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Who Is Israel?

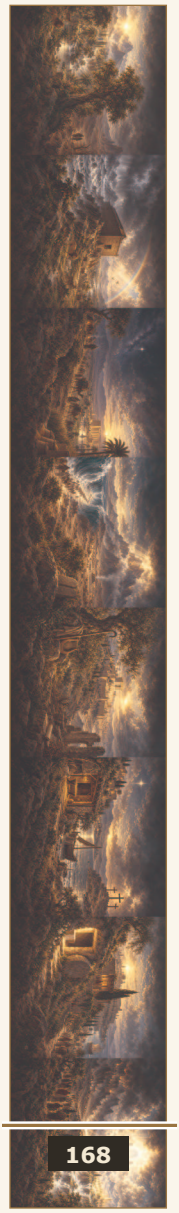
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



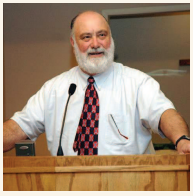
For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.

ROMANS 9:6, EXCERPT

Who is Israel? John Weaver approaches the question through Scripture, beginning with Romans and considering covenant identity and the interpretation of biblical promises. This six-message series presents his theological argument and asks readers to evaluate it by the text, while distinguishing disagreement over interpretation from a reason to sever Christian fellowship.

"If you disagree, that is wonderful; just make sure you have a scriptural basis for doing so."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Who is Israel? - Part One of Six 7

Introduction and Approach 7

Scriptural Foundation: Romans 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 8

Eschatological Views of Israel 8

Saved Israel vs. Natural Israel 9

Spiritual Relationship Transcends Physical 10

Historical Meaning of 'Jew' 14

Judaism vs. Christianity 15

The Divided Kingdom and Migration 16

Exposition of Romans 2:17-29 21

Old Testament Witness to Heart Circumcision 23

New Testament Fulfillment in Christ 24

Conclusion and Prayer 27

Chapter 2: Who is Israel? - Part Two of Six 29

Introduction and Review 29

Abraham's Nationality and Idolatrous Background 32

The Question of Romans 4:1 37

The Declaration of Abraham’s Experience 38

Declaration 1: Abraham's Faith Was a Work of God Alone 39

Declaration 2: Abraham Was Ungodly and a Sinner 40

Declaration 3: Scripture Confirms Abraham's Experience 41

Circumstances of Abraham's Experience: Justified Before Circumcision . . . 43

Abraham as Father of Believers Only 44

Justified Before the Law Was Given 47

Conclusion: Faith Alone Makes True Children of Abraham 49

Practical Application and Closing 50

Chapter 3: Who is Israel? - Part Three of Six 51

Introduction and Context 51

Paul's Affirmation and Heaviness (Romans 9:1-3) 53
Paul's Heart and the Nature of His Kinsmen 55
Identification of Israelites (Romans 9:4-5) 59
The Objection and Paul's Explanation (Romans 9:6-8) 62
Illustrations of Sovereign Election (Romans 9:9-13) 67
God's Righteousness in Election (Romans 9:14-18) 69
Application and Conclusion 71
Chapter 4: Who is Israel? - Part Four of Six 73
Galatians 3:1–14 73
Introduction and Overview of Galatians 73
The Central Question of Galatians 3-4 77
Paul's First Question: Bewitched Galatians 77
Paul's Second Question: Receiving the Spirit 81
Paul's Third Question: Perfected by the Flesh? 84
Paul's Fourth Question: Suffering in Vain 85
Paul's Fifth Question: Miracles by Law or Faith? 87
Abraham as the Example of Faith 88
The Curse of the Law and the Blessing of Faith 90
Conclusion: Salvation by Grace Alone 90
Chapter 5: Who is Israel? - Part Five of Six 93
Introduction and Reading of Galatians 3:15-29 93
Review of Previous Lessons and the Example of Abraham 94
The Covenant with Abraham Cannot Be Annulled 95
The Purpose of the Law: Because of Transgressions and as a Schoolmaster . . 96
The Singular Seed: Christ as the True Seed of Abraham 97
The Everlasting Covenant and Progressive Revelation 98
Christ Is Greater Than Abraham and the True Seed 101
The Promises Are in Christ Alone 103
Believers Are Abraham's Seed and Heirs of the World 104
The Inheritance of Believers: All Things in Christ 108

Summary of Key Passages and the Israel of God 110
Conclusion and Prayer 112
Chapter 6: Who is Israel? - Part Six of Six 115
Introduction and Review 116
Paul's Rebuke and the Law 116
The Seed of Abraham is Christ 117
A Divinely Ordained Illustration 118
A Divinely Ordained Declaration 121
A Divinely Ordained Interpretation 122
A Divinely Ordained Interpretation 123
The Contrast Between Sarah and Isaac 126
The Divinely Ordained Application 127
A Divinely Ordained Application 128
Conclusion: One Way of Salvation 131
Topical Index 135
Scripture Index 139
Study Guide Link 147

CHAPTER 1

Who is Israel?

Part One of Six

Introduction and Approach

Let us get started today, but let me make a couple of statements before I begin the message. This message today is basically going to be an introductory message. I do not know how long I am going to deal with this subject until I get through, but I have been asked to deal with this subject, and I am going to do so to the best of my ability from Scripture. If you disagree, that is wonderful; just make sure you have a scriptural basis for doing so. But keep in mind that eschatology is nothing to sever fellowship about.

You can believe one thing and another can believe another, and it is going to be worked out when Christ returns, I can assure you. So listen carefully. Lord willing, today we are going to start on lesson number one. I have been asked the question, Who is Israel? I am going to try to answer that in a series of messages from the Bible. Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 2 and also 1 Corinthians chapter 15. I am going to read Romans chapter 2; do not think that I have left that passage. I am certainly going to come back to it. But I

am going to begin with it, then give you an introduction and some historical background, and come back to Romans 2. Let us look at verses 28 and 29. Romans 2, look at verse 28.

Scriptural Foundation: Romans 2 and 1 Corinthians 15

Scripture says, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Now turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and let us begin reading there with verse 45. Scripture says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

I have been asked to preach on the subject, Who is Israel? If you ask that question of many Christians, undoubtedly you are going to receive different answers.

Eschatological Views of Israel

The varying answers depend upon one's eschatology. Eschatology is the study of last things. It is from the Greek word eschatos, which literally means last. Thus, one's view as to who Israel actually is reveals what one's eschatology really is. There are eschatological differences among Christians. For instance, historic premillennialists, dispensational premillennialists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists will usually give different answers as to the identification of Israel. In some instances they may agree as to who Israel is, but then they will violently disagree on what Israel's role in the last days really is.

If you ask an identity Christian who Israel is, he will answer the white, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and Scandinavian people. If you ask a fundamentalist Christian who Israel is, he will answer the Jews,

referring, of course, to those people who now occupy Israel and to those who claim to be Jews scattered abroad. If you ask a Reformed Christian who Israel is, he will usually answer the church. Of course, all of us, hopefully, would agree that the true Israel is saved by Jesus Christ.

Saved Israel vs. Natural Israel

There has been a big debate among some people as to whether or not to use the term spiritual Israel. Because that term is sometimes misunderstood, I am going to use another term: saved Israel. Saved Israel certainly includes a spiritual aspect, but it can also be distinguished from the carnal aspect, that is, from national or physical Israel. Saved Israel is different from natural Israel.

How can I say that? Look in 1 Corinthians 10:18. There is a difference. Look what the Apostle Paul says: "Behold Israel after the flesh," or, "are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" Paul says, "Behold Israel after the flesh"; that is, he is talking about a natural or national Israel. If there is a natural or national Israel, then certainly there is a saved or spiritual Israel. Saved Israel is different from national or natural Israel. If there is an Israel after the flesh, there must be an Israel after the spirit. Whoever Israel is, one truth must be adamantly admitted: only those who are in Jesus Christ are saved, because there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. Salvation, then, is not by race.

It is not by ancestry. It is only through the grace of God. If you look in your Bibles to the book of John chapter 1, let's go there and read verses 11 through 13. John chapter 1 beginning there with verse 11. Look what Scripture says. John 1 verse 11. The Bible says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Now that's easily understood. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Now watch. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Now, let's go back to verse 12. The Bible says, "...but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

Now, He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but some received Him.

Now, why did they receive Him? Well, look at verse 13, "...which were born..." and then you have a whole list of negatives. "...which were born, not of blood," that is, ancestry, "nor of the will of the flesh," that is, works had nothing to do with it, "nor of the will of man," that is, man's will had nothing to do with it, "but of God."

Now, here's what you can do. You can take and put the negatives in a parenthesis, and let's leave them out temporarily and go back and read verse 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born of God." You see what I'm saying? When you leave the negatives out, you have the positive, "which were born of God." So he's saying then very clearly that it's not our ancestry, it's not our works, it's not the will of man that has anything to do with salvation. It is totally and completely the work of God.

Spiritual Relationship Transcends Physical

One is not saved simply because Abraham is his ancestor. The truth of the matter is that it is not really in Abraham that we are called, but in Isaac. Romans 9:7 says, “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Isaac was the child of promise, which was a picture of Jesus Christ, who was indeed the true promise. Therefore, “in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

The New Testament teaches that our relationship with Jesus Christ transcends every physical relationship imaginable. In Mark 3:31, we read, “There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.” These were the physical brothers of Christ. His mother was outside calling Him, and His brothers wanted to see Him. “And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.”

What is He saying? He is saying that a relationship with Himself transcends even physical relationships. His mother, His sisters, and His brethren were His true disciples. Here is something elevated over and above and beyond physical relationship. The Apostle Paul will also address this matter in 1 Corinthians 15.

I have heard people say, "I wish I had been alive in the time of Christ. If I could have just heard Christ, if I could have seen Him, if I could have touched Him." I have heard people say that they wish they could have been alive when Christ was on earth. They think that hearing, seeing, or touching Him would have given them a relationship greater than the one believers have now.

Now undoubtedly, there were people who did see Him, people who did hear Him, and plenty of people who did touch Him. But I want you to know what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 16: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Now look what he says: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."

Let me put this to you very bluntly. If Jesus Christ were to appear in this room in the flesh as a natural individual, the way He appeared in New Testament times, and you were to talk to Him, touch Him, and listen to Him, it would not benefit you one bit. Why? Because that is not that which counts now. What counts now, since Christ has come, is a new creature in Christ Jesus. That is regeneration and conversion.

So Christ is saying that this has been elevated above and beyond a mere physical relationship. That is why He looked at His disciples and said, "You're my mother, and you're my brethren, and you're my sisters." This principle is enunciated throughout the entirety of Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 45, the Word of God says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." I am not going to get into the distinction necessarily between the first man and the second man theologically. But I do want you to note that, in the first man, Adam was a living soul. When we think of Adam, we think of a natural,

fleshly individual. He was a real, literal man. So as Adam was the first Adam, Christ is the second Adam.

Here is the principle: “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.” Now here is the principle clearly enunciated. In Scripture, you first have that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. Was Christ a real, literal individual? Of course He was. But He was still the spiritual counterpart of the physical Adam. The first man, Adam, is of the earth, earthy. That is all he is. The second man, Christ, is the Lord from heaven.

So now you have a distinction. You have a real individual who is of the earth, earthy, who is natural. On the other hand, you have the second Adam, who is a real individual but more than simply earthy. He is heavenly. There is the spiritual aspect.

Now, understand that this is true of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was earthy, emblematical, and symbolical. In it you have the tabernacle, the temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices. What do we tend to do? We tend to say, “Man, that was real.” That was not reality. The tabernacle, the temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices were not reality. Let me show you what I mean. Look in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews 9, beginning with verse 1. In Hebrews 9, the Bible says, “Then verily the first covenant,” speaking of the Old Testament, “had also ordinances of divine service,” and “a worldly sanctuary,” or an earthy sanctuary: “For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was”

The golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant were in the tabernacle; over it were the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat, of which we cannot now speak particularly. When these things were thus ordained, the priests, literal, physical individuals, went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy

Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. Everything in the Old Testament was a type, a shadow, an emblem. There is a contrast in the next verse: “But Christ being come an high priest.”

