



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Divine Purpose

TRANSCRIPT

Structure of Dispensational Theology (5): Distinctive Features:

Israel and the church – II

[Prayer] Father we are indeed grateful to Thee for the word of God and for the way in which it ministers to our spiritual needs. We thank Thee for the variety of teaching that is found within it. We thank Thee, Lord, for those things, which touch so definitely the daily walk that we must engage in. And we thank Thee, Lord, for those things that especially challenge our minds. We thank Thee for the things that have to do with the future and for those things that have to do with our hope as Christians. We thank Thee for the way in which the Bible speaks so plainly to us and tells us exactly what we are as men and women. We thank Thee for the frankness of the word of God. We thank Thee, Lord, for the way Thou hast, to use one of our idioms, hast put Thy finger upon us and upon our needs. And we pray that we may be responsive to the word of God, that we may study it diligently, that we may apply ourselves to it. We ask that our time together tonight may contribute to our understanding of Scripture and also to the way in which we are to conduct our Christian life and testimony. Lord, build us up so that we may be fruitful in our service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee especially for Him and all that He is and will be forever to us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, in our last study, which seems so long ago, we were looking at Israel and the church, and we had gotten just about two thirds or perhaps a half way through our study of “The Structure of Dispensational Theology: The Distinctive Features,” the second of them “Israel and the church.” And having the feeling somehow or other that you have misplaced your outline; I decided that I would let you look at a transparency tonight so you can, at least, follow along where we are.

Now, let me for a few moments review what, I believe, that we were talking about. I'm not absolutely certain but, I think, this is what we were talking about. We were trying to show that the Scriptures do make a distinction between Israel and the church but, particularly, between Israel and the Gentiles who are in the church of Christ. We pointed out as we began that the church and its nature involved a twofold manifestation; that is the church local and the church universal. We pointed out that the Scriptures say that the church is something new.

Now, we must not over emphasize this, but we must emphasize precisely what the Scriptures say. In Ephesians chapter 2, when Paul speaks about the Christian church, he talks about how God has broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles and he has brought into being one new man. Those are Paul's precise words. And so, therefore, there is a sense in which the church is new.

Now, of course, we must not, because the church is new, necessarily assume that it is new in everything. It seems quite plain from the context of Ephesians 2 and 3 that the newness is not the newness of a different people of God because the connection that the church has with the Old Testament people of God is very plain. The newness has to do with the new relationship that exists between Jews and Gentiles in that one body. In Old Testament times, just to use a simple illustration, when a Gentile was converted he had to become a Jew. He had to be circumcised and, thus, enter into the life of the nation Israel. But now as a result of the doing away of the Mosaic Law, when a person is

converted, so the apostle says he shares in the same blessings, he stands before the Lord God in the same stance that the Jewish believer does. In fact, in a moment we will try to make this point. He says very plainly in Ephesians chapter 3, that those who are Gentile believers are fellow partakers of the promises. They are members of the same body. They are fellow heirs of the blessing of God. In fact, the apostle stresses that so much that he uses, three terms each of which is build upon the little Greek preposition “with” or “together with,” so when he says fellow heir he means an heir “with.” Fellow members of the body, he’s in the body “with” and fellow partaker he’s a partaker with. So the apostle points out, I think, in the context that the newness of the Christian church is a new relationship within the one people of God shared by Jews and Gentiles.

Now, there were indications of such a thing before the church in this sense came into existence. For example, the Lord Jesus in John chapter 10 in verse 16, says something which makes it quite plain that he is anticipating exactly what the Apostle Paul is talking about because he says, John Chapter 10 in verse 16, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd or one flock one shepherd.” So he is talking about the fact that there will be one flock and one shepherd and those others will join the present flock from the nation Israel who had believed in the Messiah that was to come.

Well, all of this raises the question is the church Israel? In other words because they share the same blessings, Gentiles and Jews in the church, can we say that the church is Israel?

