



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Structure of Dispensational Theology (4):

Distinctive Features: Israel and the Church – I

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the study of the Scriptures. We ask that Thou wilt give us understanding. Enable us to grasp the Divine Purpose throughout the ages. And we pray, especially, that tonight we might have the sense of the Spirit's guidance and direction as we ponder some of the significant passages of the word of God. We commit the hour to Thee.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] When we think about the nature of the Church, just briefly, one of the points that we need to emphasize is the Church is a redeemed community belonging to the Lord by virtue of his purchase of them. He loved the Church and gave himself for her. Now, this redeemed community of the Church has a twofold manifestation. That is there is a local manifestation of it in local churches such as are found described in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 in verse 2, and then it also has a universal manifestation as is suggested by the apostle's words in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 22 and verse 23.

Now, I am going to read these two passages 1 Corinthians chapter 1 in verse 2, and then Ephesians chapter 1 in verse 22 and 23, in order for us to at least have in our minds plainly these two aspects of the local church. Paul writing to the Corinthians says.

“Paul a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God and Sosthenes the brother to the church of God which is in Corinth sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints together with all who call upon the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ in everyplace both there’s and ours.”

Now, when he speaks of the Church of God as located in Corinth it’s obvious that he’s thinking of the Church as a local body of believers who meet regularly in one locality for the ministry of the word of God, for the observance of ordinances, to be overseen by the discipline of a body of men called the elders. These are the aspects that make up, specifically, the local church and its local manifestation. The fact, for example, that people gather together and meet regularly in some place does not mean that it is a church. A church is composed of people who meet regularly in a place but who also listen to the word of God, observe the ordinances under the oversight of elders and deacons. So the local church and its manifestation then are expressed in this text.

Now, if you turn over to Ephesians chapter 1 in verse 22 and verse 23, the apostle makes a statement, I think, that indicates that there is a sense in which the Church is a universal body that is a church that is inclusive not simply of people who meet in a particular place but of the whole body of believers. We read in Ephesians chapter 1 in verse 22.

“And he hath put all things under his feet and given him as head over all the Church which is his body the fullness of the one who is being fulfilled as to all things in all.”

Now, I am reading from the Greek text and I don’t have time to explain all of the details of it, but you can see that the Church here is called “the body of the Lord Jesus

Christ” and the context of it indicates that what he is talking about is the group of people all of whom are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who meet in any particular locality. So that we are all members of the Church of Jesus Christ no matter where we meet if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. So that’s the nature of the Church; it’s a group of people who have been redeemed through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present age. It has a twofold manifestation; a local manifestation, and a universal manifestation as well.

But now, the Church is also a new work of God. Now, this raises some very interesting questions because to my mind the Bible teaches that there is one people of God. But in the development of the doctrine of the one people of God there is a flow in the national history of believing men in which at certain periods of time this people of God is characteristically Israelitish and other times it is characteristically Gentile, and these things represent the Divine Purpose as it unfolds down through the ages.

But something happened on the Day of Pentecost in the development of the doctrine of the people of God that may be called new. In fact, if you will turn to Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 15, you can see what the apostle says with reference to it which, I think, just that point. In Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 14 we read now.

“For he is our peace who has made the both one and having broken down the middle wall partition the enmity in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances having been brought to naught in order that he might create the two that is the Jew and the Gentile in himself into one new man so making peace.”

So something happened on the Day of Pentecost that was new.

Now, there is no need for us to spell out all of the details because later on we will discuss this in some detail, so I will just state it. What happened on the Day of Pentecost was not that there came to be a new people of God but a certain change took place in

the people of God that was of such significance that this body can be called a new man. The significant thing that took place is simply that those characteristics of Judaism that mark Judaism as a temporal body came into existence when the law was given on Mt. Sinai in its sense as a body of people under the Levitical cultist, and that came to end with our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. On the day of Pentecost fulfilling the promises concerning the coming Holy Spirit that group of believers comprised on the Day of Pentecost primarily of Jewish believers, some Gentiles no doubt there as well, from the context were welded together into one body having been baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ.