That earthly, literal, physical, carnal tabernacle was a picture of Jesus Christ. The earthly, carnal, physical temple was a picture of Jesus Christ. The earthly priests were a picture of Jesus Christ, and the earthly sacrifices were a picture of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10:1 says, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” Everything in the Old Testament was a shadow, a type, an emblem, and symbolic.

We have reality in the New Covenant; we have reality in Christ. That is why, throughout Hebrews, one of the key words is better. We have the better sacrifice, the better covenant, and the better this and the better that. Everything is better in the new covenant.

Likewise, in the Old Testament you have what we would call national Israel, who were carnal, fleshly people. They were the people of God. In the New Testament, you also have fleshly people who are the people of God, but they are spiritual, or saved, Israel: literal in one sense, but saved, which is the spiritual aspect. This does not mean that there were no saved people in the Old Testament. Surely there were saved people in the Old Testament.

John 1:17 summarizes the distinction: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Was there any grace in the Old Testament? Of course. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and anyone who was ever saved in the Old Testament was saved by grace. Was there any truth in the Old Testament? Of course; all of the Old Testament is true. But did Abraham have all truth? No. Did Moses have all truth? No. Did the prophets have all truth? No. The fullness of grace and the fullness of truth only came

by Jesus Christ. That is why he says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth”—that is, the fullness, the epitome, the apex of grace and truth—“came by Jesus Christ.”

Historical Meaning of 'Jew'

Now turn back to Romans 2, and hold that passage. In order to understand Romans 2, verses 28 and 29, we must have a historical understanding. The word Jew is greatly misused, misunderstood, and mistaken today. There is a vast difference between the way that term is used in the Bible and the way it is used today. The very first occurrence of the word Jew in our Bibles is in 2 Kings 16. The first time the word is used is in 2 Kings 16:6.

“At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.” Notice that he drove the Jews from Elath. If you read the entire context of 2 Kings chapter 16, you find that there was a war between Israel—the northern tribes—and the Syrians against Judah.

What happened was this: There were some Judahites living in Elath. The king of Syria defeated them and drove them from Elath. That is all verse 6 tells us: “At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews,” and I will use the word more specifically, the Judahites, “from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.”

The Hebrew word translated Jew here is Yehudi, which literally means a Judahite, or a descendant of Judah. The word is used in the Bible in at least five ways: first, it refers to a person or persons of the tribe of Judah; secondly, to the kingdom of Judah; thirdly, to the land of Judea; fourthly, to the nation of Judah; or fifthly, to the house of Judah.

Anyone belonging to the tribe, land, nation, or house of Judah could be called a Judahite. Thus, all 2 Kings 16:6 says is that there were some people of the tribe, house, land, or kingdom of Judah in Elath, and the king of Syria defeated them and drove them out of the land.

When you come to the New Testament, the Greek word is Ioudaios, which means Judean—a person from the country or land of Judah. For instance, Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom. What do we call people who lived in Samaria? Samaritans. So the Judeans, or Judahites, were people of the tribe or house of Judah, or people who lived in the land of Judah.

What we do today is different. When the word Jew is used today, it does not refer to someone of the house, tribe, land, or kingdom of Judah. Primarily, it refers to someone who embraces the religion of Judaism. Galatians 1:13-14 is one of the few places where the word Jew refers to the religion of Judaism. Most of the time in both the New Testament and the Old Testament, it refers simply to someone from the land, house, kingdom, or tribe of Judah.

Judaism vs. Christianity

Paul says, “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.” The Jews' religion, or Judaism, was antagonistic to and contrary to Christianity. It was Judaism—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and those who embraced it—that always opposed Christ, the Apostles, and the Prophets.

We are not and cannot be considered to be Judeo-Christians. We are not. Christianity has nothing to do with Judaism; it has nothing to do with it. Moreover, we are not connected to the land of Judea now in any way, sense, form, or fashion. We are Christians. If you want to discuss the Old Testament influence, you might speak of Hebrew Christians, Israelite Christians, or simply Old Testament and Christianity. Judeo-Christianity deals with a mixture of Judaism and Christianity, which is not and cannot be. Judaism opposes Christianity, and Christianity opposes Judaism; they are not the same.

Christ was not a Jew. He was a Judahite; that is, He was from the tribe of Judah. But He was not a Jew because He did not embrace Judaism. He was never in the Jews' religion. If you will remember reading through the Bible, you will find that one reason they were so

upset with Him was that He was always attacking them and their traditions. Read Matthew 5, Matthew 15, Matthew 23, and numerous other passages. I have a friend who has a cap hanging in his business with these words written across it: "My boss was a Jewish carpenter."

I cringe every time I see that. Christ was not Jewish. He was from the tribe of Judah, that is for sure. He was a Judahite, that is for sure. But He never embraced and never taught Judaism. There is a difference. Judaism and Pharisaism are a perversion of the Old Testament. They follow the traditions of the fathers and not the Word of God. It was Judaism, it was Pharisaism that repeatedly attacked Christ and the apostles over and over. Thus, when you read in the New Testament about the word Jew, it usually refers to someone of the house, the tribe, the kingdom, or the nation of Judah. It has nothing to do with Judaism. Just a couple of times it refers to the Jews' religion.

The kingdom of Israel was split during the days of Rehoboam. Rehoboam followed his father Solomon, and the people came to him, saying that his father had laid grievous taxes and burdens upon them. They said that if he would ease those burdens, they would be his servants for life. Rehoboam took counsel of the old men, who told him to listen to the people: if he would serve them, they would serve him. Then he went to the young men, who told him to say that his little finger would be thicker than his father's loins. His father had beaten them with whips, but he would beat them with scorpions. Rehoboam liked that rough, tough approach, and that is what he told the people.

The Divided Kingdom and Migration

First Kings 12:15 says, "So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them."

The passage continues: “Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.” Notice the statement that the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah were ruled by Rehoboam.

To fulfill prophecy, and as the judgment of God, the ten northern tribes went to Jeroboam, while the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, stayed with Rehoboam. However, some Israelites were still in Judah and Benjamin as well.

Here, then, is a split in Israel. The ten northern tribes were collectively called Israel, and the two southern tribes were collectively called Judah. But the two southern tribes were just as much Israel as the ten northern tribes were, in reality. This is pointed out even in the New Testament, in Acts chapter 2.

There were twelve tribes in Israel, and there are still twelve tribes. Here's the day of Pentecost. Acts 2, verse 5: “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews,” or Judahites, or people from the nation of Judah, “devout men, out of every nation under heaven.” A lot of these are listed. Now look at verse 14. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said, “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.” Then skip down to verse 22. He was still preaching to the same people: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words.” You see what this means? They are called Jews in verse 5, Judaites in verse 14, and men of Israel in verse 22.

In Matthew 27:37, what was written and set up over Jesus on the cross? “And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” Or the King of the Judeans. But look at verse 42: “Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.”

He had this written over his head, the King of the Judahites. But the tribe of Judah was also of Israel. It was certainly the southern

tribe, but here he is called the King of the Jews, and now he is called the King of Israel, even by the leaders, the elders, and the scribes.

Look also in Matthew 2, beginning with verse 19. Christ had been sent into Egypt because of Herod: “But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”

The whole southern portion was still called the land of Israel. It was still referred to as Israel. You would have Judah, Galilee, and Samaria, divisions put out basically by the Romans when they captured that land. The reason I emphasize this truth is that just because the southern kingdom was called Judah collectively, other people lived there besides the Judahites and Benjamites. Judah consisted basically of those two tribes, Judah and Benjamin; however, many Israelites from the northern kingdom lived down there as well.

Look at what happened to many of the Levites after Jeroboam took over. 2 Chronicles 11:14 says, "For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers."

When Jeroboam took over, he set up false gods, golden calves, and instituted a false religion. Therefore, all the Levites who were true worshipers of God went down to Judah and Jerusalem. Others who truly wanted to worship God and did not want to be part and parcel of his idolatry went down there as well.

Remember that Jerusalem was not only the capital of the southern kingdom; it was also the place of the temple and a leading city of commerce. Undoubtedly, many individuals would want to live there. Look at what happened and why so many Israelites left the northern kingdom and moved into the southern kingdom. First Kings 12:25 begins, "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Jeroboam knew that Jerusalem was the place to worship God, where the temple and the true altar were. But he feared that when the people went back there, their hearts would turn again to Rehoboam, they would kill him, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.

Therefore, to save his life, throne, power, and progeny—his ancestry—he acted deliberately and purposefully. Verse 28 says, "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Jeroboam set one calf in Bethel and the other in Dan. “And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah.”

He offered upon the altar in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made, and placed there the priests of the high places. He offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel.

So what Jeroboam has done is start up a state religion, a false, idolatrous religion, and he did it to save his own hide and his own

kingdom. Those who did not want to be a part of that went down to Judah and Jerusalem and lived there. The Levites went, and many others as well.

Now, if you look in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 15, when King Asa was used by God, instituted reform, and sought to call the people back to the God of the Bible, once again folks from the northern kingdom flocked down into Judah and Jerusalem. Verses 8 and 9 say: "And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him." Thus many of the northern tribes continued coming down into Judah and Benjamin because of the hand and work of God.

Similarly, under the revival in Hezekiah, many still came down to Judah and Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 30:11–12 says, "Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD." There were many Israelites from the northern kingdom who came down into the southern kingdom, not only because of the apostasy of Jeroboam, but because of the revivals that God sent in the southern kingdom.

The northern kingdom went into captivity into Assyria, but the southern kingdom went into captivity in Babylon. When the people returned from Babylon, the language used was not limited to Jews, Judeans, or the southern kingdom. They were also called Israel, because there were so many Israelites in Judah and Benjamin, and because Judah itself was part and parcel of Israel. Ezra 2:2, speaking of those who returned, concludes, "The number of the men of the people of Israel." Verse 70 says, "So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities." Ezra 3:1 says, "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of

Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem."

Yet Ezra 4:4 says, "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building." In verse 12, they are called Jews: "Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem," where they were building "the rebellious and the bad city." Ezra 5:1 says, "Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them." Thus they had been called Israelites, then Judahites, and then Jews, recognizing that some were of the tribe of Judah. But they were also called Israelites and were prophesied to in the name of the God of Israel.

With this in mind, let's go back in our Bibles to Romans chapter 2. In Judah and Benjamin, you not only had Levites. The Levites were of the tribe of Levi; they were the teaching priests and the priests who had the business around the tabernacle and the temple. But you had people from these other tribes living there as well. Let's begin with verse 17.

Exposition of Romans 2:17-29

Let me set the stage before I read this. I'm using the term Jew the way it is used historically: to refer to anyone who lived in the southern kingdom. The word Jew actually means a Judahite, someone who was surrounded by or in the land of Judea, who might have been of the tribe of Judah, but who certainly was in that southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah. You have to remember that the capital of Judah was Jerusalem.

That is where the tabernacle was. That is where the temple and the altar were. That is where the sacrificing was done. That is where the priests and the Levites were. Religious teaching emanated from Jerusalem.

Now, let's begin with verse 17 to show the perversion that took place around that teaching. Notice Romans 2:17: "Behold, thou art called a Jew," or a Judahite, "and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God." How could the Judahites boast of God and rest in the

law? The worship of the true God was in their kingdom, in their capital; the temple was located there in their land. He continues: "And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law."