Now, we try to point out that the fact that they shared the blessings does not mean that they are the same peoples. We looked at just briefly Romans chapter 9 in verse 6, where the Apostle Paul says, “Not all who are Israel are Israel.” We tried to point out that contrary to the interpretation that has been placed upon that, namely, that Gentiles also may be called Israel that the apostle was not speaking of that but rather speaking of a distinction within Israel; that is, in order to be a genuine Israelite one must not simply be

a member of ethnic Israel but he also must be a believer in the Messiah. Not all who are of ethnic Israel are truly Israel. There is no place for Gentiles in Paul's comment.

Then we looked at Galatians 6:16, which is the text that has often been appealed to as proof that the church and Israel are the same. It's the text, “And as many as walk according to this rule peace be on them and mercy and upon the Israel of God.” And I had, I think, someone read the New International Version of this particular passage because the translators of the NIV at this point, and I was one of the translators but I didn't participate in the translation of Galatians nor in the discussion of the translation. In the new International Version the text reads something like this I'm going by memory, “As many as walk according to this rule peace be upon them and mercy and peace upon the Israel of God.” Now, does someone have the NIV here? Would you read it loud enough so for everyone to hear? “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule even to Israel, even to the Israel of God.” See, “to all who follow this rule even to the Israel of God.”

Now, let me say that it is remotely possibly to render a text like that because the Greek conjunction *kai* which ordinarily means “and” can in some rare instances be translated “even” in the appositional sense. It more frequently means “even” in the ascensive sense. Now, I know, this is technical but I have to say it because the others who will be listening to the tape and they will want to know why. For example, if I were to say I went to the Netherlands. I even went to the Rykes Museum. Then I would be using “even” in the ascensive sense. That is I went to the city of Amsterdam but more significant, more particularly, I went to the Rykes Museum. Now, you can use “even” in that sense and the Greek word *kai*, one of the simplest words in the language meaning “and,” can be found in that sense. But you can see that when a person says, “even upon the Israel of God,” he is not talking about “even” in the ascensive sense. He is talking about even in the appositional sense. That's different.

That's to say, for example, I was looking at a football game the other day, and I saw the Dallas football team play even the Cowboys. Well, when I use “even” in that

sense I am identifying Cowboys with football team. I'm not using in the ascensive sense, I am just identifying. I went to Big D even Dallas. Now, that sense, which is the sense the NIV puts upon this, is an extremely rare sense. In fact, you cannot really find many senses in the New Testament. And some respected commentators insist that the Apostle Paul never uses it in that sense. So I say that because that will let you know immediately that the evidence for that kind of rendering and, therefore, that meaning attaching the term Israel to the church of Gentiles stands upon very slender grammatical and syntactical grounds.

Furthermore, you wouldn't have to do that if you were the Apostle Paul. If you wanted to say that the church was Israel, you could say it very simply by eliminating the *kai*. You could just say “and as many as walk according to this rule peace be upon them and mercy” leave out the conjunction and have “upon the Israel of God.” Then we would know that that is appositional; that is, the Israel of God is appositional with those who walk according to this rule. The very fact that the apostle used the *kai* is evidence that that is not the sense that he intended to put upon it.

We also tried to point out, I know you remember all these things but there may be someone who was not here, I tried to point out that the term “Israel” is never used of any group of people who are not ethnic Israelites. In other words, it's never used of Gentiles. Now, these two cases are disputed by some, as you can see, there is very little ground for this. Almost always there are theological reasons lying back of individuals wishing to translate it that way. They would like to think that the church is Israel and Israel is the church because they would like to apply certain promises that are Israel's promises to the church. Now, I think, that is the history that lies in the background of this. Today there are some different ways of looking at some of these things. It would be nice if we could go into all of the fine points because someone might come up and say, “Yes, I do know that was ordinarily the way that certain people saw that text, but now I don't. And, yet, I hold similar views to them on certain doctoral matters.” That's certainly true. As the years

pass by, we learn that some positions that we hold don't have as much support as we thought they did and so we look for different ways to defend our views. That's natural. After all, you want to defend what you think is the teaching of the word of God, and if you have a poor defense you need to get a new defense. And so it is not unusual for people to try to get a new defense. If, finally, you find there is no defense then you need to abandon your position. But you are not necessarily wrong if someone can show that your defense is very weak. You may have the right position and a poor defense. So, anyway, the point is that some have sought to identify Israel and the church.