And the significant thing about it is that those distinctions that had separated Jews from Gentiles, believing Jews from believing Gentiles, but Jews from Gentiles primarily have been done away. As Paul says right here in verse 14, “For he is our peace who has made the two or the both one and has broken down the middle wall of the fence the enmity in his flesh having brought to naught the law of commandments in ordinances that he might create one new man. So what Paul is saying is that from this point on when men are converted they are converted on the same basis. They share the same privileges. They have the same promises. They have the same destiny. There is the body of Christ is one new man.

Now, that was such a significant thing that took place on the Day of Pentecost that the Church can be called a new work of God or to use the expression one new man. One well-known theologian has said that “the Church came into being on the Day of Pentecost but what he meant by that and what he should have meant by that was that the Church that came into being on the Day of Pentecost was a body of believers in which there occurred a significant change in the relationship between Jew and Gentile and the one people of God. Now, later on we will go into detail about this but that's enough to at least suggest the essential features of it. So the Church has composed of Jew and Gentiles who share the same blessings, same promises, and same destiny is its newness.

Now, one might ask the question was there any indication of what was to take place then on the Day of Pentecost? After all, Paul talks as if this is something that is has been revealed to him in a special way. Listen to what he has to say in Ephesians chapter 3, he says.

“For this call I Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which has been given to me for you, how that by revelation it was made known to me the mystery as I’ve written before hand in a few words are briefly with reference to which you are able when you read to understand my understanding in the mystery of Christ which in other generations was not made know to the sons of men as now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.”

What is this secret? Well he tells us in the sixth verse that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, members of the same body, fellow partakers in the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel. In other words, there are no mental walls or partition any longer between Jews and Gentiles. Remember in the Old Testament when a Gentile was converted he has to become a Jew. He had ordered his life in such a way that he lived under the Mosaic Law. He had to be circumcised. The males had to be circumcised. They had to enter into life in the community of the nation Israel. They had to become an Israelite. That, of course, has been done away with with the coming of the New Age. So the newness of the Church then is something plainly taught.

The question of whether there were intimations of this remarkable change or not is a matter of more doubt. Personally, I think, there were indications in previous revelation of this remarkable change though the details of it and the precise nature of it are not given. The Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 16 in verse 18, said that “He will build his Church.” Notice he does not say I am building my church but he says, “I shall build

my Church,” because the Church in this sense came into existence on the Day of Pentecost. Chapter 18, following chapter 16, he sets out some of the principles by which discipline is to be carried out in the future church. And then in John chapter 10 in verse 1 through 21, there are some very plain indications from our Lord’s marvelous three little parabolic illustrations of the work of the shepherd that a remarkable change was in process of being made. For example, in chapter 10, verse 16 of the gospel of John we read, “The other sheep I have which are not of this fold.” That is, other sheep which are not Jewish people. “Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and they shall become one flock one shepherd.” So the fact that these two Jews and Gentiles are going to become one flock anticipates, intimates the fact that there will come a time when in the people of God Jews and Gentiles will stand on the same foundation and share the same blessings.

Now, if you have any question about that all you have to do is read Romans chapter 11, and read through that chapter and you will see that’s precisely what Paul says has taken place. He says in Romans chapter 11, another passage that we will look at in more detail later on. But in Romans chapter 11, verse 17, Paul says, “Now if some of the branches have been broken off and you being a wild olive were grafted in among them and have become a fellow partaker of the fat root of the olive tree stop boasting against the branches.” So the apostle says, he says in this context, he’s speaking of the Gentiles “They have been grafted into the olive tree.” His illustration of the Abrahamic promise line of blessings, they have been grafted in among the Jewish believers and have become fellow partaker of the fat root of the olive tree. Later on in this same chapter in verse 24, he will call this olive tree Israel’s olive tree. So what he says is that we Gentiles have been brought in to enjoy Abrahamic promise blessings but they belong primarily to the nation Israel. We share in their blessings. Its their own olive tree. You can see from this, I think, if you would read the Bible through you would get the impression or should get the impression that the divine purpose has preeminent significance for the nation Israel.

