 2, see the article by W. Edward Glenny.

¹⁷⁴ See the lecture by Frank Himmell on “New Covenant Worship”.

¹⁷⁵ F.F. Bruce discusses in some detail the comparisons found in 1 Peter 2:1-10 between Israel and the church (*New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, 63-66).

¹⁷⁶ See also Revelation 5:10; 20:6.

¹⁷⁷ The argument for the priesthood of Jesus runs from Hebrews 5:1-10 to Hebrews 6:20 – 7:28.

¹⁷⁸ See the lecture by Mark Reeves and the lecture by Tim Smelser.

¹⁷⁹ The city of Jerusalem is mentioned over 70 times in the New Testament, too numerous to list here. The majority of references are to the physical, earthly Jerusalem.

¹⁸⁰ See the lecture by Robert Harkrider and the lecture by Phil Roberts.

¹⁸¹ See the lecture by Homer Hailey.

¹⁸² See also Revelation 3:12 and 21:10. For a dispensational understanding of this passage, see the article by David L. Turner.

Ignoring the clear teaching of scripture that our present earth will pass away (2 Peter 3:10-12) and that heaven will be the eternal abode of the righteous (Matthew 5:12; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews

While there is certainly something to be gained for the historian by traveling through Bible lands and seeing the sites, there is no need for Christians to make a special earthly pilgrimage to earthly Jerusalem as many do today. Faithful Christians are making an upward, heavenly pilgrimage to that “heavenly Jerusalem” prepared by God (Philippians 3:14; Colossians 3:1-4). Paul writes that our “citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:19). Christians are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1). Christians are members of “the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23).

Heaven, not earth, is where the righteous will spend their eternity. After Jesus fulfilled his earthly ministry, he ascended back into heaven from which he came (Ephesians 1:20; 4:10; Hebrews 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:23-24; 1 Peter 3:22). In heaven, Jesus now rules and reigns and he has prepared a place for his people there. Jesus wants us to lay up “treasures in heaven”, not on earth (Matthew 6:19-20). Jesus wants his people to be with him where he has gone and where he now is, in heaven. Jesus said: “that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3) and “I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory...” (John 17:24).

12:23; 1 Peter 2:4; etc.), some scholars like J. Richard Middleton have located the New Jerusalem on earth. For example, Middleton writes: “In Revelation 21, however, the New Jerusalem (which is both a holy city and the people of God—that is, redeemed humanity in their concrete socio-cultural, even urban, character), comes down out of heaven. Here it is very clear that the final, permanent dwelling place of God with humanity is *on earth* (emp. CHR). Indeed, one chapter later we are told (in Revelation 22:3) that in the New Jerusalem—which has come down from heaven *to earth* (emp. CHR) —there will no longer be any curse (Genesis 3 will be finally reversed). Instead, God will be enthroned there (on earth) and God’s servants (according to verse 5) will ‘reign forever’” (“A New Heaven and a New Earth,” 92). Note that Middleton says “on earth” and “to earth” in the above statement. Read Revelation 22:1 again carefully. The words “on earth” and “to earth” are not in the text. The idea of the new Jerusalem being “on earth” and coming “to earth” is neither directly stated nor indirectly implied in the text. It is simply inserted into the text by Middleton without valid reason. This is pure eisegesis, reading something into the text!

The phrase “coming down out of heaven from God” in Revelation 21:1 refers to the *origin* of the new Jerusalem. John is not telling us that the new Jerusalem is travelling from heaven “to earth”. He is telling us about the *origin* of the new Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem is from God; it is divine in origin. The new Jerusalem is “the name of the city of my God” and it comes down out of heaven “from my God” (Revelation 3:12). J. Noel Meredith remarks:

“Coming down is from *katabainousan* and means that the city descended so it could be seen by John. Some regard the participle as merely qualitative, merely describing its appearance and not that it came down. But it would appear that John sees the city coming down. What John saw was the vision which God gave in such a manner that he could see it and that it could be seen in no other way.”

“The city as it is described is to be regarded as a figurative or emblematic description. It is a representation of the heavenly state under the image of a beautiful city. God is presented as dwelling with his people as if in a tabernacle.”