I didn't say anything tonight, but back a month ago, I did mention the fact that in the history of interpretation of Israel and the church and that issue, no one in the early church made any identification of Israel with the church until 160 AD. However, one should also point out that there was not whole lot of Christian writing in that period of time to which we might appeal. But we don't have any indication that the earliest believers thought of Israel as the church.

So looking at it historically, looking at it from the standpoint of philology, the word simply means “and” in almost all of its cases. Looking at it from the standpoint of the exegesis of the particular text, well I don't think that there is whole lot of support for understanding the term Israel of God as a reference to the church composed of Gentiles as well. I think, I referred to the fact that there have been three viewpoints that have been put upon that expression “the Israel of God.” The one we have been talking about that is the term means the church and, therefore, we justified it calling the church the Israel of God. That's one interpretation. We tried to show that that doesn't have much ground in support of it. It is also possible to take this to refer to the future eschatologically; that is the apostle is saying, “As many as walk according to this rule peace be upon them and mercy” and then looking off into the future and the fact that all Israel shall be saved as he writes in Romans 11, he says, “and upon the Israel of God.”

That is that generation of Jewish believers who shall turn to the Lord in the days just prior to the Second Advent to the earth.

Now, there is some justification for that and we don't have time to go into the details of it, but that's a possible rendering and a possible meaning. The one that I personally feel is more likely is very closely related to that and if someone were to say to me well, I think, the eschatological interpretations are a little better it wouldn't bother me at all because it may be right. I rather think that the apostle is talking about Jewish believers in his own day. In other words, think of what he was doing. He was writing to the church in Galatia. He was saying to them, “I was there with you not long ago. I preached the gospel to you and you responded in a beautiful way. As a matter of fact so responsive were you, you would have plucked out your own eyes and you would have given them to me.” Perhaps an allusion to the fact that he did have some form of eye difficulty. So they were very responsive but after he left Judaizing professors came in, Paul, evidently, thought they were not true believers because he said they are not preaching the gospel. At any rate, they came in and the Galatians, they were young believers, and even though they had an apostle preaching to them they still could be confused, and they had become confused and they were in process of moving over to the gospel that the Judaizing teachers were teaching. They had come in with a great deal of authority because they had said we are from Jerusalem and after all that's headquarters. And, furthermore, they had a knowledgeable grasp of the history of Israel and were themselves Israelites.

You know, I noticed some of that on occasion in the Christian church when a Jewish believer is in the midst of people, Gentile believers tend to look up to them because they are Jewish believers. And sometimes it's a valid thing and sometimes it's not. People don't often realize that Jewish people today have very little knowledge of the Old Testament. Many of them don't have any more knowledge of the Old Testament than you have growing up in a professing Christian church. They may know certain names but

as far as the doctrine is concerned they are woefully ignorant of the teaching of the word of God.

These men had come in and the Galatians were in point of moving, Paul describes them by using tenses that suggest that they are in the process of moving. They are not simply thinking about it but they are in process of accepting the teaching. What was the teaching? Well, it's not enough to simply believe in Christ and his finished work, one must also be circumcised in order to be saved, very common problem in the early church because that's the way you became a full-fledged member of Israel. When you were converted you had to be circumcised and it was carried over. That's one of the reasons by the way they some Christian preachers wear clerical garments. It's a carry over from the Levitical ceremonies. That's why they wear the collars that they wear. That's why they wear the clothes they wear. That's also is why in many of our churches we have a very elaborate ritual and liturgy. And in many of them we have candles and other types of things that appeal to the eyes. There was not liturgy that was more beautiful than Judaism. Think of the Day of Atonement, think of other aspects of the Old Testament and you have the finest of old liturgy, the most appealing to the eyes and to the emotions and so much of that has been carried over into the professing Christian church.