In other words, you think you have it. You know all the traditions and all the ins and outs. Verse 19 says, "And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law." You are pretty sure that you have it all down. Then comes the condemnation in verse 21. This is a condemnation of ritualism, ceremonialism, hypocrisy, and, in one word, externalism. They had all of the externals: the temple, the priests, and the sacrifices.

Now look at verse 21: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" You would not teach another; you would not follow your own lesson. "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" Of course, they were guilty of theft. "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" If you really want to know about Judaism, read the Talmud. You would be amazed how it helps you understand this passage, because the Talmud allows sex outside of marriage—even what you would call homosexual sex, even with a child.

And here is what he is saying: You said, "A man shall not commit adultery." Does thou commit adultery? Watch it. "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" What? You are saying, "Do not worship any other God but the truly living God"? Well, you are not even worshiping me, he says. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

Look what he says: "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." Now here is what they are saying: We have been circumcised. We have the law, the temple, the priesthood, the ceremonies, and all of the externals. And our Lord says that if all you have is the externals, then your circumcision is counted, or made, as

uncircumcision, just as if you had never been a part and parcel of the covenant as well.

Verse 26 says, “Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?” You have all the externals and think you have it, but you are violating every law that I have made. Your heart is not right with me; therefore your circumcision is counted as uncircumcision. On the other hand, if a man is uncircumcised and keeps the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? “And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?” Here is a man whom you condemn, but if that man is righteous, he is going to turn around and judge you who profess to be righteous. Then he says, “For he is not a Jew,” or a Judahite.

Remember, this is where the temple was, the worship was, and the teaching was. Verse 28 is a negative, all totally negative: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh." That is the negative. Just because you have all the externals, just because you may even have the ancestry, just because you may have the law, as you call it, does not make you a true child of God.

He says in verse 29, "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." The word Jew, or Judahite, is to be taken as a designation for the people of God. For he is not a Jew, or a people of God, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. Rather, he is a Judahite who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God. So verse 28 is the negative, and verse 29 is the positive.

Old Testament Witness to Heart Circumcision

This truth was clearly taught in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The Old Testament emphasized over and over that their circumcision had to be of the heart as well. In Deuteronomy 10:16, God tells them, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and

be no more stiffnecked." In other words, circumcision of the flesh is useless unless there is a circumcision of the heart. The command is, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."

Jeremiah 4:4 says, "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." He says, "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire." In other words, externals are useless. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah 9, verse 26. This is an interesting passage. In fact, let us read verse 25.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." What's God saying? If you live like the heathen, I'm going to judge you with the heathen.

I don't care what you profess. If you've got externals and that's all, He says you're going to be judged with the wicked. Ezekiel 44:9 says, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel." To be God's people in the Old Testament, you not only had to be uncircumcised in the flesh, which was the sign of the covenant, but you must be circumcised in the heart.

New Testament Fulfillment in Christ

In Acts chapter 7, Stephen gives his defense before he is put to death by those who were of the Jews' religion. He looks at these men, these Jews, and says, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." He called them stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.

Who was he talking to? They were not able to resist the teaching of Stephen. Acts 6:10 says, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God."

"And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council," evidently the Sanhedrin, "And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

"Then said the high priest, Are these things so?" When Stephen said, "ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," he was speaking to the religious leaders who claimed to have it all. He said that all they had was externals, and they were lost as a hound dog.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:11, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." He continues: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

Return to verse 11: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." Circumcision was a rite. These Judahites were circumcised by men, and so they looked at other people and said, "You're uncircumcised. That's what you are."

The point is that there is a circumcision made by hands. Colossians 2:8 says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the

rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:" Then verse 11: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." There is a circumcision made with hands according to Ephesians 2, and there is a circumcision made without hands according to Colossians 2.

There is a circumcision made by hands. But here in Colossians chapter 2, there is a circumcision made without hands. What kind of circumcision is that? Verse 11 says, “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” So there is a work of God in Christ that Christ does in a man’s heart, called a circumcision made without hands, which is true salvation.

In Galatians 5:6, Paul says, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision,” referring to the physical act, “but faith which worketh by love.” In other words, what really counts is that which is done in you by Christ, not the externals.

Philippians chapter 3 gives us another comparison. I like how bluntly and plainly Paul writes. He says, “Beware of dogs,” and he is not talking about the four-legged kind; he is talking about the two-legged kind. “Beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,” or the circumcision. He is speaking of the Judaizers. Then, in verse 3, he says, “For we are the circumcision,” which is the true circumcision, “which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

That is exactly what he said in Romans 2:29. The true Israel of God, or the true Judahite, is one who places no confidence in the flesh, its works, its ancestry, or its righteousness. The true Israelite, the true Judahite, places all his confidence in Jesus Christ, whose praise is not of man, but of God.

All the externals profit us nothing, just as they profited none of those Judahites in Romans chapter 2, or anyone who was in that

kingdom. If all you have is externals, you have nothing. Everything is in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion and Prayer

For He, and He alone, is salvation. He is the true King of Israel and the King of the true Judahites.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, help us. Teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. As we continue this study in days to come, give us the answers we need. Help us, Lord. Give us enlightenment, grace, and mercy to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Who is Israel?

Part Two of Six

SCRIPTURE READING - Romans 4:1-17 (KJV)

Introduction and Review

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How

> was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised.
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> For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

At first there is the natural, and then there is the spiritual or the safe, whichever you want to call it. Secondly, we see the contrast between the first Adam, who is of the earth earthy, and the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That principle held true throughout the Old Testament. The tabernacle, the temple, and all of this were what we would call natural, carnal, or fleshly. In the New Testament, we find that all of it was nothing more than symbolical and emblematical, replaced by the true and real substance, which is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

We also found in Romans 2 that a true Judahite is one who worships God in the spirit, has no confidence in the flesh, and whose praise is of God and not of man. The word Judahite literally referred to someone who lived in the kingdom of Judah, was from the tribe or land of Judah, or belonged to the house of Judah. The word Jew, as translated in our Bible, usually refers to the Judahites—that is,

someone from the house or tribe of Judah, or from the land of Judah. A few times the Bible speaks of the Jews' religion, referring to Judaism.

With this understanding, there is no way in the world that we can be called Judeo-Christians, because we have nothing to do with the religion of Judaism. Christ fought Judaism. Christ established Christianity. If you want to refer to us as Old Testament and New Testament Christians, or even as Hebrew, or as having an Israelite connection, wonderful, fine. But Judaism and Christianity are absolutely, totally opposite. Christ condemned Judaism in Matthew chapter 5, Matthew chapter 15, Matthew 23, and over and over in the New Testament.

Some of you were caught by surprise when I said that Jesus Christ was not a Jew. He was not. He was a Judahite.

He was of the tribe, of the house, and of the lineage of Judah. But He was not a Jew in the sense that the word Jew is taken today—as a religion. It is taken as Judaism. Christ did not embrace Judaism. In fact, what He was doing in Matthew chapter 5 was correcting all the misinterpretations and misapplications of those Pharisees. He certainly was not a Jew in the sense that He embraced Judaism.

Look at Matthew 27. It was the Jews who were always persecuting Jesus Christ and attacking Him because He did not keep their traditions. When He was set down on the judgment seat, Pilate's wife sent unto him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." That is Jesus Christ.

"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude." The chief priests and elders were the religious leaders. They persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. Barabbas was a murderer, a seditionist, and a thief. The governor asked, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" They said, "Barabbas." Pilate then asked, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

They all said, "Let him be crucified." When the governor asked, "Why, what evil hath he done?" they cried out the more, saying, "Let him be crucified." When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but

that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”

Look once again at verse 20: “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude.” Whom did they persuade? The multitude, or the rest of the Jews. Then, in verse 25, “Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.” Pilate released Barabbas and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Very clearly, then, the Jews had nothing to do with Christ in the sense that they embraced Him. They hated Him and wanted Him crucified. The point is that Jesus Christ was not a Jew in the sense that He embraced Judaism. Christianity and Judaism are absolutely, totally opposite.

Abraham's Nationality and Idolatrous Background

Now if you'll go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 4, let's look at verse 1 because a question is asked there that has direct bearing on our subject. The question is asked, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?" So note carefully, the Bible is asking, what are we going to say about Abraham, our father, according to the flesh, what he had found? In other words, what did fleshly, natural, carnal Abraham find? Now, before I answer that question, and I'm going to answer it a little bit later, allow me to ask you a question. Please don't answer this out loud. But here's my question. What was Abraham's nationality? What was his nationality? Now, I'm not asking who he's descended from. I'm going to show you that in just a moment, too. But what was his nationality originally? Now, think about that. That's it.

Now, from whence did he spring? Was he, like Paul, boasting, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees? And, of course, no. Look in your Bible, hold Romans 4, to Genesis chapter 11. Genesis chapter 11. And notice, if you would please, verse 11. Genesis 11 and verse 11. The Bible says, "And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." You remember Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now skip down to verse 26. "And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." So Terah then is in the genealogy of Shem, and

so Abraham his son, or Abram his son, would be in the genealogy of Shem. So you could say that Abram was indeed a Shemite because he was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. Then if you look in Genesis 14 and verse 13, we're going back to Genesis 11, so hold it, Genesis chapter 14 and verse 13 the Bible says, "And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram." But now notice Abram is called the Hebrew.

Now, how in the world do you get that? Well, the word Hebrew is from the word Eber.

If you'll go back to Genesis 11 and look at verses 16 and 17, you will see that Eber was also one of Abram's ancestors. Notice verse 16, "And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg: And Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters." And you go right on down and then Abram, and his father Terah are descendants of Eber. So the word Eber, an Eberite or a Hebrew. So the word simply means a descendant of Eber or an Eberite or a Hebrew.

The Old Testament is quite clear in its statement that Abraham’s home was in lower Mesopotamia, especially Ur, and the Bible says it is Ur of the Chaldees. It is true that he lived in Haran, which is in the upper Mesopotamia Valley as well, on his journey and trek over to Canaan land. But the Bible specifically says that he was from Ur of the Chaldees, and Ur is in southern Mesopotamia.

In fact, the Word of God says in Genesis chapter 11, verse 28, “And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.” Verse 27 says, “Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.” Abraham, then, was in Ur of the Chaldees. The word Chaldees is really another way, another word for Babylon, so to speak. You could call him a Chaldean; you could call him a Babylonian by nationality.

Isaiah 51 gives us something interesting to consider. Isaiah 51, verses 1 and 2, presents another question that we could ask ourselves.

The Word of God says, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness.” He is speaking to those who follow after righteousness, to those who are believers. He says, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.”

Now go back to verse 1. God says, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD.” He is talking to the godly; He is talking to the righteous. Then He tells us, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.” What is He saying? Look back at your beginnings if you are one who follows after righteousness, if you genuinely seek the Lord. Then He says, “Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.” In other words, God says you have been hewn out and pulled out. You had better look and see what you were hewn out of and what you were pulled out of. You had better see what the nationality really was.

Why use that language? Because the Chaldeans, or the Babylonians, were notorious idolaters. They worshipped mainly the moon god and other idols as well. The moon god was a big cult in Babylon, especially even in Ur of the Chaldees.

The point I am trying to make is this: when God found Abraham, Abraham was an idolater. He lived in Ur of the Chaldees. And when God called him—and, by the way, God did call him—he did not call God. Look back in your Bibles, first of all, to Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. Then go to Acts chapter 7. Look in Genesis 12, verse 1.

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Note, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram." God came to Abram. God called him and said, You get out.

Acts 7 makes this exceedingly plain: "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father

Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."

So Abraham dwelt in the land of the Chaldees, specifically Ur of the Chaldees. He was from Mesopotamia. By nationality he was a Chaldean, or Babylonian.

God says, "You look to the rock which you were hewn out of and the pit out of which you were digged out." When Abraham was ready to find a bride for his son Isaac, he gave specific instructions to his servant Eliezer: "And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

That is exactly what he did.