“The idea of the city’s coming down out of heaven is explained by J.W. Roberts as describing the heavenly origin of the city or the abiding nature of the city. Thus we read in Revelation 13:11 of the beast that rose out of the earth, showing its nature and origin” (“Difficult Passages in Revelation: No. VI”, 470).

In heaven, God's people will have a resurrected body which will be "in the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:48-49) and "eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). In heaven, God's people will receive the "hope which is laid up for you in the heavens" (Colossians 1:5), they will experience the "heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18), they will receive the inheritance "reserved in heaven" (2 Peter 1:4), and they will enter the "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13).¹⁸³ The eternal abode of God's people is in heaven, not on earth.

The People of God Current Issues and Questions

The subject of the relationship between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church has been debated since the 1st Century and numerous issues and questions have been raised as a result of this debate. Disagreement over this relationship goes back to the days of Justin Martyr's dialogue with Trypho the Jew.¹⁸⁴ Even before this, in the days of Paul, there was much debate over what Jews and Christians must demand of each other.¹⁸⁵

Today, this disagreement continues to be wide and sharp.¹⁸⁶ Liberal theologians¹⁸⁷ and orthodox Jews,¹⁸⁸ of course, believe that there is no inter-connected relationship between Israel and the church. According to them, Israel and the church pose two completely separate ways of salvation for mankind: Judaism is salvation for Jews and Christianity is salvation for everyone else.¹⁸⁹ W. Eugene March describes this relationship as "two distinct but eternally related 'families' within 'the family'"¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, conservative, evangelical theologians believe that there is a direct relationship between Israel and the church. Some of these scholars believe that the

¹⁸³ See the lectures by Homer Hailey, David Barnes, and Don Truex on "The New Heavens and the New Earth". See also the lectures by Buddy Payne and Tim Reeves on the "New Creation".

¹⁸⁴ Peter Richardson, in his monumental work, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, sets forth the case that Israel was first applied to the church in the discussion between Justin and Trypho.

¹⁸⁵ See especially Acts 11 and 15, Galatians 1-6, and Philippians 3.

¹⁸⁶ The relationship between Israel and the Church has been brought to the forefront of religious studies in the past 30 years with the discussion of the so-called "New Perspective on Paul". See my 2013 Alpharetta Bible Study lecture titled "The New Perspective on Paul".

¹⁸⁷ For an example of this liberal approach, see John G. Gager's *Reinventing Paul* (59-61, 152), Krister Stenahal's *Final Account* (38-44), and the article by Lloyd Gaston.

¹⁸⁸ See the writings of Rabbi Randall M Falk in *Jews & Christians: A Troubled Family*. For example, Rabbi Falk writes: "Jews accept Jesus as teacher and as a prophet, not as Christ or Messiah. Orthodox Jews still look forward to the coming of the 'Mashiach' who will bring God's kingdom on earth with the establishment of a free Jewish nation in Palestine" (105).

¹⁸⁹ Some liberal Christian scholars and Jewish scholars even believe that world religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. are all valid ways of salvation for mankind. For example, W. Eugene March writes: "In Christ, God's family has already been expanded and opened to believing Gentiles, but in the end, all mortals will know the richness of the divine presence" (*Great Themes of the Bible*, 109).

¹⁹⁰ *Great Themes of the Bible*, 109. March also believes that the church first existed as a "subset among other Jewish groups" and then later separated from the synagogue. He views the NT church as discontinuous to OT Israel to the point that Israel does not need to be a part of the church.

relationship is so connected that Israel and the church are “essentially one” and the same, and the Lord’s “church” can even be found in the Old Testament.¹⁹¹

Other evangelicals associated with dispensational¹⁹² premillennialism¹⁹³ hold this connection more loosely. Evangelicals are also divided over Israel’s future. Some say that Israel will return to her own land and experience a mass conversion to Christ,¹⁹⁴ while others say that Israel’s promises from God will be fulfilled in their own land but without Christ. Some say that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are united today in the church,¹⁹⁵ but God has special plans for Israel in the future and in her own land that will not include Gentiles.¹⁹⁶

Naturally, many people (Jews and non-Jews, Christians and non-Christians) want to know: What exactly is the relationship that exists between modern-day Jews and Christians? They want to know what attitudes and actions should exist between these two. M.F. Goldsmith writes:

The church today faces several controversies with regard to Jewish evangelism ... 1. Is conversion necessary? ... 2. Is there discontinuity as well as continuity in Jewish conversion? ... 3. Do Christians have a right to evangelize Jews? ... 4. What is the future for Jews?¹⁹⁷

Consider here, in no particular order, four related issues and questions:

First, how should we describe the relationship of Israel to the church and vice-versa? Words vary that are used by scholars to describe Israel’s connect or disconnect with the church. Some say the church has “taken the place of Israel” or the church “replaces” Israel. Should we use the word “replacement,”¹⁹⁸ “supersession,” “progression”, “transference”, or some other word to describe the church’s place in relation to Israel? Some scholars speak of “replacement theology”, others of “separation theology”, or “remnant theology.”¹⁹⁹

To answer this question, it is important to remember what role in particular Israel played in pointing forward to the coming Christ? After listing several benefits and blessings of

¹⁹¹ See Louis Berkoff’s *Systematic Theology* (571-572).

¹⁹² For more on Dispensationalism see the book by Oswald T. Allis, the book by Bruce Curd, the article by Bruce A. Baker, and the article by William E. Wallace.

¹⁹³ The acceptance of premillennialism is not limited, of course, to evangelicals. Some brethren in the past associated with the “Restoration Movement” like R.H. Boll have taught premillennialism. For a brief history of the premillennial movement among brethren see the articles by Edward Fudge and Robert C. Welch.

¹⁹⁴ See the articles by George Eldon Ladd and Matt Waymeyer.

¹⁹⁵ See the article by Marten H. Woudstra.

¹⁹⁶ See the book and articles by Michael J. Vlach, the book by Barry E. Horner, and the article by Robert L. Saucy.

¹⁹⁷ “Judaism and Christianity”, 357.

¹⁹⁸ Wayne Jackson writes: “A balanced study of the nation of Israel must include at least four elements – the selection, testing, rejection and replacement of the Jewish nation” (170).

¹⁹⁹ The online article by John J. Parsons provides a good overview and critique of these three positions.

Israel, Paul writes in Romans 9:5: “and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh”. Jesus was “born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3).²⁰⁰ When Paul preached to the “men of Israel” in the synagogue at Antioch (Acts 13), he started with the history of the Jewish patriarchs and moved forward to the *fulfillment* of Jesus as the Savior of Israel (see especially Acts 13:23, 25, 27, 29, 33 for this concept of fulfillment).²⁰¹

The “fulfillment” approach used by Paul must be used to today if we are to ever have a proper understanding of the relationship between Israel and the church. It is always best to use the language of the New Testament when speaking of the church’s relationship to Israel. We are often asked, “Does the church *replace* God’s plan for Israel?”, or, “Does the church *supersede* God’s plan for Israel?” The answer is: The church *fulfills* God’s plan for Israel.²⁰² Stephen Motyer’s comments may be of some help on this point:

The question whether Israel as an ethnic entity – that is, as the Jews – has continuing covenant relationship with God is one over which Christians disagree. Some argue that the logic of the NT requires a termination of the covenant with Israel, because the ‘blessings’ are transferred to the church ... Others argue that this is the view against which Paul argues in Romans 9-11, where he insists that God’s word to Israel has not failed ... Still others argue that, if the OT promises are irrevocable, then we must freely allow the independent validity of Judaism as a separate way of living in unity with God, and therefore not seek or expect Jewish conversions, whether individual or large-scale.

For many ‘replacement’ has become a loaded word, indeed a test of ‘orthodoxy’: does the church ‘replace’ Israel in the purposes of God? But this question crudely oversimplifies the issues. As far as the NT is concerned, the only candidate for ‘replacing’ Israel is Jesus himself. But he replaces *Jacob*, rather than Israel, by finally effacing the twistedness and idolatry which had ruined Israel’s side of the covenant relationship. And he replaces, or rather displaces, all (whether Jews or Gentiles) who reject him and refuse to enter the ‘friendship of the Lord’ through him ... But when people enter that friendship through faith in him ... then Israel’s destiny and hope has been realized, not set aside.”²⁰³

²⁰⁰ The Jewish genealogy of Jesus going back to David and beyond to Abraham is traced in Matthew 1.