So we have no evidence that those men didn't preach exactly what Paul preached so far as the person of Christ was concerned and the word of Christ was concerned. So far as we know, they believed in the deity of the Son of God, they believed in the Trinity, they believed in the atonement by blood, and they acknowledged that faith was necessary so far as we know from the Epistle to the Galatians. The one thing that they differed with Paul on, so far as we know, well there were really two things but one important, the one important thing that they differed with the apostle was over the terms by which the benefits of Christ death become ours. Paul said faith alone. They said faith plus circumcision.

Now, surely, you ought to include people like that in the family of God shouldn't you? After all, just that. Well, we have the professing Christian church today seeking to unite with Rome, and they acknowledge that they have many things that are the same. In fact, there are certain people in the church of Rome today that are saying we believe in justification by faith. And so many Protestants, who are believers, are in danger of being taken in by that. For until the day that the Pope says the sacramental system is wrong then they have not yielded anything. Until the day that they say their water baptism does not remove original sin the mass is not useful in the removal of daily sins, the oil of Extreme Unction has no value whatsoever in the end of a person's life, and that there is no such thing as Purgatory at all and fire cannot remove sins, until that day, then you'll pardon me but I do not believe that we believe the same thing, Christians, biblical Christians, believe that Christ has performed the atoning work and that it may be ours through simple faith.

Now, Paul wrote a very, very harsh letter. He didn't say he thanked God for the Galatians. He usually thanked God for all of the other believers but he was so upset he forgot about a thanksgiving. Furthermore he did something he didn't ordinarily do. He wrote it with his own hand. He usually hired an amanuensis and this time he couldn't wait to get himself an amanuensis or a secretary. He wrote it himself and near the end he said, “You see with what large letters I've written to you with my own hand.” That too might suggest he had a little bit of eye trouble. I can see his sprawling, scrawling hand that he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians in. So he was upset and disturbed and he said if anyone preaches any other gospel and that gospel which I preached unto you let me him, pardon the expression I've said it before, let him go to Hell. That's what let him be an anathema means. That's how deeply Paul felt about it. Now, you can see Paul wouldn't be very popular today. You can just imagine him in a large gathering of professing Christians and he was saying the gospel of Jesus Christ gave me is the only gospel and if any other man preaches any other gospel and exactly what I've preached to you let him

go to Hell. And oh I can see the hands of the Christians who are so entranced with sentimental love being tremendously upset. I don't think Vernon McGee would be he talks about sloppy; agape well that's exactly that kind of love.

But at any rate, now, the apostle has written six chapters, and he is near the end of his epistle and by the Spirit's guidance. I suggest, he's smitten with a little bit of desire to be kindly and truly loving to his Galatians believers. He's really told them that they were in danger of falling from grace. Think of it, falling from grace. That's what the expression uses. He says, “Christ has become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are trying to be justified by the law you have fallen from grace.” Now he is not teaching that you can fall from salvation. Grace is not salvation. Grace is a principle of God's dealing with us. It's the principle by which we are saved. But if you add circumcision to faith in Christ you fall from the grace method of salvation. That's what he is talking about. So near the end he says, he wells up this feeling in the apostle and he says I need to encourage those true Jewish believers who haven't fallen for these Judiazing false teachers. So he writes, “As many as walk according to this rule peace upon them a mercy and upon the Israel of God.” That is, those true believing Israelites who have not yielded to the blandishments of Judiazers.