That's very evident because the promises beginning with the Abrahamic promises are related to them. But provision is made for us. As a matter of fact, Abraham was justified before there were any promises for his seed. And, therefore, God's first purpose is directed toward the world of Jews and Gentiles but Israel is the means by which he will accomplish his worldwide intent and purpose. I say all of those things we'll try and talk about later on.

But now, tonight, the question is the church Israel? Now, you should never have to discuss something like this except that there are all kinds of people who like to say the church is Israel. It's one of the characteristics of the history of biblical interpretation that this viewpoint has arisen. I think that Roman's chapter 11, makes it very plain that it should not have arisen but we deal with human beings and all of us who interpret the Scriptures can make mistakes.

I know you may think that I never think that I could make a mistake. I don't go around telling all of the mistakes that I've made. You might not have any confidence in anything that I teach. But I want you to know that I've learned a lot of things, I think, through forty years of reading and studying the Scriptures. And I'll tell you one other thing too I'm still learning some things. And, therefore, what I tell you is the result of my own personal study and I know that I can be wrong about things but this question about whether the church is Israel or not is a very volatile subject with some people.

So let's take a little look at it. You'll look at the outline I've given you is Roman I, “The church and Israel” and capital A, “The Distinction of the two Entities.” It would be nice if we had a lot of time to talk about all of these things in great detail but we don't. I guess I shouldn't even say that anymore you just understand that. When we think about the historical evidence for the viewpoint that the church is Israel these are the facts. It was not until the year 160 A.D. that there is any record whatsoever of anyone ever advancing the viewpoint that the church and Israel were to be equated.

So, far as the earliest records that we have of biblical exposition and the apostolic fathers that those individuals who immediately followed the apostles. There is no indication that they regard the church as being Israel. It was not until 160 A.D. that that opinion was advanced. So far as the historical evidence is concerned it is a viewpoint that arose after the time of the New Testament and after the time of the apostles themselves and after the time of the earliest of the apostolic fathers, Arabic too, the philological evidence. The term Israel occurs countless times in the Old Testament. I didn't even bother to count how many times it appears in one book. But as you know, if you read the Old Testament it literally occurs hundreds and hundreds of times. No one has ever brought forward any illustration of the sense of Israel in the Old Testament giving it any sense other than ethnic Israel. In other words, all of the preparation of the Old Testament books gives us one single meaning for the term Israel, the ethnic Israelites that we know as the children of Israel.

Now, it is true that in the Old Testament it is stated very plainly that if a person was an unbelieving Israelite he wasn't a real Israelite, but there was never anyone who was called an Israelite who was not an Israelite. So far as the term Israeli is concerned, it always refers to ethnic Israel. But God very frequently will point out in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, particularly, in the days when apostasy was so rampant that a person could be outwardly an Israelite but not inwardly an Israelite. But he still could be properly called an Israelite. And, of course, in the sense in which he could be called that would simply be the ethnic national sense. But if he was not circumcised in heart then he was not regarded as a true Israelite. So let us keep that in mind.

Now, when we turn to the New Testament we have the term “Israel” a number of times, I didn't bother to count them this time. I don't know whether in my notes I even have exactly how many times. But as you know several scores of times in the New Testament the term Israel is used. There is not a clear case in the New Testament where the term “Israel” means anything other than ethnic Israel. I'm going to look at two places

where it has been claimed that the term “Israel” means something other than ethnic Israel. I think, when we get through with it you’ll see that these claims rest on very poor grounds.