²⁰¹ Stephen used a similar approach when he preached to the Jews in Jerusalem without using any “fulfillment” terminology (Acts 6:8 – 7:58). He started with Abraham and worked his way forward to the Old Testament prophets who “showed before of the coming of the Righteous One” (Acts 7:52).

²⁰² Many scholars today, caught up with their contemporary religious “pc” approach, simply do not want to admit the plain New Testament teaching concerning Israel and the church. Many today are not like Charles Brown who wrote this bold and plain statement in 1948: “Moreover, I will assert that the doctrine that the church is Israel, or that Israel was merged into the church, or that the church is the continuation of Israel is in fact a doctrine of the church of almost universal acceptance among its greatest leaders and teachers. It is almost as fundamental to Christianity as is the doctrine of the deity of Christ and has practically as widespread agreement among all parties” (*The Reign of Christ*, 163).

²⁰³ “Israel”, 586.

Another doctrine that is wholly biblical, in addition to that of fulfillment, is the doctrine of the remnant. A position that focuses on the remnant of Israel is the position that best describes the relationship of Old Testament Israel with the New Testament church. The Lord's church was first made up of Jews who were of the remnant (Acts 2) and when Gentiles were later added to the Lord's church, they were grafted into the root of the Jewish remnant (Romans 9-11).²⁰⁴ The language of both fulfillment and remnant are sound, biblical ways of expressing the true relationship between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.

Second, is there one way to be saved for *both* Jews and Gentiles? Or, are there two separate ways, one for Jews in Judaism and the other for Gentiles in the church? Do Christians need to evangelize the Jews? Is Jewish conversion even necessary? The answer to all these questions is best found in the book of Acts. If we take the inspiration and accuracy of Luke in the book of Acts seriously and the words and actions of the apostles seriously, then the answer to these questions is simple. There is one way to be saved through Jesus Christ for both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 4:12; 13:38-39). And yes, Jews certainly need to be evangelized and converted to Jesus Christ (read the many cases of Jewish evangelism and conversion recorded from Acts 2 to Acts 28).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is still a "stumbling-block" to many Jews today just like it was in the 1st Century, but the gospel is God's only plan of salvation for Jews (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). A Jew may reject the gospel all together, or alter it and preach "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6-9); either way, he is lost. Both Jews and Gentiles have sinned (Romans 3:9). Both Jews and Gentiles were preached the saving gospel (Acts 14:1; 18:4; 19:10, 17; 20:21). Both Jews and Gentiles need Jesus Christ: "but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

The present state of Jews regarding their attitude toward Jesus Christ is similar to what existed in the 1st Century. Simply put, modern Jews reject Jesus as the Christ the Son of God. The standoff continues between Christians and Jews.²⁰⁵ Jews are "stiff-necked" by their own admission. However, we must still try to reach them with the gospel of salvation. Consider the comments of two contemporary Jews.

Bennett Muraskin, chair of the editorial advisory council of *Jewish Currents* magazine, writes:

²⁰⁴ I agree with John J. Parsons that "Remnant Theology" is the better biblical position over "Separation Theology" or "Replacement Theology".

²⁰⁵ E.T. Charry writes: In sum, with the current exception of small pockets of irenic and innovative leaders, Jewish self-definition and Christian self-definition each continue to deny the self-definition of the other. This results in an intractable struggle for both the claim to be the true people of God and to know God truly. At stake is not only ecclesiology, but also the knowledge of God, for each side claims it is right and the other simply wrong ... We have then an intractable theological argument between Judaism and Christianity that has not always been carried on graciously. Perhaps pockets of resistance to mutual teachings of contempt will, by God's grace, chasten religious verve that is clear-eyed about its own truth ("Judaism," 441-442.).