Now, that makes perfectly good sense. The usage of the term is standard Pauline assuage. The grammar is satisfied, the sense of the little word “kai” that it most frequently had is the sense that it has here. And so I see no reason whatsoever to abandon all of these other things for something that really has practically nothing in support of it except the desire to find some place in the Bible in which we can say Israel is a term that we can use for the church. How often do we read the Christian literature that the church is the new Israel?

Now, strictly speaking if a person said the church is the new Israel and if he were meaning by that that there is a great knowledge between these two then I would have no

objection. But ordinarily what that goes along with is that the term Israel is properly applied to Gentile believers and that I challenge anyone to find in the word of God.

Now, there are some other things that could be said about this. That's the interpretation that, I think, makes good sense exegetically, syntactically, philologically, contextually why should be go to any other sense.

Now, there are some other debated passages for example Philippians chapter 3 in verse 1 through verse 3, where the apostle says something might be taken to mean that. He doesn't use the term Israel but he uses a related term. He says, “For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have not confidence in the flesh.”

Now, it is the opinion of many that when the apostle says, “For we are the circumcision,” he is saying the church is the circumcision and thus in a sense the same kind of meaning is attached to this. Well, in the first place, one might ask well to whom is Paul referring when he uses the term “we.” Is he referring to Gentiles? Well, we are not absolutely certain of that but I'll grant that, I'll grant that the apostle most likely includes Gentiles there, but I ask you to look at the preceding verse. It says “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.”

Now, what is Paul talking about in Philippians? Well, almost all of the students of Philippians acknowledge that the Philippians were troubled with the same kind of heresy, that is, Judiazers, people who had mixed Christian truth as the apostles taught it with Old Testament truth and came up with Judiazing truth. Now, the apostle speaks figuratively. Notice he calls them “dogs.” Now, for you people who like dogs the Bible won't support you. Actually, dogs are not faithful. Dogs are faithful not to an individual, they are faithful to the one who feeds them. Did you know that? I'm sorry you who like dogs. I like dogs. I like dogs better than cats as you know. And I've had a number of dogs so I'm not anti-dog but dogs are faithful to those who feed them, so are false teachers. They

are faithful to those that feed them. It's not faithfulness to the Lord that is significant; it's faithfulness to those who feed them. So Paul calls them dogs.

Now, if you study dogs in the ancient world packs of dogs roamed the streets. It's almost like London but at any rate, oh pardon me for saying that about London, but Europe loves dogs. It's one of the things you have to be aware of when you go to Europe unfortunately. They love dogs over there. We like dogs too but they like them more than we do. They are everywhere. But at any rate, the dogs were regarded with a great deal of suspicion in Paul's day. In fact, to call a person a dog and in this instance to call them these false teachers dogs is to suggest that they are excluded from the fellowship of the people of God. So he says beware of the dogs, they're excluded.

What is their particular error? Well, he says, “beware of the evil workers,” that is they are individuals who stress works. And then he says, identifying their national background, their ethnic background, he says, “beware of the,” and he couldn't bring himself to say the circumcision because circumcision was a clear reference to the nation Israel, generally speaking. In fact, in Romans remember after he gives his statement that the true Jew is the one who is the inward Jew he says, “What advantage then hath the Jew or what profit is there of circumcision.” So the Jews were called the circumcision. But here he uses a word that means the mutilation not circumcision. Our English text that I'm reading has concision in other words if a person is not a true believer, if he is a Judaizing false teacher then the mark that he makes in his body which is medically circumcision in the case of an individual who has no faith, it's just a mutilation of the male body. So he says beware of the concision, the mutilation.