The first of these is found in Romans chapter 9 in verse 6, Romans chapter 9 in verse 6, occasionally, this text is referred to as being a text which indicates that Gentiles can be called Israel. Listen to what Paul says. As you know, he in the first eight chapters has set out the divine plan of salvation and surprisingly in this elect company of people that have risen by the sovereign grace of God operating in humanity through the preaching of Paul and others, there is no clear indication of Israel among them. That would have raised quite a few problem because after all Paul talked to a lot of people who were ethnic Israelites and if they heard him explain the Christian doctrine they would have said but what about Israel? After all, God gave his revelation and his great promises to Israel. You must have some place in your theology for Israel; for if you don’t how can we believe that you are really giving us the word of God, because the God of the Old Testament has made it plain that he is the one God and, further, that Israel stands in the place of greatest importance for him. So Paul in Romans 9, 10, and 11, answers that simple question what has happened to Israel? So he begins by saying.

“I say the truth in Christ. I do not lie. My conscience testifying together with me in the Holy Spirit that I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart for I could wish to be anathema myself, I myself, from the Messiah on behalf of my brethren, my kinsman according to the flesh who are such as are Israelites.”

Of whom,” now this is a construction of which we could translate it “belonging to whom are,” this is genitive of possession, “Of whom is the adoption and the glory and the covenants.” Notice the covenants belong to them, “the giving of the law and the service

and the promises.” They belong to Israel. “Of whom are the Fathers and of whom is the Messiah according to the flesh who is over all. God blest forever.”

Now, you can see he starts by saying here is Israel I have great pain for them, I wish I could myself be anathema cursed from Christ that they might be saved. They have all of these privileges the greatest and climatic one is that the Messiah himself belongs to them. But the covenants and the promises and all of those things were Israel's. They belong to them. Well what happened? Well, essentially, he says look you didn't read the Bible correctly. If you read the Bible a little more closely you wouldn't think as so many obviously did that because you are an ethnic Israelite you are going to be saved. Notice what he says now. He says, “It is not as such a thing that the word of God has fallen out.” In other words, we don't look back over the Old Testament and say God intended all of this like the Armenians but it hasn't come to pass. He was frustrated in his purposes and plans and now he started something else. That letter that that pastor wrote to me is so revealing, I think, of the kind of theology that so many people are taught today. It is no wonder that they are tossed about by every word of doctrine.

Incidentally, I had a former member of Believers Chapel, who was here for eight years, write me a letter. I got it just today. It was addressed to my home and this individual had called me about, I guess, about four weeks ago and said he had been teaching Sunday school, adult Sunday school class at a church on the outskirts of Dallas and the deacons of the Church had become upset over what he was teaching; some of them were in the class. And so they had said they wanted to have a meeting with him over this. He pretty well knew what it was because he had been teaching not the doctrine of definite atonement but simply the doctrine of sovereign election. And he had been giving lessons in Ephesians and so he said, “What shall I do Dr. Johnson. I'm to meet with them tomorrow night” or whatever it was. And I said, “Well are you convinced that that's biblical doctrine?” “Oh yes I'm convinced it's biblical doctrine.” I said, “Well you will have to teach that biblical doctrine.” “But should I do it even though I have a

hunch they are going to say to me, ‘You’re not going to be able to teach.’” And I said, “Well that’s for you to decide and I’m unable to give you any advice on that point because I don’t know the situation entirely. I can only tell you what I would do. I would teach the Scriptures.” He said “well what do you think is going to happen?” I said, “Well I think what is going to happen is they are going to tell you you either teach as they want you to teach or you’re not going to be teaching any longer.” Well that was two or three weeks ago and so I got the letter today and he said, “Dr. Johnson” he didn’t say I was a prophet [Laughter] but I was thinking I was a prophet in that respect, he said, “It happened exactly as you said. They said that if I didn’t teach their doctrine that I couldn’t teach any longer.” So he said, “I’m not teaching any longer and so, therefore, I’m looking for another church out in one of the communities out here and do you know of any out there?” It is so characteristic of our day.