Despite all the Jewish-Christian dialogue that followed the shock of the Holocaust, however, the religious divide between Christians and Jews over the perceptions of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be entirely bridged. Both communities may exercise restraint in their dealings with one another, but Christianity remains a missionary religion, fervent in its own salvational belief in Jesus as the Son of God — while Judaism remains “stiff-necked” in its contention that there has been no messiah among us, at least not yet.²⁰⁶

Lawrence H. Schiffman, vice provost for Undergraduate Education and professor of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University, writes:

Further, and probably more important, the Jewishness of Jesus is regularly used in evangelizing Jews by Christian conversionists. The sad reality is that Jews throughout our country, and even in Israel, are often the target of groups seeking to convert them to Christianity. For many Jews, the symbol of Jesus is precisely the thing that is most unacceptable to them about Christianity. They know that “Jews don’t believe in Jesus.” Take that away by lowering our collective defenses and we open the way from Judaism to Christianity. So there is no sense to the proposal to reclaim Jesus as a Jewish teacher and hero. He is best left to his Christian adherents, even if he started out as a fellow Jew who lived by the Jewish tradition.²⁰⁷

Third, does the call to modern Jews to come to Christ and be a member of his church produce anti-Semitism against them? Indeed, some so-called Christians down through time have been anti-Semitic. Some have misunderstood the role of New Testament church and its relationship to Old Testament Israel and have fostered genuine anti-Semitism.²⁰⁸

Does anti-Semitism exist in the world today (hatred of Jews, prejudice against Jews, fear of Jews, jealousy toward Jews, etc.)? Of course it does and we should never condone such conduct. But, at the same time, we should never forget to tell our Jewish friends that the New Testament gospel of Jesus Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Two wrongs don’t make a right. Anti-Semitism is wrong and so is refusing to tell Jews that they need to believe and obey Jesus Christ.

It is certainly popular today to point out how “Christians” have persecuted Jews from the 1st Century until today.²⁰⁹ Some church historians who claim to be “Christian” will document cases of anti-Semitism but they will not discuss the fact that Jews today need to obey Jesus Christ.²¹⁰ It is common today in scholarly circles to point out past abuses

²⁰⁶ “Jewish Perceptions of Jesus,” 53.

²⁰⁷ “Is Jesus Really Kosher?,” 13

²⁰⁸ W. Eugene March writes, “The discontinuity in the New Testament among God’s people — namely, the displacement by or supersession of the church over Israel and the Jews as God’s people — was understood in the centuries that followed as justification for suppression, oppression, and persecution of Jews by Christians” (*Great Themes of the Bible*, 108).

²⁰⁹ See the book by Barry E. Horner.

²¹⁰ See the book by Justo L. González.

against Jews without telling Jews of their present need to obey Jesus Christ.²¹¹ Many contemporary religious scholars are fearful to confront modern Jews as John the Baptist, Jesus or Paul confronted them. John the Baptist (Matthew 3 and Luke 3) and Jesus (John 5 and 8) plainly told Jews that they must come to Jesus in faith. Peter (Acts 2-5) and Paul (Acts 13-28) also plainly told Jews that they must come to Jesus in faith.

We must tell Jews today nothing more or less than these great men told them long ago. It is not anti-Semitic to tell Jews today that they must believe in Jesus in order to be saved. When Jews today reject Jesus, we do not change the gospel message, we, like Paul, move on to someone else (Jew or Gentile) who will accept it (Acts 13:44-52; 18:12-21; 19:8-9). Paul suffered at the hands of his own Jewish countrymen for his conversion and for his preaching, but this did not keep him from proclaiming the saving message of the gospel to them and to others (Acts 9:19-25; 21:11; 22:1-30; Romans 9:1; 10:1; 2 Corinthians 11:26). Even Jewish Christians suffered from their own fellow-Jews, but they continued to proclaim the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

We follow the New Testament example of Paul and Jewish Christians. We preach the saving gospel to any Jew today who will hear. We tell them to follow the example of their fellow-Israelite, Paul, and believe on Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:12-16). We tell everyone, Jew and Gentile, that “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, *yea* and forever”, and everyone must go out to him to be saved (Hebrews 8-13). Jesus shed his blood for “every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation”, including Jews (Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9).

Fourth and finally, will there be a return of Jews to the land of Palestine in the future in order to fulfill God’s plan and prophecy for Israel?²¹² Does God have a future plan for the nation of Israel that is different from the church? Some modern, end-time millennial views have Israel returning to her land, rebuilding her temple, and re-establishing Old Testament worship. When Israel became a state on May 14, 1948, some millennialists viewed this as the beginning of the Jews’ return to their land/nation in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.²¹³

²¹¹ An exception to this scholarly trend can be found in the writings of Dr. Michael Milton, President of the Reformed Theological Seminary (see his article “Engrafted, Not Replaced”).