In Genesis 24:10, the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master and departed, for all the goods of his master were in his hand. He arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. In verse 15, before he had finished speaking, Rebekah came out. She was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. Her father's name was Bethuel. In verse 29, we learn that Rebekah had a brother named Laban: “And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.” Thus, the father was Bethuel and the brother was Laban. Now notice their nationality in Genesis 25:20: “And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.”

It is important to understand that this family had gone to an area of the country where they were referred to as Syrians. This is

extremely important, and here is why. When Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebekah, was ready to marry, where was he sent? Genesis 28:1 says, “And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.”

So Jacob was sent back with the instruction not to marry a Canaanite. He was to go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, his mother's father, and take a wife from the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother. Laban was referred to as Laban the Syrian. Verse 5 says, “And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.” In Genesis 31:20 and 24, Laban is once again called Laban the Syrian. Jacob went there into that country. You know the story.

Jacob served fourteen years for Leah and Rachel—seven for each—and then another six years for the cattle that he got from Laban. That is another story. So Jacob had now been in Syria for twenty years. In fact, look in Genesis 31:41. Here are Jacob’s own words as he speaks to Laban, his father-in-law: “Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.” Laban was not necessarily a very honest man, you see, but Jacob is saying, “I served you for twenty years.” For twenty years, Jacob was in the land of Padan-aram, or the land of Syria.

Now, I am not going to go into Genesis 32, but you do know that Jacob had a wrestling match with the angel. Of course, the angel was the Lord himself, and the Lord changed Jacob’s name. He changed it to Israel.

With this understanding, you will be able to comprehend the confession that the descendants of Jacob had to make at the feast of the first fruits. Jacob had sojourned in the land of Syria for twenty years, and now his descendants were coming into Canaan land. Look in Deuteronomy 26, beginning with verse 1: “And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;” So

Jacob's descendants were coming into Canaan land, and they were going to possess it. "That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, 'A Syrian ready to perish was my father.'"

The confession continues: "And he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous." God said, in effect, "You tell me that your father was a Syrian, ready to perish." So Abraham was not only an idolater, so to speak, but also Jacob was ready to perish.

Now it is for this reason that I want you to turn back to Romans chapter 4 and ask the question again. Remember, the nationality of Abraham was that he was a Chaldean. Jacob was referred to as a Syrian, for he lived in Padan-aram for twenty years. Notice verse 1: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?"

The Question of Romans 4:1

What does that mean? What is the question asking? It means simply this: What has Abraham, in his natural state, in his carnal, physical state, found? What it is telling us is this, and I am going to show it to you in the rest of this chapter: Abraham did not earn, merit, or work for his salvation or his justification. It had nothing to do with his flesh. It had nothing to do with his family. What did he find? Here is what he found, and I am going to show it to you in this passage: He found that salvation was by grace alone, through faith, and not of oneself. He found that God's salvation, that God's justification, had nothing to do with works.

Now watch how verse 2 explains verse 1: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For

if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God." So if salvation was based upon Abraham, or anything that he was, or anything that he could do, or anything that he did, he would have a reason to boast in the glory, but certainly not before God, because he would have justified himself or earned salvation himself. He could not glory in God because his salvation would not have been dependent upon the sovereignty of God. So verse 2 says that he had no right to boast before God. Skip down to verse 4: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

If Abraham had earned or merited his salvation in any way, it could never have been of grace. It would have had to have been debt. In other words, if God saved Abraham for who he was, it was out of debt. If God saved Abraham for what he did, it was out of debt. But Paul says, Oh no, He did not save him out of debt. He saved him because of grace.

The Declaration of Abraham's Experience

To understand Romans chapter 4, you must understand that in Romans chapter 3 Paul begins an argument of justification by faith alone, and that argument runs from Romans 3 to Romans 8. It is one total, complete argument. In Romans 4, Paul deals with an objection. The Jews would say, "But what about Abraham, our father? Wasn't he justified by works?" The Apostle Paul answers, no, Abraham was justified by faith.

Now look at Romans 4:12: "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised." Abraham is called our father in a specific sense. Romans 4:16 says, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." Abraham is called our father and the father of us all in this specific way.

Declaration 1: Abraham's Faith Was a Work of God Alone

For instance, begin with verses 3 through 9 on the first point: the declaration of Abraham's experience. Since he is the father of the faithful and the father of the faith, consider the declarations of his experience. Romans 4:3 says, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This statement appears in Genesis, here in Romans, and in Galatians as well.

The first declaration is that Abraham's faith and justification were a work of God alone. Look closely at verse 3: "For what saith the scripture?" It says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

If Abraham believed God, what is the most fundamental assumption? God had to speak to Abraham. God had to reveal Himself to Abraham. It was not who Abraham was, nor what Abraham did. God spoke to him and revealed Himself, because Abraham could not have known who God was, or anything about God, apart from divine revelation.

That's why in Genesis 12 we read, "And God came to Abraham, and he said, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." The Bible says in Genesis 15 once again, "And God spoke to Abraham." In other words, it was a divine revelation. It was God revealing Himself.

I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Matthew. As you turn there, remember this: Abraham was living in the land of Ur of the Chaldees. He was living in the land of idols. He was living in the land of idolatry. Notice in Matthew chapter 11, here it is pointed out very clearly. Matthew 11, verse 26. The Scripture says, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Now look at verse 27. Here's what our Lord says. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Let me ask you a question. How does a man know who Jesus Christ is? The answer is the Father reveals him. How does a man

know who the Father is? The answer is Jesus Christ reveals him. Apart from that knowledge, no one can know.

Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldees. He could not know who God was apart from divine revelation. Matthew 16 records another truth: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." How did Peter know who Jesus Christ was? Not because he had been taught by man, nor because he had been instructed in the academies, but because the Father had revealed it unto him.

So Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldees, and the very first declaration of his experience is this: his faith and justification were the work of God alone. God came to Abraham, revealed himself to Abraham, and called Abraham.

Declaration 2: Abraham Was Ungodly and a Sinner

Romans 4:5 gives the second declaration: Abraham was a sinner and ungodly. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." If justification is by faith, and if God justifies the ungodly, and Abraham was justified by faith, what does that mean about Abraham? He was ungodly. He was lost, a sinner, and wicked.

The reason for making this point is not only what Scripture plainly says, but also that Jewish law teaches Abraham was not ungodly and was not a sinner. Here are two direct quotes. One claim states, "Abraham was perfect in all of his deeds with the Lord and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life." Yet "all the days of his life" would include the time before he was converted. Another statement says, "Abraham, our father, hath performed the whole law before it was given." Now that is a feat.

To say that Abraham was obedient to something in totality before he ever knew about it is to say that he kept the whole law perfectly before it was given. That means Abraham earned, merited, and worked out his salvation. What they are teaching, basically, is salvation by works. Scripture is exceedingly plain that this is totally heretical and erroneous.

Romans 5:6 says, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Verse 8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Very clearly, Abraham was a sinner. Abraham was ungodly because he was justified by faith. It is only God who justifies the ungodly by faith.

Paul’s argument is exceedingly clear: If Abraham was justified by faith and not of works, he was ungodly and a sinner. Matthew 18:11 says, “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” You have to be lost to be saved. That is all there is to it.

In John 8:56, Jesus Christ, looking at those Jews, said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” How could Abraham see the day of Christ? By faith. If Abraham saw it by faith, that means he was justified by faith, which means he was ungodly and a sinner. We are looking at the declarations of his experience.

Declaration 3: Scripture Confirms Abraham's Experience

The third declaration is that Scripture confirms the experience of Abraham. Romans 4:6-8 says, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Paul then asks, “Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?” and answers, “for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.” Two of the most treasured, honored, and revered men in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, were David and Abraham. Abraham confessed that he believed God and was saved by grace through faith, justified by faith.

David says the same thing. Who is going to argue with David and Abraham?

For instance, hold Romans chapter 4, but look in your Bibles to Psalm 32. Here is the direct quotation Paul takes in Romans 4, beginning with verse 1: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered, the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.

Now go back to Romans 4 and look at verse 6: “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” What the Scripture is saying is this: Whomever God justifies is blessed indeed. Why? Because God does not charge sin to their accounts.

Do you understand that this is basically what justification is? It is a declaration that we are sinless before the law. The only way we are sinless before the law is that we are in Jesus Christ, who kept the law of God perfectly. When God justifies us, He pronounces us righteous in light of the law, and that is all by faith in the work of Jesus Christ.

It is not based upon our works, our merit, who we are, or what we have done. No, it is based solely, totally, and completely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. Consequently, because we believe in Christ, our transgressions are forgiven. That is why he declares the blessedness of the man unto whom God will not impute sin. Rather, what He imputes or charges to his account is absolute righteousness.

Now look at Romans 4 again for the second point. We have looked at the declarations of Abraham’s experience; secondly, consider the circumstances of his experience, in verses 9 through 11: “Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of

the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also."

Circumstances of Abraham's Experience: Justified Before Circumcision

The Scripture is telling us that God justified Abraham before he was given the ordinance of circumcision. Justification, or salvation, is not based upon externals. You cannot be saved without being justified, and you cannot be justified without being saved. What the Apostle Paul is doing in verses 9–11 is striking out against what is known as the institutionalization of the faith. When people say that a person is saved by virtue of a certain rite, ceremony, or work, Paul says that is not true. Abraham was saved and justified before the rite of circumcision was given. It is not circumcision that saves. It is not baptism that saves. It is not church membership that saves. It is the triune God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ that saves.

Let me show you the tendency to institutionalize faith. Look in your Bibles at Acts chapter 15. There was a big argument over this—an entire council known as the Jerusalem Council. They came together to consider the matter. Acts 15:1 says, "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

Why is Paul arguing that Abraham was saved before he was circumcised? He knew that these Jews, these Judaizers, would say, "Wait a minute. If you really want to be saved, you have to be circumcised. You have to go through our rite, our ordinance, and the externals." Acts 15:5 says, "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Verse 24 says, "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment."

Note what Scripture says: if you are placing faith in a rite or an ordinance, then you are being subverted; your soul is being

subverted. This is what I mean by the institutionalism of faith. Just as the Judaizers in the days of the apostles demanded circumcision for salvation, likewise today there are plenty of people saying that if you are going to be saved, you must be baptized.

You must be baptized by this group or a special group. You must be baptized in this position, or you must do this or you must do that. In other words, it's all based upon externals. Paul says, no, no, no. Certainly, we cannot deprecate any ordinance that God ordained. But on the other hand, we cannot abuse and misuse and pervert those ordinances and make them teach what God never intended them to teach.

The Apostle Paul is saying, look, Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. What is he saying? The very fact that Abraham was justified before circumcision demonstrates that God is able to save whom He will, when He will, and where He wills. One does not have to be a Judahite or a Pharisee in order to be justified. One does not have to keep the externals, the rites, and the ordinances demanded by a certain group to be justified. God saves and God justifies without the externals.

Romans 4:11 says, “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” Did Abraham have faith before or after he was circumcised? Before. Why was circumcision given? It was just a sign. It was just a seal. That's all. He was already saved. It's just like we want our wives to wear their wedding bands. Why? It's a sign. It's a seal that they're married. But you can take that wedding band off, but that doesn't mean that you're no longer married. And that's all he said it is.

Abraham as Father of Believers Only

Paul says that Abraham received circumcision as “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised,” that he might be “the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” In this sense of the word, Abraham is only the true father of those who believe. He is not the father of unbelievers. I don't care

who they are. John chapter 8 shows what I am talking about. You can read the whole chapter when you get home.

"Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them." We've got the people. We've got the scribes and the Pharisees. "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery." "The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." Who were the Pharisees?

They were the straightest sect of believers. They would have been called the fundamentalists in Christ's day. The Sadducees would have been the liberals. The Pharisees said, "Your record's not true because you're bearing record of yourself."