Now, this particular passage goes on to say it is not that the word of God has fallen out. God is not a frustratable deity. For not all who are not of Israel, these are Israel. Now, there are some who tell us that this text means that it is possible for an Israelite to be an Israelite and it’s possible for a Gentile to be an Israelite. But look carefully at this text it says, “From not all who are of Israel are Israel.” It doesn’t say that Gentiles are Israelites. In fact, the Gentiles are not mentioned at all. You see the division that Paul is talking about is not on the one hand Israelites and on the other hand Gentiles and it’s possible for a Gentile to be Israelite, he’s simply saying there are two kinds of Israelites. Not all who are of Israel that is the whole body of ethnic Israel, not all of them are true Israelites. In other words, to be a true Israelites one must be an ethnic Israelite but he also must be a believing Israelite. It’s the same thing that is stated over and over in the Old Testament when it says that a person in order to be a member of the circumcised must be circumcised in heart as well as in flesh very simply and that’s all that Paul is saying. But some people are so anxious to find that other view that they would like to find it that way.

Now, if you turn to passages like, I don't know whether I put some of them in here or not, don't know, I didn't I believe. But if you would turn to Jeremiah chapter 9, verse 24 and verse 25, Ezekiel chapter 44, I think, it's about verse 7, I'm doing this from memory so I'm not certain of that, you will find and there are many other passages in Deuteronomy had said on several occasions that in order for a person to be an Israelite pleasing to God he must be a believing Israelite. That's all Paul is saying. He's saying look in Israel there are two kinds of Israelites one of them is a believing Israelite or one class is a believing Israelite the other class are unbelieving Israelites but they are both ethnic Israelites.

Now, as a matter of fact, that isn't quite what Paul says. It's true though you can tell who is a genuine Israelite by his faith. But what produced his faith? Why his divine election. Does that seem harsh? Does that seem harsh to say that? Listen to Paul, that's what he says. See if I hadn't said this some of you could have come up and said to me look that passage doesn't say anything about faith at all. That passage simply says some are elect and some are not elect. And those elect Israelites are true Israelites and the non-elect Israelites they are still Israelites but they are not the true Israelites. Look, Paul, he is a student of the Bible, so he says, “Look at the Scriptures nor because the seed of Abraham are all children but in Isaac shall their seed be called.” In other words, Ishmael is passed by but Isaac is selected. That is not the children of the flesh, these are the children of God.

But the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. For the word of the promise is this, “According to the season I will come and Sarah shall have a son and not only but also Rebekah being pregnant of once, I can see a Jewish fellow now thinking about what Paul is saying, “Wait a minute Isaac was he son of Sarah and Abraham. Ishmael was the son of Hagar and Abraham. That's why Isaac was selected and that is why Ishmael was passed by. And so it is not really divine election distinguishing grace at all. Ishmael did not have the right mother. He had the right father and now in really a

marvelous coup for Paul he says think about those twins that were born. Notice what he says, “And not only but also Rebecca being pregnant of one” you can just see Paul studying the Scripture and coming up with these things. He got all of his theology out of the Bible. He didn’t read Hodge and Warfield and Shedd and Barth. He wouldn’t bother with some of them. He got his theology out of the Bible. He found the doctrine of distinguishing grace written right in Scripture. That’s where he got it. So he says, “But Rebecca being pregnant of one of Isaac our Father for the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or worthless in order that for the purpose that the purpose of God according to election might abide not of works but of the one who calleth it was said to her the greater or the elder shall serve the younger. As it stands written Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.” Marvelous exposition of divine sovereign distinguishing grace that marks out Jacob as one who is Israel and Esau as one who is of Israel but not Israel. It’s all so simple. So when a person looks at Romans 9:6, and says this has to do with Gentiles how they are Israelites you can see this doesn’t have a thing to do with this text.

But now, there is another text that is appealed to. You get into the law of diminishing returns after this one. This one is finished with not much left for a person to stand upon who would like to distinguish, make this identification that so many want to make. In verse 16 of Galatians chapter 6, we read, “In as many as shall walk by this rule peace be upon them and mercy and upon the Israel of God.”

Now, if you have the New International Version some of you have to do, some of you have the New International Version here? Would you read it out loud so that everybody can hear it and listen carefully for the last six or eight words, “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule even to the Israel of God.” Yes, notice that “even to the Israel of God” peace and mercy be to those who follow this rule even to the Israel of God.”