²¹² See the articles by John Goldingay, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Marvin R. Wilson. In answer to this question, see especially the article by Thomas H. Holland.

²¹³ Examples of this kind of thinking can be found in John F. Walvoord’s *Israel in Prophecy* (15-26), Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* (42-58), and Robert G. Gromacki’s *Are These the Last Days?* (94-108). A few brethren in the last century among the premillennial movement believed that Israel, Jerusalem, the temple, and Old Testament worship would be restored to the land of Palestine. R.H. Boll affirmed this position in a written discussion with H. Leo Boles in 1954 (*Unfulfilled Prophecy: A Discussion of Prophetic Themes*, 7-82; see also the article by Robert C. Welch, 58-59). The article by Burton B. Thurston and the article by Jon Weatherly both address and answer some of the premillennial ideas about Israel’s future.

However, Old Testament prophecy concerning Israel's promised land has already been fulfilled.²¹⁴ God promised a land to Abraham (Genesis 12:1; Hebrews 11:9), to Isaac (Genesis 26:4), and to Jacob (Genesis 28:13). God also promised a land to the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 1:8). God fulfilled his land promise when he gave all the land to Joshua (Joshua 21:43-45). God kept his promise and fulfilled his word in giving Israel her land (Joshua 23:14). When Israel became unfaithful, God removed them from their land (Deuteronomy 4:25-27). When the Babylonian captivity was complete after 70 years, God caused Israel to return to their land just as he had promised (Jeremiah 3:18; 29:10; Ezekiel 37:11-12, 22; see also Nehemiah 9:7-8). There is no other divine land promise for Israel yet to be fulfilled in the future.²¹⁵

The People of God Today and For All Eternity

A study of the relationship between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church should not be set forth as merely an academic exercise in comparisons (continuity) and contrasts (discontinuity). We must see the practical value in all this for our admonition to godly living today. Consider these words by Ed Gallagher:

Paul's identification of the Israel of God with the church has several implications for Christians in the 21st century. First, if the church is the Israel of God, then no other entity is the Israel of God, not even the modern state of Israel. This means that groups such as Christians United for Israel (CUFI), founded by prominent evangelist John Hagee, are off-base and actually unchristian...

Second, if the church is the Israel of God, then America is not God's chosen nation to bring blessings to the world either...

Finally, as Christians – members of the church, the body of Christ, the Israel of God – we must, as Abraham Lincoln might say, 'take increased devotion to that cause for which [Christ] gave the last full measure of devotion' ... God chose Abraham and

²¹⁴ See the lecture by Clinton D. Hamilton and the articles by Dale W. Manor and Willie J. Nettle. William Hendriksen has a chapter in his small book that answers the millennialists who set forth Old Testament prophecies that they allegedly claim will be fulfilled when Jesus returns (see pages 16-31).

²¹⁵ "To apply the Old Testament predictions to literal Israel necessitates concluding the promises regarding Israel have not been fulfilled. It necessitates believing the promise of a ruler to sit on David's throne has not been fulfilled. It necessitates believing the promised restoration has not taken place. It necessitates another age in which God will keep the promise He failed to keep regarding Israel. David's throne must be rebuilt. The land must be restored to the twelve tribes. The priesthood must be reestablished. The sacrifices must be resumed. The throne must be rebuilt in the center of the land and David must rule over the twelve tribes. The Gentiles must make their way to literal Jerusalem. But these are false conclusions. The fact is, the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of David that was promised."

"The problem is resolved when we see how the promise of an Elijah to come was fulfilled in John, when we see how the promise of David's return is fulfilled in Jesus and when we see how the promise of a restored kingdom of Israel is fulfilled in the spiritual kingdom of Christ that was set up on Pentecost following Christ's ascension" (*Will God Return the Jews to Palestine?*, 11-12).

his descendants to bring blessing to the world, to undo the curse of sin. We are Abraham's descendants if we are in Christ Jesus. God has not redeemed us from the curse of the Law simply so that we might sit on a pew. He has assigned us a task, and it is time for the church to realize its identity as the Israel of God in Christ Jesus and to bring the blessing of Abraham to all nations.²¹⁶

So, what can we do to get up off the pew and bring the blessing of Abraham to all nations? How can we be moved to greater service and faithfulness as the people of God. Returning to the story of Jacob's name change in Genesis 32, we ask the question: As the "Israel of God" today, will we, the members of the Lord's church, be found striving with God, or will we be found blessed by God?