In other words, they are excluded from fellowship, these Judiazers, their characteristic is that they talk about works as the way to salvation and in addition they follow liturgy of the Old Testament rather than that situation that has existed since the veil of the temple was rent in twain. Then Paul says, “For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit.” Now, what he means by that is very plain. He's been talking

metaphorically and so he talks metaphorically here. He says, “We are the true circumcision.” He’s not saying we’re all Jews, but he’s simply saying as he has accused them in metaphorical terms of being false. He’s saying we who are true believers, we are that which circumcision was intended to represent in the Old Testament. For circumcision was intended ideally to mark a person out as belonging to the Abrahamic covenant and a true believer in those promises and, therefore, the possessor of them. So that’s all Paul is doing. He’s speaking metaphorically and says, “We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit not in the flesh and rejoice in Christ Jesus not in good works and have no confidence in the flesh any kind of liturgy or ritual is beyond our hope.” Now, that seems to me that makes excellent sense. I see no reason to abandon the common sense of terms.

There is one other passage that you might look at 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9 and 10. You see, there are really very few passages to which a person can appeal for the doctrine that the church may be called the Israel of God and once you look at these in the light of the mass of teaching to the contrary, well sometimes you wonder how views can arise. First Peter chapter 2 in verse 9, the apostle writes, “For ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.” You can see he is taking terms from the Old Testament that apply to Israel, and he is applying them now to the people of God now, “peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God which have not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” So Paul is simply saying many of the things that were true of the nation Israel are true of us. Why, because we form one people of God. We are one people of God. And so as a result of that as Israel was a chosen generation so are we. As Israel had a royal priesthood ideally so are we, a holy nation so are we, a peculiar people so are we. In time past, we’re not a people but are now the people of God which have not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. The apostle alludes to the passage in

Exodus chapter 19, and he alludes to Hosea chapter 2, and chapter 1, a by analogy refers to the believers in his day. So again there is, so far as I can tell, no reason for anyone to try to identify the church with Israel.

But that does raise a question and I'd like for just the remainder of our time to deal with this. It raises a question, well, what is the connection between them? What is the relation of the two people? And we want to say just a little bit concerning that. The fact that the church is distinctive from Israel does not mean that there is no relationship between the two. Israel was an elect people of God. They were given a certain liturgy and law. But at the time of our Lord's death that was done away with. And then when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost a new situation prevailed.

Now, when an individual came into the people of God he didn't go through the ceremonies that a Gentile would in Old Testament times. He became a member of the people of God through faith alone. So the fact that the church is distinct from Israel doesn't mean there is no relationship between the two, they are both part of the one people of God. That's, I think, the relationship that is extremely important today. Later on in this series we will devote a more lengthy period of time to Romans chapter 11, and Ephesians chapter 2 and 3, in which we will try to spell out precisely what this means. But we just want to point out that there is a relationship between the two.

Occasionally, in the desire to distinguish Israel from the church, individuals have taken what is to my mind an unbiblical position by suggesting that there is no connection between the church and Israel. Just reading through the Bible you should see the error of that but, after all, when a person is very persuasive, when people are very persuasive we ordinary human beings tend to follow them. If you'll just reflect upon this fact. Who made up the first Christian church in the sense of the term church as used in the New Testament? Well, let's say let's go back to the Day of Pentecost. Who was there at the Day of Pentecost and if the church was formed there by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as seems to be taught in the New Testament. Who made up the church? Well members

from Israel. They were Israelites almost all of them. They were Israelites. The church was Israel, ethnically, in its beginning. And later on through the ministry of the apostle as the nation as a whole turned away from the preaching of the gospel, God put his hand upon Paul, and sent him out to the Gentiles. Read again the Book of Acts, that's precisely what the Book of Acts tells us. He is the apostle of the Gentiles and when Israel turns from the Lord, Paul is sent to the Gentiles and they come into relationship with the Lord God and with the people of God. And so today the Christian church is largely Gentile but not entirely. There is even in Paul's day after many have come into the church and, no doubt, the Gentiles were in the great ascendancy when Paul wrote Romans 11, he says, "Even so at the present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." That's the Israel of God. That's what he meant in Galatians 6:16, the remnant of believers.