Now, you can see that what is involved in this is a very, very important question of the text. What it comes down to so far as the Greek language is concerned is the

rendering of a little word which means “and” *kai* -- *kappa alpha ild kai*. Now, if we translate this “and” upon the Israel of God then we come to one particular meaning. If we translate this even the Israel of God then we make those who walk according to this rule obviously individuals who live in this present age, the Israel of God. And that would be some justification for saying that it is possible at least in one passage for the term Israel to be referred to Gentiles. After all, Paul is writing to Galatians who were largely a Gentile body.

Now, let me stop for just a moment and try to outline the special problem that exists here. There are three different viewpoints. It's possible to take the view that this a text in which Paul says that the term “Israel” may be used for the believing Gentiles in the church. In fact, the whole church may be called the Israel of God. That's one viewpoint held by a number of men. Generally, of course, they all hold to the doctrine that the term Israel is a reference to the church of Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is possible to hold that this means simply the Israel, believing ethnic Israelites, who belong to the Lord God. For example, the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11, in discussing the passage that we've just talked about in chapter 8 in chapter 11, he comes in the first few verses he says, “I say then God has not cast away his people has he? God forbid for I too am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew or don't you know in Elijah what the Scriptures says how he intercedes with God against Israel? Lord thy prophets they have slain, thine altars they've digged down and I am left alone and the seek my life. But what sayeth the divine answer? But I have left for myself” by the way you'll notice the word of grace there, “I have left for myself” God's doing this even, “I've left for myself seven thousand who are such who has not bowed the knee to Baal. So then, Paul writes, so then even also now in the present time there has come to be a remnant according to the election of grace.”

Now, to what does the term “remnant” refer? It refers to his people. That's the whole point of this context. Look at the last verse of the preceding chapter. “To Israel”

he says “all day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.” Israel is the people and so when he says there is a remnant in the present day according to the election of grace he means a remnant of believers from the nation Israel. That’s so plain. It’s hard to see how anyone can miss that. So you see it is a proper biblical doctrine to make a distinction of the body of Christ in the present day between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. It’s obvious that the same general conditions exist today that existed in Paul’s day. The vast majority of the true church of Jesus Christ are Gentiles. But there is a remnant of believing Jewish people in the church of Christ today. They are the Israel of God. They are the true believing Israelites.

Now, it’s possible to hold that view with reference to Galatians, chapter 6 in verse 16. That’s the second view that is that the term “Israel of God” is a reference to believing Israelites in the present day. How then should we render that little word “kai”? Well render it by its normal meaning, its commonest meaning. Here is a word that literally occurs back thousands of times in the New Testament. What is its most common meaning? Every grammarian who ever read a Greek New Testament would agree. It’s commonest meaning is it should be “continuative” or “copulative” and to be translated how, and, and. Now it can also have an adjunctive sense. It can mean “also.” Now if you were to catalogue this, this is job for someone with a computer I guess, but even then it’s possible to make have differences of opinion because one has to interpret in the light of the context. But I would imagine that out of the vast numbers of “and” in the New Testament measuring the senses of also against them you’d have one percent maybe.

Now, it is also possible to render “kai” even give it an asensive sense. I won’t explain it. Sometimes it is called explicative some times asensive sometimes appositional these senses slightly different and should be distinguished. But out of the New Testament those passages in which “kai” means even they form an even smaller percentage than also. And in the sense of even appositional which is what is demanded by the interpretation “that them who walk according to this rule should be the Israel of God” you

can count literally on ten fingers the illustrations that might be comparable in the New Testament out of thousands of instances.

Now, there is a fundamental rule of Hermeneutics which anyone who studies the Bible much it seems to me ought to follow and unfortunately quite a few don't. It is simply this. If the common sense of a word makes good sense don't go the rare and unusual senses of a word. Isn't that common sense? Three people think it is common sense in Believers Chapel. I'm disappointed. Of course, it's common sense. It's possible for a word to have a rare and unusual meaning. Sometimes the common sense just doesn't make sense, and when it doesn't make good sense look for differences of meaning. Common words often have many different meanings. The little word for in English has almost as many meanings as Heinz had varieties of canned goods. We all know that. But there are certain patterns that are plain and clear.