"These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come."

"And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

"As he spake these words, many believed on him." There is an intellectual belief, a historical belief, a demonic belief, and then there is a saving belief. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is not just a profession that makes it evident that you are Christ's child. There must be a continuation in his word. There must be perseverance and preservation in the word. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Now, what is this argument?

"They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" What are they claiming? "We be Abraham's seed." In other words, they are Abraham's descendants and offspring. "Jesus answered them,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you." They claim to be Abraham's physical descendants, his seed. Christ says, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you."

"I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father." They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus saith unto them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father."

Then said they to him, "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

In verse 33 they said, "We be Abraham's seed." In verse 37 Christ says, "I know ye are Abraham's seed." But in verse 39, He denies that they are Abraham's children. You see the distinction? You can be a physical descendant of Abraham and still not be a child of Abraham. In fact, our Lord went on to say to these unbelievers, "Ye are of your father the devil." Abraham is not your father, because Abraham is the father of those who believe, according to Romans chapter 4.

Now, go back to Romans chapter 4. God justified Abraham before He gave him the ordinance of circumcision. In verses 13 through 15, God gave Abraham the promise before He gave the law. Romans 4, verse 13: "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world"—that is a very significant term.

Justified Before the Law Was Given

Abraham is not merely the heir of a little patch of land in the Middle East. He is the heir of the world: “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.”

Note that God gave Abraham faith and gave him the promise before the law was given. Paul emphasizes that Abraham was not justified by his circumcision or by keeping the law. The promise that he should be heir of the world was through faith. If justification is by the deeds of the law, by the works of man, or by externals such as circumcision and baptism, then faith is made void and the promise is made of none effect.

Look at verse 14: “For if they which are of the law be heirs...” If you want to hold on to the externals, the rites, and the works, then, if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is of none effect. If you cling to the strict letter of the law, Christ will do you no good, and none of the promises will do you any good. If you claim that everything is by the law, you are destroying faith and destroying Scripture. There is no hope for you. Everything is by grace through faith.

Now consider what he is saying in verse 15. Justification can never be by the law: “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.” What does it mean that the law worketh wrath? It means that the law brings men into judgment because of the curse of the law. Let me show you the curse.

Galatians 3, verses 10 through 12, explains what it means when Romans 4 says that the law worketh wrath: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." Again, verse 10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are

under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

What does the law demand of every individual? Three things. The law demands a personal obedience. It demands, secondly, a perfect obedience. And it demands, thirdly, a perpetual obedience. If you cannot give to God's law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, you are under the curse. You are under the condemnation. You are going to come into judgment.

To show you how simple this is, suppose that from this day forward you were able to be perfect. You never committed another sin, internally or externally. You were personally perfect and perpetually perfect. Would that earn you an entrance into God's kingdom? No, because what about all those sins you committed before you got perfect? Salvation, or justification, by the law is impossible. For the law worketh wrath. Then he says in Romans 4, "for where no law is, there is no transgression."

If you try to find the promise under the law, you will find the opposite: wrath. If you try to find the blessing under the law, you will find the opposite: a curse. Justification can never be by the law because the law worketh wrath.

What does it mean when it says, “for where no law is, there is no transgression”? Certainly, it does not mean that without law there is no sin. People were sinners long before the law was given at Mount Sinai, and the way we know they were sinners is that they died. The wages of sin is death. Sin is still there without the law, but the law codifies, defines, and establishes the fact that sin is the transgression of the law. Without the law, we would still be sinners; but since we have the law, we now know how great, vile, and wicked we really are as sinners.

The law magnifies our sin and our guilt. It will not lead us to justification and blessings; it will lead us to curses and condemnation. Romans 3, beginning in verse 19, says: “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the

knowledge of sin." If you truly understand the law, all it will do is shut your mouth and make you guilty before God, and you will realize how great a sinner you really are. Instead of justifying you, it will condemn you. Instead of erasing your sins, it will magnify them.

In Romans 4:9–12, Paul tells us that Abraham was justified before circumcision. In verses 13–15, he tells us that Abraham was justified before the law was given.

Conclusion: Faith Alone Makes True Children of Abraham

Paul's conclusion is found in verse 16: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." Verse 17 continues: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)" Wherever God's elect are, they will be made manifest by the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, the father of all who believe: "Therefore... before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

Galatians chapter 3 demonstrates that Abraham is indeed the father of believers. Galatians 3:6 says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." It does not say that, because Abraham was circumcised, it was accounted to him for righteousness. It does not say that his baptism was counted to him for righteousness, or that he was sanitized. No: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Who are the true children of Abraham? Those who are of faith. You may say, "But I am a real fleshly Israelite." It does not matter. If you do not have faith in Jesus Christ, you are only a lost fleshly Israelite. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with

faithful Abraham." Who is blessed with faithful Abraham? Only those who are of faith.

I was talking with a friend this week about the subject, Who is Israel? He stopped me and said, "Have you ever thought about how less trouble we would have in this world if every Christian understood three simple truths?" I asked, "What truth are you talking about?" He said, "Well, if they understood Romans 13, first."

Practical Application and Closing

Secondly, if they understood what the Bible taught about debt, they would stay out of it. Thirdly, if we found out that those folks living over in the Middle East are really not Israel, we would save ourselves an awful lot of heartache, trouble, and money. That's a fact. It's amazing how these three truths, understood from Scripture, could revolutionize our entire country: learn what the Bible says about Romans 13 and civil government; learn to stay out of debt; and learn what Paul says in Galatians 3:7: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Let's pray.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ for Your grace, mercy, and love to us. We pray, Lord, that You would give us understanding, speak to our hearts, encourage us, and enable us to honor Thee in all our lives, bringing our lives into conformity to Your Word. Help us do all things for Your honor and glory. Thank You, Father, for Your grace and mercy. Thank You for salvation by grace through faith. Thank You, Father, that it is not of works, it is not of rites, but it is trusting solely and totally in Jesus Christ, in who He is and what He has done. We give Thee the praise, honor, and glory, in Christ's name. Amen.

So let's just tell all Christians about those three things—if we can get them to listen. If they want to kill you, you have to tell them. I would have a fourth one that I'd really want to tell them.

CHAPTER 3

Who is Israel?

Part Three of Six

SCRIPTURE READING - Romans 9:1-18 (KJV)

Introduction and Context

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever, amen. Not as though the word of God had taken none effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of

> promise, at this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son. Not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.
>
> As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth.

For the last two weeks, we have been studying the subject, “Who is Israel?” In part one, we dealt with Romans chapter 2, especially verses 28 and 29, where the Apostle Paul said that the true Judahite is not one who is circumcised in the flesh, but whose circumcision is of God, whose praise is of God and not of man. Last week we looked at Romans chapter 4 and saw that Abraham was indeed the father of all those that believe, the father of those that walk in the steps of Abraham. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 7 summed it up: “Know ye therefore that they which be of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

The Word of God is telling us that it is the genuine Christian, those who are saved, who are indeed the children of Abraham. When we come to Romans chapter 9, it intensifies the truth that Paul has been enunciating. In this chapter Paul deals with a very serious objection to his teaching of justification by faith alone. His argument for justification by faith alone begins in Romans chapter 3 and goes through the latter part of chapter 8. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 deal basically with an objection to that doctrine.

If justification by faith is true, what about God's promise and covenantal relationship with national or natural Israel? Is there a failure on God's part since not all Israel is saved and the greater part rejects the Messiah? Paul demonstrates in Romans chapter 9 that the truth of justification by faith alone is not inconsistent with the promises of God. This truth is upsetting to those who trust in externals, rejoice in the flesh, and love rites and ordinances.

He begins in such a way as not to upset them immediately. In other words, he begins by expressing that he is indeed stating the truth and showing his love for them. I have a friend whom I love to hear preach. At one time he was in a barber's chair, and the barber wanted to argue with him over Romans 8 and Romans 9 concerning the doctrine of election. My friend certainly did not want to argue, but he said, "Look, let's choose a point of beginning. Let's begin where we agree, and then let's go down this list and try to take things one at a time." After they began where they agreed, when my pastor friend got through with him, every objection the man had was gone. He was left dumbfounded because, when the pastor got through, he had to agree with him. Finally, he said, "Well, Pastor, today we began where we agreed. Next time when we talk, let's begin where we disagree."

Paul's Affirmation and Heaviness (Romans 9:1-3)

What Paul is doing is showing these individuals, "Look, I do have some love and concern for you." It is not simply in your face. In verse 1, we have, first of all, Paul's affirmation: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not. My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." Some scholars regard verse 1 as an oath. However, it is not necessary to interpret verse 1 as an oath. The mode of assertion that the Apostle Paul uses in verse 1 is thoroughly scriptural. As you study the Bible, you will find many times an assertion and then a denial. Paul said, "I say the truth in Christ"—that is an assertion—"I lie not"—that is a denial: I am not lying.

Do you remember when the Pharisees sent men to John the Baptist and asked him, "Art thou the Christ?" Scripture says in John 1:20 that he confessed and denied not. There is the positive and the negative. He confessed that he was not the Christ, that he was not

the Messiah. He did not deny that he was the forerunner, but he certainly did not confess that he was Christ. So he confessed and denied not. When you come to Isaiah 38:1, Isaiah comes to King Hezekiah and tells him, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

There is an affirmation and a negation: “Thou shalt die and not live.” In Romans chapter 9 and verse 1, the Apostle Paul is giving a formal assertion of his integrity. He is saying, “I am speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience is bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.” In other words, he is saying, “What I am about to say, I am saying as a Christian man before Christ, realizing that I must answer to Christ for what I say. I am giving this answer before Christ in a clear conscience, and the Holy Spirit is bearing me witness that what I am saying is indeed truth.”

This is Paul's affirmation. He is not lying; he is telling the whole truth. He is giving this affirmation before expressing his heaviness. He says, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.” The Apostle Paul is speaking of great grief, a continual and incessant sorrow that was constantly and continually in his heart. He is no indifferent spectator to the distresses of his people. He is not simply a bystander looking on with indifference. He is concerned about them. He has great heaviness and great sorrow in his heart, and that sorrow is constant and continual. He does not merely think of them and then forget them. Thus Paul gives not only an affirmation that what he is about to say is the truth, but also his heaviness and his constant sorrow for them.

Now we see Paul's heart. He says, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.” Paul is speaking of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. First, note that Paul is not speaking nationalistically. Verse 3 is not nationalism in the sense that we know it today. Nationalism and patriotism are associated with a political and geographical entity. We say, for instance, that we are Americans.

Paul's Heart and the Nature of His Kinsmen

What do we mean by that? We say that means we live in America. It is a political and geographical location. You've heard the old expression, and a lot of people have used it in this country: "My country, right or wrong, my country." Well, I certainly disagree with that. I'm certainly patriotic, and I want to do everything I can to protect my country and promote my country. But when my country is contrary to God, my country is wrong. When my country is contrary to the Constitution, to the original compact that we agreed upon, then it is wrong. It still may be my country, but it is wrong. When you and I think of nationalism, we think of a political or geographical area.

This was not the concept in biblical times. Paul's concept was familialistic and religious. Note what he said in verse 3: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my"—not countrymen, but "my brethren and my kinsmen according to the flesh." He is referring to all of his Israelitish friends as his family. They are his kinsmen. In fact, look in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 14, while holding Romans chapter 9, and notice verse 14. In fact, let's read verse 13.

"And there came one that had escaped and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eschol and brother of Aner. And these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, 318, and pursued them unto Dan." Now, who was the brother that had been taken captive? Lot. Do you know what relation Lot was to Abraham? He was his nephew. But when he heard that his brother had been taken captive, he did not just look upon Lot as a nephew; he called him a brother.