Now, what about the church and the seed of Abraham? What about the term "the seed of Abraham?" What's meant by that? Well in the New Testament several entities may be called the "seed of Abraham." First of all this term "seed of Abraham" is used for natural, physical descendents of Abraham; for example, the Lord Jesus uses it of himself and John 8:37, I said of himself, I mean of the Jews in John 8:37. The Apostle Paul speaks of himself as from Abraham. Listen to what he says in that chapter in Romans Chapter 11, "I say then that if God casts away his people God forbid for I also am Israelite of the same seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin." So it was used of the natural, physical descendents of Abraham through Jacob.

Second, it refers to Christ himself, Galatians 6:16. He's said to be the "seed of Abraham." And then, and this puzzles some believers today, the term "seed of Abraham" is used of all Gentile believers today. That seems strange isn't it, the "seed of Abraham." Sometimes we are puzzled by that. We tend to want to think well doesn't that make us ethnic Israelites? No, as a matter of fact, Abraham was not an Israelite. Jacob is the one through whom Israelites come. Those who are sons of Abraham are not Israelites unless they are descendents of Abraham through Jacob. Ishmael is not an Israelite. Esau is not.

Abraham is the father of believers whether they be through Jacob, a natural ethnic Israelite or Gentile believers. So Paul writes in Galatians 3 in verse 29, “And if he be Christ then are you Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” So we’re Abraham’s seed. Don’t make the mistake of saying, however, because you’re Abraham’s seed, son of Abraham, you’re a son of Israel. We’re never called “son of Israel,” we’re sons of Abraham. There is a big difference. Jacob had his name changed to Israel, a big difference. The Bible is so careful in what it says. It’s worthy of the most minute study and if you are puzzled, puzzled, keep at it until finally clarity comes. There are two primary senses then, I say two primary, all justified after the pattern of Abraham justification and then all natural, ethnic descendents of Abraham through Jacob seed of Abraham.

Now, the church and the Abrahamic promises. I have some good friends and I do respect them. I love them. Since I’ve become a Calvinist they don’t love me quite as much as I love them, I don’t think, but I may be wrong. They may have really liked me but we differ over a significant point. My friends, some of whom were my teachers, like to say that the church does inherit the Abrahamic promises ex the land promises. In other words, spiritual promises yes, land promises no.

Now, I confess that never satisfied me. I read Romans 11, so many times as I have often said to you I took over forty classes of young men through the Greek text of the Epistle to the Romans in exegetical lectures. Year after year for thirty years I did that and took forty of them, some years I’d have two classes, obviously. I would come to Romans 11, and it was so difficult for me, in fact, in the later years of my teaching the last fifteen years, I guess, I just didn’t say anything about it. It was a puzzle to me. How it could possibly be said that we inherited some of Abraham’s promises and not all of them? When the Bible seems to say that we as Paul says in Galatians, “we are heirs according to the promise.” And, you know, it puzzled me so much I didn’t want to say my friends were wrong. I didn’t know how to show they were wrong except to say if it says “we’re

heirs according to the promises,” then we ought to have all the promises. We should have the land promises as well.

Well, it was about seven years ago I was giving a course on the Epistle to the Galatians and was studying the use of the Old Testament in Galatians 3:16, a very interesting passage, very difficult too in some ways. But I discovered something that solved my problem for me after all these years. You know, you can still learn even after you’ve thought you’ve known something for twenty-five years.

It says here in Galatians 3:16, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made he sayeth not and to seeds of many but as of one and to thy seed which is Christ.” That seems a simple text. But in the course of investigating the apostle uses an expression “and to thy seed” which he derived from the Old Testament Septuagint, that is, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. He cites it in the Greek text of Galatians. Then if you take that expression, *kai*, to spermate” and you go back and look at the Old Testament “and to thy seed” in the context you will find that that expression had solved all my problems, refers to the land promises in context, to the land promises in context. And so I realized that what Paul was saying was that when a person was an heir to the Abrahamic promises through Christ, belonging to him, he was an heir to all of the promises and even to the land promises as well. So we share in all the promises, the land promises as well. There is no way by which we can distinguish those Abrahamic promises.