We, the "Israel of God" and the people of God, need not be striving with God from day to day. We need to be faithful in our service to God from day to day so that we can be blessed by God. What is our responsibility as the people of God today in the world we live in?

First, as the people of God, we need to live lives that are separate from sin. We must not forget, as many Old Testament Israelites did, to remain a separate and distinct people of God. We must not have fellowship with the sinful practices of the world around us. We must come out and away from sin and live holy lives in the fear of God. Let us continue to preach and teach against sin and worldliness in local churches and encourage our families and brethren to live clean, pure and holy lives. Paul wrote the following in 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1:

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, And ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Second, as the people of God, we need to be diligent in our service to God so as not to fall away or apostatize. We must not fall away as many Old Testament Israelites did (1 Corinthians 10:5-12; Jude 5). We must not have the hardened attitude that some Jews had which caused them to fall and be "broken off" God's olive tree. Christians today can also be "cut off" if we are "high-minded" and refuse to "continue in his goodness" (Romans 11:19-22).²¹⁷

²¹⁶ "The Israel of God," 28-29.

²¹⁷ Wilson Copeland offers a good reminder. Hear his words: "Christians everywhere need to remember the fall of Israel and the reasons for their rejection and destruction. Do Christians today display any of the attitudes that caused Israel to fall? Is not ignorance of God's word a continuing problem among spiritual

We do not need to drift away or neglect our salvation through a hardness of heart or disobedient living. We need to take heed seriously to the word that God has spoken through his son Jesus. Let us continue to preach and teach against the possibility of apostasy in the local church and help Christians avoid it. Let us encourage our brethren to not forsake the assembling of the local church (Hebrews 10:25) and encourage them to remain active in their service work within the local church (Hebrews 12:28 – 13:21). Let us encourage our brethren to remain faithful so that they can reach their Sabbath rest in heaven.²¹⁸ The author of Hebrews wrote the following in Hebrews 4:8-13:

For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day. There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Third, as the people of God, we need to show forth God's excellencies to the world. As the people of God, we need to be a "light" to the world and not forget, as many Old Testament Israelites did, to be that light. Our righteous life of good works needs to be "light" that points the world to God (Matthew 5:13-16). Let us continue to preach and teach in the local church about the importance of holy living, personal Bible study, prayer, defending truth, and evangelism. All of these godly practices will help point the world to God. Peter wrote the following in 1 Peter 2:9-12:

But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul; having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Finally, as the people of God, we need to victorious and overcome by living faithfully all our life so that we can partake of the blessings and rewards of heaven.²¹⁹ We need to overcome by faith all the various trials, temptations, and tribulations that are thrown our way on this earth, so that one day we can go to heaven. Let us continue to preach and

Israel? Does pride and self-righteousness exist in the congregations of which you are a member? Are we, like the Jews guilty of setting aside the word of God for our own traditions? God's people today must remember the warning of Paul, 'Be not high-minded, but fear...' (11:20-22)" (133-134).

²¹⁸ See Revelation 14:13. See the lecture by Jay Bowman and the lecture by David McClister.

²¹⁹ See the lecture by Steve Wolfgang.

teach in the local church about the importance of a strong faith for overcoming (1 John 5:4; Revelation 2:5, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). What was lost by God's people in the garden (Genesis 2-3) can be regained by God's people in heaven, if they will but overcome (Revelation 21-22).²²⁰ John wrote the following in Revelation 21:1-7:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

My prayer is that God may help us to be "the people of God" he would have us to be now and for all eternity!

²²⁰ See the lecture by Richard Copeland.

Addendum

(Sermon Outline by Bill H. Reeves, January 3, 1960)

Page 1

ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD TODAY

Intro.--Many groups (Mormons, Premil., etd.) teach that God has promised special blessings upon the Jews, or upon the "Ten Lost Tribes," etc. (Note: "British-Israel World Federation").