Note something else: there were 318 trained fighting men in Abraham's household. "And when Abraham heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants," not his servants, just his trained servants—that is, trained fighting men—"born in his own house, 318." If Abraham had 318 trained fighting men born in his own house, how many men did he have who were too old or too young or not trained in warfare?

What about their wives? What about their daughters? What about their little children? In other words, when you talk about Abraham's household, he probably had around 2,000 people in his household—318 trained fighting men. If they had a wife each, and if they had two kids each, you figure it out. These individuals were basically referred to as a family.

Look in Genesis 17, beginning with verse 10. God says, "This is my covenant, which you shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee, every man child among you shall be circumcised. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child of your generations. He that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with money, must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of the foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant."

So every man-child had to be circumcised, and thus they were religiously connected as well as familialistic. They were considered family and also religiously connected.

For the Apostle Paul, Israel meant a family and a faith. That is why he says in Romans 9, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." Their rejection of Christ, and God's rejection of the nation, was extremely personal to Paul. It was like losing a real brother or sister, or losing a mother or father. Moreover, since their rejection included an apostasy—a turning from the true faith—Paul felt a religious hurt as well. It was not merely a family hurt, as though some member of the family had died; those family members had turned from the true faith.

In Romans 11:1, he says, "I say, then have God cast away his people? God forbid," that is, perish the thought. He continues, "For I also am an Israelite. Of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." Paul says, "I'm also an Israelite"—one of the twelve tribes. He is "of the seed of Abraham," a direct descendant of Abraham, in his lineal descent. He is a Benjamite, of the tribe of

Benjamin, but he could also claim to be a Judahite because Benjamin was in Judah. Thus Paul was an Israelite, a Benjamite, a Judahite, and a direct descendant of Abraham. He had strong feelings for his people, whom he called his kinsmen according to the flesh. Their rejection of the Messiah, and God's rejection of the nation, was therefore extremely personal and painful to him.

In verse 3, Paul says, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." What are we to make of this statement? When Paul says, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ," is he wishing to be cut off, reprobated, or damned for Israel's sake? Having understood Christianity, salvation, and damnation, is it possible for a Christian truly to want to be damned in order to save others? Some scholars will tell you that this was exactly what Paul had in mind.

However, I do not necessarily think that is so. Let me explain what I mean. When you look at verse 3 and the first four words, “for I could wish,” the Greek tense could be literally translated, “I could be wishing,” that is, if it were possible. Paul does not say that he does wish, but that he could wish.

For instance, look at Philemon 13. Onesimus was the runaway slave who was converted in Rome under the influence of the Apostle Paul. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, although Onesimus had been very beneficial to him. Paul says, “Whom I have sent again,” and, “whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly.” Thus, you could read it this way: “whom I was wishing to have retained with me.”

I wanted to retain him, but I did not. It was something I would like to do, or be able to do, but I could not do it and would not do it without your permission.

Now, the point I am trying to make is this: when you come back to Romans chapter 9 and verse 3, Charles Hodge, the great theologian, interprets the text like this: “I could wish were the thing allowable or possible.” In other words, Paul is saying, “I could have such a wish as this, but it is not possible. It would not work. I cannot die for you.”

If you look in Galatians 4 and verse 20, there is one other illustration of the same construction. Paul tells these Galatians, “I desire to be present with you and to change my voice, but I stand in doubt of you.” What is Paul saying? “I desire to be present with you now.”

Paul wanted to be there with the Galatians, but it was impossible because he was somewhere else. In other words, he could say, "I'm wishing to be there with you. I'd really like to be there, but it's impossible. I cannot be there." When we return to Romans 9 and verse 3, this is essentially what Paul is saying. In view of the great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, he is saying, "You know that I'm so concerned about you and this situation that, if somehow my being sacrificed would help you, I'd be willing to do so. But of course it's not possible."

The nearest thing we have to this concept is found in Exodus chapter 32, where Moses and Paul thought much alike. Beginning with verse 30, Moses said to the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord. Peradventure, I shall make an atonement for your sin." Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." What was Moses saying? "Lord, if you're not going to forgive this people, I don't want to live. Just blot my name out as well."

It is extremely difficult to comprehend the passion, sorrow, and heaviness that Moses and Paul felt for their own people. There are very few people in this land, or even in the world, who could stand with Moses and Paul and say the same truth. We are concerned about our country, family, and friends, but none of us, if we tell the truth, could say with the Apostle Paul, "I have continual and constant sorrow and heaviness in my heart, wanting you to be right with God and wanting you to be converted." Paul's heart is expressed in verses 2 through 3. Therefore, when an Israelite heard this, he did not take Paul's words lightly. Paul was speaking both from a family standpoint and from the standpoint of faith. Now look at verses 4 and 5, at Paul's identification.

Identification of Israelites (Romans 9:4-5)

He said in verse 3 that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, and now he identifies who those brethren and kinsmen are. He says, “Who are Israelites? To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises? Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever?” So Paul identifies his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, so there can be no misunderstanding. They are Israelites. He identifies them by their religious heritage.

Now, let us look at verses 4 and 5 in detail. He specifically delineates certain things concerning Israelites. He says in verse 4, “to whom pertaineth the adoption.” What does that mean? It was the glory of national or natural Israel to be deemed the people of God. Let us be absolutely honest: Israel, national, natural Israel, were indeed the people of God in an unusual sense. God did not give his law to the Babylonians. He did not reveal himself to the Assyrians. He simply chose Israel.

Deuteronomy 4 says: “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there had been any such as this great thing is, or have been heard like it. Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes. Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know the Lord he is God. There is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee, and upon earth he showed thee his great fire, and thou hearest his words out of the midst of the fire.” So here Israel is in a unique situation. They have heard God.

Deuteronomy 7:6–8 says, “For thou art a holy people of the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you." So the Lord chose Israel because He loved Israel.

We are talking about how Israel, natural Israel, is the adopted son of God in the Old Testament. In Exodus chapter 4 and verse 22, and in Jeremiah 31 and verse 9, God says, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn." To them went the adoption. They were considered the adopted son of God and the people of God.

In Romans chapter 9, he also mentions this: "Who were Israelites to whom pertaineth the adoptions and the glory." What glory? The Shekinah glory. You can find it in Exodus 14 verse 34.

Everyone knows that when God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, He led them by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night. When that tabernacle was set up, the Shekinah glory of God came down. When the temple was built, the Shekinah glory of God came down. No other nation, no other people had the presence of God like national, or natural, Israel. So to them were not only the adoptions, but also the glory.

In verse 4, Paul says, "and the covenants." Of course, God had bound Himself to Israel by covenant. These included the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the Sinaitic covenant. When God gave the law in Exodus chapter 19, what did the people say? "All that the Lord hath said we will do." Thus, they had the covenants.

Then he says in verse 4, "and the giving of the law." The giving of the law was an aspect of the covenant, but the law was basic to Israelite life. God had expressed Himself and revealed His will to His people through the law. That was how they should conduct themselves toward God and toward others. So, they had the adoptions, the glory, the covenant, the giving of the law in verse 4, and the service of God. What was the service of God? It was all the rituals, all the pomp, all the ceremonies, and all the sacrifices involved in the tabernacle or the temple. They had all of that.

Then he says, "and the promises." The promises, as we will see later, referred to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In Acts 26, Paul, standing before Agrippa, refers to the promise. He says, "And now I

stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers." The hope of the promise refers to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when Paul uses the term "Israelite," he is using it in the sense of a family and a faith. In verse 5 of Romans chapter 9, he identifies who the Israelites are.

They are the ones who have the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. Then he says, "whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever." Note the connection between "the promises" and Christ.

Now, verse 7, he deals with the heritage of the fathers: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. These men were highly favored and blessed, and consequently, through the ages they have been regarded with great distinction. Paul is demonstrating that through these men the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, came. He speaks not only of the fathers, but says, "whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is, over all, God blessed forever."

Paul is here speaking of the Theoanthropic Christ. That word means the God-man. It is true that Jesus Christ descended from the fathers. He condescended and took upon Himself flesh and blood such as you and I have, so that Jesus Christ was perfect man. But He was more than perfect man; He was also perfect God. That is what the Scripture means when it says He is God blessed forever.

First Timothy 3:16 says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." What is the mystery of godliness? God was manifest in the flesh. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. Jesus Christ is the God-man, perfect man and perfect God.

In identifying who Israel is, the Apostle Paul says they have the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promise. Through these fathers, God gave us His Son, and His Son is God blessed forever.

Now we come to the substance of what Paul wants to share in verses 6 through 8: Paul's explanation.

The Objection and Paul's Explanation (Romans 9:6-8)

The grand objection to the Apostle Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone centered around this fact: most of the nation had rejected Christ. Christ had said, "You're going to be left to yourself, your house is going to be destroyed." They had cast off Christ, and God had righteously cast them off. Now here is the question: Did that act and fact of rejection nullify the promises of God? Did it make the Word of God of none effect?

What Paul is about to tell us in verses 6 through 8 is highly contrary to the flesh. The nation at that time did not want to hear it. Individuals at that time did not want to hear it, and many people today do not want to hear it. He is going to tell them that God is absolutely sovereign, and that God's salvation, redemption, word, and promise do not depend upon man in any way whatsoever. The rejection of the nation or of the Messiah did not imply a failure in God, His Word, or His promise.

Before going further, let us read verse 6: "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel." Paul says that his teaching does not negate the promise of God, nullify the covenants of God, or imply a failure in God whatsoever. Why, then, does Paul make this statement: "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel"?

It was a common opinion among the Jews in Christ's day that the promises of God made to Abraham and his seed included all the natural descendants, sealed as such by the right of circumcision, and that these would inherit all the blessings promised by God. They believed that merely being natural descendants of Abraham was sufficient. Thus it was enough for them to say, "We have Abraham to our father." That is what they told Christ in John chapter 8: "We be not born of fornication. We have one father, even Abraham." In other words, they were telling Him, "We've got a father, Christ. You don't. You're an illegitimate child." They believed it was sufficient: "We've got Abraham to our fathers." Therefore, they rejected Paul's teaching as inconsistent with the promises of God because they did

not believe in Christ, and Christ had cast them off. They said, "Paul, your teaching cannot be right, because it would nullify the promises of God."

Paul had already told them that there was no action of man that could thwart the promise of God. Notice Romans 3:1: “What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?” Remember, the word “Jew” means Judahite, someone of the tribe, lineage, land, house, or nation of Judah. That is where the tabernacle and temple were.

So what advantage did the Judahite have, or what profit is there of circumcision? “Much in every way. Chiefly,” here is the chief advantage: “because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” That is, they had the Word of God. Notice what he says in verse 3: “For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid! Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar, as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” What if they do not believe? Does that nullify and make void the Word of God? Of course not.

How can the Apostle Paul say that? Go back to Romans chapter 9 and see what he is actually teaching. In verses 6 through 8, he demonstrates that natural privilege is negated by the sovereignty of God. The natural privilege these people were claiming was useless and worthless: “They're not all Israel who are of Israel.”

What does that mean? First, natural privileges—descendancy from Abraham—mean nothing as far as God's salvation is concerned. The promise to Israel was not made to the whole nation, but to a limited portion of it. Even Abraham's natural seed were not all in the covenant. Therefore God's blessings did not proceed along the line of natural descent.

This is demonstrated by the choice of Isaac over Ishmael. Abraham had Ishmael by Hagar, but God did not choose him. Abraham said, “O that Ishmael might live before you.” God said, “He shall indeed be a great nation, but I'm not choosing him. I'm going to give you a son.” Abraham had Isaac; and after Sarah died, he married Keturah.

He had Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah, all born of Keturah, as recorded in Genesis 25, verses 1 and 2. While his children, like Ishmael and these children by Keturah, were given some inheritance, a small portion, and sent away, Isaac received the estate. Isaac received everything, according to Genesis 25, verses 5 through 6.