So we were talking about the church and the Abrahamic promises. We inherit all of the Abrahamic promises. Further as we will point out in Romans chapter 11, that Gentiles inheriting those promises form one of the means by which God will provoke Israel to jealousy and, ultimately, turn them back to the Lord for their national conversion in the latter days. I don’t have time to go into that right now.

So we will say just a word about the church and the New Covenant; the New Covenant Promised. The New Covenant was given so Jeremiah says, “To the House of

Israel and the House of Judah.” It was designed to provide the redemptive side of the covenantal program. When we come to the New Covenant we’ll deal with this in more detail so I’m not going to do anything more than hasten over it right now. Those promises that have to do with the forgiveness of sins are necessary if we are to inherit the Abrahamic Covenant promises and the Davidic Covenant promises. So the covenant was promised to the House of Israel and to the House of Judah.

One might say at this point, well, how do we fit in? Well, let me remind you the Abrahamic promises contain this little sentence that “Abraham his name would be great, that he would have a land and in Thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” In other words, in the Abrahamic Covenant promises provision is made for universal blessings.

Now, Paul will tell us in Romans 11, that when the Gentiles are grafted into the olive Tree they become fellow partaker of the fat root of the olive tree. So they are grafted into the olive Tree. To whom does the olive tree belong? Well, we’ll lay stress on this too. But when Paul finishes his illustration he says look if the natural branches were cut off and unnatural branches grafted in, if that which has already taken place has taken place then how much more natural it is for us to expect that the natural branches may be grafted in again into, notice these words, “their own Olive Tree.” To whom do the promises belong? To Israel, to the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. How do we obtain them, by the grace of God and the desire of God to provoke them to jealousy, and so we are grafted into the olive tree through the preaching of the gospel by men like Paul. Until the fullness of the Gentiles become in its all so plain and so simple it seems to me. The New Covenant is inaugurated when the Lord Jesus comes and sheds his blood and its promises then are shared by both ethnic Israel and Gentile believers.

Some of my friends in order to get over these difficulties, they just hated to say that the church should inherit the New Covenant blessings, thought that one way you can get away from this is to suggest that that there are two New Covenants. There must be

two New Covenants, one New Covenant for the House of Israel and for the House of Judah and another New Covenant for the church. Oh the way, the extent, to which we will go in order to avoid what seems to be the plain teaching of the word of God when the solution is lying right before us if we just apply ourselves to it.

Now, let me, I don't want to give you the wrong impression. I know what you are thinking boy he really thinks he knows everything. No, I just know something about this. There are lots of things I don't know anything about at all as many of my friends tell me. But about this, this is something that I have worked at for many, many years and I feel within reasonable certainty that this is precisely what the apostle would have said. In fact, I faintly hear him saying, “You're right Lewis,” but I'm not sure about that. But, at any rate, the point is that they share in these blessings, and the New Covenant has made it possible which Our Lord inaugurated and by virtue of the fact that God in his marvelous wisdom has seen fit to use Gentiles in the present day to, ultimately, provoke Israel to jealousy. The word of God makes marvelous sense to me. Paul when he finishes Romans 11, he will give us a little word there about how you can put it all together. We don't have time to do that now we will do that when we study Romans 11.

Well, now, that's a little bit of a review tonight. It's been fifty-eight minutes since we started, I mean, yeah, fifty-eight minutes since we started. The tape is running out. I have defeated many tapes. I don't want to completely defeat this one. Next week we will look at one of the more distinctive things of Dispensational Theology and it's a question of, is the Christian under the Law today?

Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and we thank Thee for these marvelous truths. [End of Tape]