I--JACOB'S NAME CHANGED TO ISRAEL--Gen.32:28 Jacob wrestled with angel; angel changed his name to I. 35:10, God appeared to Jacob and said his name would be Israel. Hence the children of J. (twelve tribes) called Isreal (Isrealites); Ex. 5:2. (See also 1 Kgs.18:31; 2 Kgs. 17:34)

II. DIVIDED KINGDOM, Judah and Isreal, or Southern Kingdom and Northern Kingdom, Judah and Benjamin in Southern, and 10 tribes in N. 2 Kings 17:13, "Yet Jeh. testified unto Isreal & unto Judah, by every prophet and every seer.. v.6, "the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Isreal way unto Assvria.."
v.18, "there was none left but the tribe of Judah only."

2 Kings 25:21, "So Judah was carried away captive out of his land." (by the Babylonians).

**Note: Israel, N. Kingdom, also called "Ephraim because of Eph. prominence, Is.11:13, "The envy also of E. shall depart and they that vex Judah shall be cut off: E. shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex E." (Also Ezek.37:16-22).

III. PRE-CAPTIVITY PERIOD AND POST-CAPTIVITY PER.
Early in the history of the divided kingdom, some of "Israel" (Levites and others) associated themselves with Judah, 2 Chron. 11:13-16, "And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their border....And after them, out of all the tribes of Isreal, such as set their hearts to seek Jeh, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto Jeh., the God of their fathers. Certainly after the captivity, some of ISRAEL returned to Palestine, though no Scriptural mention is made of a formal return of any of the ten tribes (Israel). See Jer. 50:1-5; Jer. 5, "For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, of His God.. I'll bring you out of the midst of Babylon and save every man his life..". Some say the promise to Israel of a return is yet to be fulfilled, but see 50:4, "In those days, and in that time, saith

*Feb 3
Bill H. Reeves*

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10:1, the children of I. shall come, they and the children of Judah together, and they shall go on their way ~~rejoicing~~ and shall seek Jeh. their God." See Ezra 1:3-5 Lev. 11:4-3 Obad. 1:17-20

IV. THOSE WHO RETURNED FROM THE CAPTIVITY FORMED THE JEWISH PEOPLE OR ISRAELITES (Israel)! The terms used interchangeably! See Ezra 2:70, "dwell in their cities and all Israel in their cities." 3:1, "the children of I. were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jer." plus 5:1, "Hagrai..and Zechariah..prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jer." In 4:12 they are called Jews, those who returned. In 6:16 they are called "the children of I." When Ezra came to Jer. years later he brought with him "some of the children of I.", 7:6,7, 13, 28. See also 8:25,29. When the "remnant which escaped" from captivity (9:8) sinned by marrying foreign wives in Palestine, Ezra reprimanded "the people of I." (9:1).

V. "ISRAEL" IN N. T. PASSAGES:
1-John 3:10; Matt. 8:10; 9:33; Acts 2:5 plus v.22
13:26; 26:1-7 (28:9,20); Rom. 9:1ff (vv. 21, 24, 27, 31); 11:1,25ff (Israel) plus Acts 22:3 (Jew) ~~(24:3)~~.
The JEWS of Jesus' time were called also ISRAEL! (Also "Hebrews" Acts 6)

VI. "Christians" are spiritual Israel, child. of A.
Rom. 4:10,11; 2:28,29; Matt. 10:28; Jhs. 1:1

VII. GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY: the church, Christians
1 Pet. 2:9; Titus 2:14; 2 Cor. 6:17,18.

VIII. GOD MAKES NO DISTINCTION: All under sin.
Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:26,29; Col. 3:11; Gal. 6:14,15.

IX. ALL SAVED IN SAME WAY: by obeying the gospel.
Acts 15:11; Rom. 1:16; 3:9; 11:32; Acts 17:30,31

X. ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST:
Eph. 1:3; 2:14 (1:22,23); Col. 2:10.

CONCLUSION: No materialistic blessing, special blessing await any in consideration of their race, language, lineage, etc.

(1) Mark the month - 11/3/60
(2) Sp. - 1/1/61
(3) Council tables - 1/1/61

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