Isaac was born according to God's purpose, God's power, God's promise, and God's time, and he was born not by ordinary nature. He was the child of promise. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born, and Sarah was ninety. Is that ordinarily what happens? No. That is not ordinary. Here was the distinction that God made at the very first.

The point is that it was not Abraham's position, but God's promise, that determined the true seed. The true seed was not Ishmael. The true seed was not Zimran and Jokshan, Medan and Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. No, the true seed was Isaac. Since God limited his original promise to one son of Abraham, this limitation necessarily excludes the purely natural descendants as well. If God drew the distinction at the outset, it could not be wrong to draw it subsequently through the ages.

The apostle distinguishes between the seed as a whole and the promised seed in order to emphasize divine election as the fundamental principle. He says, “They’re not all Israel who are of Israel.” The common election and selection of the nation of Israel as a whole does not prevent the sovereign God of infinite holiness from choosing for himself, according to his own purposes and his own counsel, whatever portion out of that nation he chooses to save. When Paul says, “They are not all Israel who are of Israel,” he is pointing out that natural descendancy from Abraham is not the basis or foundation for salvation or blessing. To put it another way, all belonging to external Israel, all belonging to national, natural Israel, are not the people of God.

This distinction is important because natural descent does not establish the true seed. The promise, rather than mere descent from Abraham, determines whom God recognizes as his people. That is the principle the apostle is emphasizing when he separates the seed as a whole from the promised seed.

Let us look at it from another perspective. All who are in the church are not of the church. We have many people in churches across this country who are legitimate, lawful members, many of them in good standing, but they are lost as a hound dog. They are not really of the church.

That is all the Apostle Paul is saying. There are plenty of people in Israel as a nation, natural Israel, who were not and still are not converted. Descendancy from Abraham is not the basis of salvation; it cannot be. Only those who are genuinely converted are true Israel. Only those who are genuinely converted are in the true church.

When Paul said in verse 6, "They are not all who are of Israel," let us look at how he explains this. If you comprehend the teaching of the Apostle Paul at this point, it will not only aid you in your eschatology, your doctrine of last things, but it will also keep you from political Zionism, which is nothing more than Marxism and Communism under a different name.

Here is his explanation: "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect, for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." In case you cannot understand what he has said, he says it another way: "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children." Verse 7 is very emphatic: "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham." The word "seed" is the word sperma. "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children." The word is teknon. Here, then, is the distinction between the seed of Abraham and the children of Abraham.

We saw this in Romans 4 and John chapter 8. He says, "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children." Then he says, "but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." The promise will produce its own children. Are you listening? It is the power of God, and not the sperm of man, that makes one the true child of God. Abraham's lineal descendants have no special claim upon the mercies and blessings of God. Many thought they were children of God simply because they were children of Abraham, and Paul is correcting that error in Romans chapter 9. The promise to Abraham and his seed was not made to him and all his descendants in general, but to him and a particular promised seed. That is why he said, "but in Isaac

shall thy seed be called." You can be the seed of Abraham, but that does not make you the child of Abraham.

So Paul says in verse 7, "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children." Then he says, "but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Why Isaac? Because Isaac was the child of promise. Isaac would never have existed except for the divine, sovereign intervention of God. Abraham was past child-bearing years, child-producing years. So was Sarah. But God sovereignly, miraculously, and powerfully intervened, and Isaac was born—the child of promise. Likewise, all of Abraham's true children will be children of the promise.

Let me show you. We will come back to this thought a little bit later, but turn in your Bibles to Titus chapter 1 and then 2 Timothy chapter 1. Notice Titus 1. Titus 1, verses 1 and 2: "Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth, which is after godliness in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised." When did God promise eternal life? Before the world began.

Now let me ask you a question. If He promised eternal life before the world began, to whom did He promise it? You and I were not even in existence, except in the mind of God. Well, the truth is, we were there, but only in Christ. Notice 2 Timothy 1 and verse 9. The Apostle Paul says, "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, when? Before the world began." Now, who did He promise eternal life to? He promised it to us. Where were we? We were in Christ.

So just like Isaac is the child of promise, the true child of Abraham, likewise, all the true children of Abraham are children of the promise.

Now let us go back to Romans chapter 9. Romans 9, verse 6, says, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel." If you do not understand it, he explains it a little better in verse 7: "Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." In Isaac, the child of promise. Now verse 8 is exceedingly clear. Paul says the same thing a third time. If

you do not understand verse 6, he says it again in verse 7. If you do not understand verse 7, he says it again in verse 8: “That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God. But the children of the promise are counted for seed.”

Let me ask you a question. See if you can put two and two together. Let us suppose, for one instance, that everybody in the Middle East were indeed true descendants of Abraham. They are not, but let us say they were. Would that give them any special status? No. What did he just say? “That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.”

I told Alice this week, as we were writing, “I do not understand this. I know preachers and Christians who would turn on other Christians who have done so in order to protect a group of unbelieving, reprobate communists and Zionists. I do not understand that. I cannot comprehend that.” If you understand what the Apostle Paul is saying, “that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for seed.” The children of the promise are those whom God comes to sovereignly, powerfully, and savingly bring to Christ.

Illustrations of Sovereign Election (Romans 9:9-13)

So he says, “They are not all Israel who are of Israel. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children. But in Isaac shall thy seed be called, that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of promise are counted for seed.” The children of the flesh—that is, anyone who claims ascendancy from Abraham, anyone by Abraham—God specifically states, are not the children of God. Only the children of promise are counted for the seed.

In the next few verses, the Apostle Paul illustrates this truth with two very common but usually misunderstood truths. Look in verse 9: “For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.” What does God do? God bypasses Ishmael. What did Abraham say? “Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee.” God said, “Oh, I’ll make him a great nation.”

God was not choosing Ishmael. He was going to give Abraham a special child. Romans 4:17 says, "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Look what Abraham did: he "against hope believed in hope." Abraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety. Yet he believed that he might become the father of many nations according to what had been spoken: "So shall thy seed be."

Abraham did not consider his own body, now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Can you believe that? Abraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety. When God said, "You're going to have a son," Abraham said, "I believe it." He never even considered that he was a hundred years old. He never even considered that Sarah was ninety. "I believe it." Here was a special child of promise. God bypassed Ishmael, and God chose Isaac.

Someone might say, "Well, Brother Weaver, I can understand that because, although Ishmael was the son of Abraham, he was also the son of Hagar, who was an Egyptian." God still has the right to choose. In case you might think that would be a legitimate objection, verses 10 through 13 throw dishwater very quickly upon that objection. Romans chapter 9 gives another illustration: "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac."

The children were Jacob and Esau. "For the children," being not yet born, "neither having done any good or evil," had done nothing at all. This was so "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." It was said to Rebecca, "The elder shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Here are Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac is a child of promise. Here are two boys with the same mother, the same father, born at the same

time, in the same environment, with the same background and history. Yet God said, “I’ll take Jacob and leave Esau.” Was Esau not a descendant of Abraham? Yes. Was he not the son of Isaac? Yes. But God said, “I’m not going to choose Esau. I want to choose Jacob.” Look what He said.

“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth.” You and I both know that Esau was an evil man, and the Edomites are evil people today. I concur. But God’s selection of Jacob was not based upon the wickedness of Esau. God said that His purpose might stand based upon His calling, not of works.

One of my favorite stories concerns Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He announced that he was going to preach on this text: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” After the service, a lady came up to him and said, “Oh, governor”—that is what they called Mr. Spurgeon—“I’m so thankful you’re going to preach on that text. I’ve had such difficulty with that passage of Scripture.” Spurgeon said, “So have I.” She was glad to find someone who had trouble with it too. She said, “I’ve never understood how God could reject Esau.” Spurgeon replied, “That’s not the problem I have. I understand how God could reject Esau. I could not understand how He could love that miserable, cheating, seductive warden Jacob. That’s the thing that concerns me.” And that is a fact. God was not obligated to save either of them, but He chose Jacob.

Here is what he is saying: Esau is bypassed and Jacob is chosen. God is not limited by the law of primogeniture—that is, the eldest. He bypassed the eldest and chooses and calls whom He wills. Note verse 11 again. God’s calling is based upon His divine purpose and will. It is not based upon human works, human merits, ancestry, or anything else. God saves whom He wills, when He wills, and where He wills. Why? For He is God alone.

God's Righteousness in Election (Romans 9:14-18)

Verses 14 through 18 simply reiterate and emphasize this truth: “What shall we say then?” What are we going to say to God’s choice of Isaac over Ishmael, or Jacob over Esau? “What shall we say then?

Is there unrighteousness with God?" Was God unrighteous when He chose Jacob? No. Was God unrighteous when He chose Isaac? No. Whatever God does is right.

He says in verse 15, "For he said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Cannot God do with His own as He wills? Of course He can. Is there a wife who would go to her husband and say, "I'm very upset with you because you don't love other women the way you love me"? No. That wife wants to be special and exclusively the wife of her husband. As that husband has the absolute right to love his wife, and that wife has the absolute right to love her husband, God has the absolute right to do the same thing.

If I had one hundred-dollar bill in my hand and gave it to Ed, I did not owe Ed any money, and he did not owe me any money. I simply gave it to him. Is everybody in this room going to get mad at me because I gave something to Ed and not to you, when I did not owe anything to you either?

We can be gracious, but we do not want God to be gracious. We want to help whom we want to help, but we do not want God to be like that. We want to love whom we want to love, but we do not want God to be like that. So he says, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" No. God said, "I'll have mercy upon whom I'll have mercy. I'll have compassion on whom I'll have compassion." Verse 16: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." And then he says, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up,"

"That I might show my power in thee, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Why did God raise up Pharaoh? To destroy him. God endured his rebellion and his wickedness and his ungodliness until the justice of God fell upon him. And verse 18 concludes it, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

God may righteously choose an Isaac and reject an Ishmael. God may righteously choose a Jacob and reject an Esau. God may righteously save me and not my wife. God may righteously save a wife and not the husband. God may righteously save children and

not the parents. God may righteously save the parents and not the children. God may do whatever He wills, for He is God. Amen.

Application and Conclusion

I have already said it, but I am going to show it to you again in Scripture. Look in Romans 9, verse 7: “Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” So the seed is going to be called in Isaac, as Isaac was the child of promise. So those who are going to be called are identified in Isaac, the child of promise.

Now look at verse 8: “Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children.” Verse 8 says, “That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Thus, Romans 9:7 says, “And in Isaac shall thy seed be called,” and verse 8 says, “But the children of the promise are counted for seed.” The seed is not counted merely by being the seed of Abraham; the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Now look in Galatians 4 and verse 28. Here's what Paul says about those who are the true believers, the true Israelites, the true church. He says this: “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are what? The children of promise.” Because we too have been saved solely, sovereignly by the grace of God.

Father, we're so thankful today for Jesus Christ, our Lord. We're so thankful for the promise made in the Fathers, as we shall see later. That promise is indeed Jesus Christ and His salvation. He alone is the Messiah. He alone is the God-man. He alone is the Redeemer. And He alone is Lord of all. We bow to Him this day. We worship Him. And I ask you, Father, to give us grace and mercy to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Who is Israel?

Part Four of Six

Galatians 3:1–14

SCRIPTURE READING - Galatians 3:1–14 (KJV)

Introduction and Overview of Galatians

Today we come to part four of the series, "Who is Israel?" The message today is an introductory prelude to the message I want to bring next week. I want to read all of Galatians chapter 3 today, and I will not get to the part that I really want to preach on. But you have to see the context and the connection before I get down to verse 16 and verse 29 and the other verses that relate particularly to the issue.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered

so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

SCRIPTURE READING - Galatians 3:15-29 (KJV)

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

> But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

We have covered Romans chapter 2, especially verses 28 and 29, and Romans chapter 4, where Abraham is the father of the faithful and of those who walk in the steps of our father Abraham. Last time we looked particularly at Romans chapter 9, where the Apostle Paul pointed out that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called," because Isaac was the child of promise; likewise, we too are now the children of promise.