Here's one of those patterns. There's one other possible meaning for this and I want to state it and then we'll kind of have to stop for the night as our time is about up. It's possible to retranslate this passage. I won't do that for you tonight maybe we'll save that for February, but it's possible to have this as an eschatological sense, give it an eschatological sense. And the reason why is that it's possible to regard what Paul is saying as a look into the future “when the Israel of God shall turn to him” as is stated in Romans 11, the passage that makes that clear distinction in the children of Israel. For there stated and so all Israel shall be saved. So it's possible to look at this text and read it this way and “as many as shall walk according to this rule peace be upon them and mercy and upon the Israel of God. That is, that body of believing people who in the future at our Lord's Second Advent shall turn to him.

Now, I'm not sure that that is the meaning. It's not necessary to appear to that meaning but it's a legitimate meaning given by a number of our finest students of the Greek text. One of the reasons why it is possible is that the expression “mercy” is so significant in Romans 11, in the passage that speaks of Israel's future national conversion

and here it is again peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. But we'll talk about the details of it next time. One final thing I want to point out. You see when we think of the epistles of the Galatians you'll understand why it is so likely that one of these last two views is correct. Paul was writing to Gentiles primarily who had heard his preaching on his missionary journeys. They responded to it, they responded so marvelously he says in the fourth chapter “that you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.” People have often thought that this is a suggestion that the Apostle Paul had eye trouble. One of the confirmations may be of the tradition. We cannot be sure of that. But at any rate they responded marvelously. But then word came to Paul a relatively short time after that Judaizing teachers had come in among his believers who had responded to the grace of God as he taught it and taught them they must be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul was really disturbed. He was so disturbed he said, “I'm astonished that you have so quickly moved from the grace of God. He wrote an epistle without any thanksgiving. Isn't that interesting no thanksgiving for them as he usually begins? He didn't say I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, he was so disturbed. Near the end of the epistle he says, “I've written this with my own hand this sprawling, scrawling handwriting” instead of using amanuensis I referred to previously.

Now, having finished this very strong letter what more beautiful thing for Paul to say at the end when he says, “Look if you are in Christ you've passed through death, burial and resurrection and you've come out as a new creature the legal injunctions belong to the old life. But in Christ we are now new creations we are arisen with him we are in the sphere in which the Mosaic Law as a code no longer applies.” So he says “So as many as shall walk according to this rule the rule of the New Creation” there's no disagreement among the commentators on this point, “as long as you walk according to this rule peace be upon you mercy.” And now a word for those true believing Israelites who have not fallen prey to the Judaizers “and upon the Israel of God.” What tenderer

way for the apostle to end his letter than to have a word for the Israelites who have stayed true to the grace that he taught them when he was there? That makes marvelous sense. Many people have pointed that out. Some of the finest interpreters now come to that view, in fact, the most recent of the really find interpreters on the epistle to the Galatians has come to that view and many of us as well not only in English but also in German. As I mentioned before I've written a rather lengthy letter, article on this particular text and at the conclusion of it I've called upon the NIV Committee and I had a part in translating in NIV not of this passage to change their reading, translation of Galatians 6:16, because like the emperor their translation has no clothes. But now whether they are going to respond or not is another matter.

But at any rate, next time we meet I'll discuss Romans 2:28 and 29, Romans 4:12, Philippians 3:1 and 2, and a little bit more detail on Galatians 6:16. I'm sorry to keep you for a time I'll have to do it without discussion tonight but we will save it for next time and you can think of all of your hard questions and I'll be prepared for you. And if I can not answer them Mr. Prier can.

So let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee and praise thee for Thy word. We are grateful for the clarity with which the apostle unfolded the things concerning Christ. Go with us tonight and at this Christmas season especially [End of Tape]