Galatians chapter 3 further develops Romans chapter 9. Its basic teaching is that only the saved are the true children of Abraham. Galatians has been called the charter of Christian liberty, for it destroys and overthrows the legalism and Pharisaism of the Judaizers. In this book, the Apostle Paul was not a diplomat or a peacemaker. Many would call him a troublemaker, but he was indeed a prophet. He thunders against those who would deny the grace of God in Christ Jesus and the truth of justification by faith alone.

Galatians was Martin Luther's favorite book, the book of the great Reformer in the 1500s. He said of it, "Galatians is my book," because justification by faith alone is so clearly taught in this book.

Since Galatians is vital and critical to our study, I want first to give a broad overview, then center on chapter 3 and possibly chapter 4, because those chapters deal with the crux of the issue in answering the question, Who is Israel? Now, look back in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 1. The first nine verses are basically an introduction. In verses 1 through 5, you have the ground of liberty:

our liberty is in Christ Jesus Himself. I am not going to take time to read all of these. In verses 6 through 9, which I do want to emphasize, you have the challenge to liberty. Look what he says to these Galatians.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." Paul explains that "another" is *heteros*, meaning another of a different kind. Then he says, "Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." In verse seven, "another" is *allos*, meaning another of the same kind. Thus, the gospel is unique. If you move from the gospel of Christ, you have moved into another gospel of a different kind; you have left the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But look what Paul says: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Verse 9 says, "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

The word "accursed" is the Greek word *anathema*, which literally means to be set aside, to be set apart, and to be marked out for certain and sure destruction. So the Apostle Paul says that if anybody comes around and preaches another gospel, let him be accursed. Even an angel from heaven, let him be accursed. I do hope that you realize there are many cults and isms that do not follow the Bible because they claim to have received their instruction from an angel from heaven. They have departed from the gospel. The Apostle Paul says, let that individual be accursed. Even an angel, let him be accursed.

Verses 1 through 9 are basically the introduction. In chapter 1, verse 10, through chapter 2, verse 20, you have the biographical argument. Paul teaches that he has received an independent revelation from God himself. This argument summarizes how God gave Paul the revelation independently of human tradition, independently of the Judean churches, independently of the Judaizing brethren, independently of apostolic pressure, and independently of selfish interests.

Secondly, you have the theological argument in chapter 3, verse 1, through chapter 4, verse 31. You have the biographical argument in chapters 1 and 2, the theological argument in chapters 3 and 4, the practical argument in chapters 5 and 6, and the conclusion in chapter 6, verses 11 through 18.

You can see very clearly that the book of Galatians is easily divided. You have the historical, or biographical, then the doctrinal, and then the practical. That is how Paul divided many of his books: historical or biographical, doctrinal, and practical. The central section of Galatians is chapters 3 and 4. But chapters 3 and 4 are not simply the central section of the book; they are the very heart of the book. There the Apostle Paul deals with a straightforward doctrinal question.

The Central Question of Galatians 3-4

Are men made righteous by relationship with Abraham, or by works, as in keeping the law, its ordinances, rites, and ceremonies, or by their relationship to Jesus Christ and by solely trusting in the atoning and sacrificial work of Jesus Christ? The controversy between Paul and the Pharisees, the controversy between Paul and the Jews, and the controversy between Paul and the Judaizers was over biblical faith. The truth of the gospel was at stake. Paul answers the question of how men are justified with specifics, illustrations, and documentation.

Paul's First Question: Bewitched Galatians

Now, however, before he gives us the answers, he begins by asking questions. These questions that he asks were designed not only to make the Galatians think but they were also to demonstrate the truth that he was about to enunciate and proclaim. So actually, in Galatians 3, verses 1-5, you have the first five questions. And that's what I want to deal with, and then try to give you a summary of those questions, and of course then a summary of verses 7-10 or 11. Galatians 3 and verse 1, Paul says, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" I want you to note, he begins this with, "O foolish Galatians." Paul

does not, at this point in this chapter, address them as brethren. He just calls them Galatians and even foolish Galatians.

Now the reason is very simple. Because if they are going to seek to be justified or saved by the law or by the works or by any other method than Jesus Christ, then they are not his brethren. Even though the Judaizers, and I'll show you this from the Bible in just a moment, the Judaizers were individuals who professed to believe in Jesus Christ, but in reality what they were teaching was this, that Jesus Christ was not really sufficient for salvation, that in order to really be saved, you had to be circumcised and you had to keep the law of Moses. So what they were doing was adding works to grace, basically speaking.

Now, I want you to look in Galatians chapter 5 at verse 4, and look what the Apostle Paul told these Galatians. Look in chapter 5 and verse 4. He says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Now, there are individuals who try to take this verse and try to say that you can lose your salvation. That is not what this verse is talking about. Here's all Paul is saying. Paul is saying if you're seeking to be justified by the sphere of works or by your obedience to the law, then you have left the sphere of grace. Law and grace do not mix. Works and grace do not mix. If you earn something, it can't be of grace. If it's given to you, it cannot be of works. So the Apostle Paul is saying, look, if you're seeking to be justified by your deeds, by your works, by your merits, then you have left the sphere of grace. You have nothing to do with grace.

The truth of the matter is this: These Judaizers were saying that it was all right to believe in Christ, but if you really wanted to be saved, then you needed to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. Thus, what they were doing was adding works to grace. But the Scripture teaches that salvation is in Jesus Christ alone, plus nothing, minus nothing.

The apostle was not just fighting against the Jews who denied Christ. He was not just fighting against the Pharisees who had their own traditions and their own interpretations. He was fighting against individuals who claimed to believe in Christ, but were adding

something to it. Acts 15:1 says, “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Verse 5 says, “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” Verse 24 adds, “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment.”

In Galatians 2:3–4, the Apostle Paul says, “But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.” These were false brethren who sought to bring believers into bondage by adding circumcision and the law to Christ.

Understand what these Judaizers were saying: You had to be circumcised in order to genuinely be saved. You had to keep the law.

Paul was concerned enough about the situation in Galatia, especially in chapter 3, that he was not willing then to call them brethren. In relation to grace, they were not his brethren indeed. In Galatians 4:11 he says, “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” In verse 20 he says, “I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.” Later, he becomes a little more gracious and does call them brethren, but he was not mincing words. He was saying, If you are going to add your works to the grace of God and justification by faith alone, I am afraid of you. I stand in doubt of you. I do not believe you are really, genuinely converted.

Going back to chapter 3 and verse 1, he says, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” The word “bewitched” is the word *baskaino* in the Greek, and it means literally to charm a person. It means to bewitch, or to flatter in order to mislead.

If the Galatians had been charmed, flattered, or bewitched, they were not very bright, to say the least. They were nothing more than dupes or pawns in the hands of individuals who wished to lead them

astray. In other words, they were not very wise or intelligent, no matter how much they thought they were.

Romans 16:17-18 describes such individuals: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” If you have been bewitched, Paul is saying, that shows that you are simple. You have been flattered, duped, and led astray. The bewitching was designed to lead them away from the Word of God.

I want you to see how horrible this was, because he says in verse 1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" What made this bewitching even more serious, and their defection even more monstrous, was the fact that Jesus Christ had been evidently—that is, very clearly—manifested and set forth before them. There is a principle in the Word of God: "to whom much is given, much is required." These people were not ignorant of the gospel. They had been taught.

Now, let me deal with the phrase "evidently set forth." It is basically a Greek word meaning to be placarded or billboarded before your eyes. Some have tried to make this verse refer to something similar to a papal procession, in which the pope and cardinals walk down the street holding images. That has nothing to do with a papal procession. This verse means that Jesus Christ was billboarded and placarded in front of them.

How do you explain it? Very simply, the word "evidently set forth" is *proegraphe*. What is *graphe*? Writing. *Pro-* means before. Literally, it speaks of that which was written before. Undoubtedly, first and foremost, there is a reference here to the apostles preaching. Hold Galatians 3, but turn back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 2. Let us read the first five verses and see how Jesus Christ was evidently set forth, crucified, among these Galatians. What did Paul tell the Corinthians?

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I

determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

There is Jesus Christ evidently set forth. He preached and taught plainly in the power of God before them. Not only that, but there could be a secondary interpretation of this verse, and it would certainly be inclusive, because it could refer not only to the apostles' preaching, but also, in a veiled way, to the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11, beginning at verse 23, Paul says, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." He continues, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

The Apostle Paul is telling these Galatians that the very fact they were deceived and led astray was monstrous, because they knew the truth. They had to turn from the truth to follow those who were proclaiming error. So the question in verse 1 is simple: How could you possibly turn from that which you knew was true unless you had been deceived? And if you were deceived, bewitched, and lured into it, then you could not have been very wise or very smart.

That is hardly a way to win friends and influence people—to say, in effect, “Dummy, you should have known better.” But basically that is what he is saying: You knew the truth. Why did you not stick with the truth? Paul is not interested in winning points or making friends; he is interested in preserving the truth of the gospel.

Paul's Second Question: Receiving the Spirit

Watch verse 2. Here is the second question: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Underline, if not in your Bibles, in your mind, "this

only." The Greek construction is very simple: *touto monon*, literally, this one thing. Paul says, I want you to answer one thing for me. If you will answer this one thing, it ought to clear up the confusion in your mind.

It will correct the error. In this verse and a few others, there is an appeal to their personal salvation experience. When the Apostle Paul appeals to their personal experience, he does so based only upon the sovereign grace of God.

When he asks in verse 2, “This only” or “this one thing would I learn of you,” he is asking, Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Initially, in their salvation experience—when they were converted, brought to Christ, and received the Holy Spirit—did they come to Christ and receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the law, or by faith?

This was a blunt reminder to these Galatians: it had to be by faith. If they came by faith, they were sinners; and if they were sinners, they could not have received it by obedience to the law, for they were disobedient to the law. Paul wanted them to see that their obedience to the law was the result of their already having been saved.

They did not get saved because of their obedience. Their obedience is the evidence, fruit, and result of having been saved by the grace of God alone. In their senseless error, they were reversing the order, saying, “It was works. It was my law-keeping. It was my obedience that brought me to Christ.” No, that is not true. Good works, the keeping of God’s law, are a result of grace, and not the cause of it.

Ephesians 2:8–10 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” then, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Verse 10 continues, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” When do good works and obedience come? After salvation, not before.

And so Paul says, I want you to answer me this one thing. See that the issue is basic: Who is the creative power in life and in the universe—God or man?

If man, by his works, can save himself, or contribute to his salvation, then man can not only obligate God but also place God in debt to man for salvation. Man, therefore, can, by his creative works, add to creation, because he is helping to create life. And if man can help create life, why cannot man also help create law? Let us add our law to God's law; thus we become a law to ourselves, falling into the trap of Genesis 3:5, where the tempter said, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,” or determining good and evil for yourselves.

The issue is simple: Who is the author of life, God or man? If you answer God, then it cannot be man; and if you answer man, then it cannot be God. Paul is asking, What is the source of your salvation? Who initially gave you the Spirit of God? May I remind you that our Lord, in John chapter 15, said, “But if I go away, I will send the Comforter unto you.” Who sends the Holy Spirit? God Himself. He said the same thing in John chapter 16. Did you know?

Look in 1 Corinthians 12, verses 2 and 3. This puts man right where he needs to be, at the feet of God begging for mercy. “Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” You were nothing but a bunch of idolaters when God came to you. Then he says in verse 3, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

Do you realize that man is so sinful, wicked, and depraved that he cannot even say Jesus Christ is Lord savingly apart from the Holy Spirit of God? How in the world can man create life, add to his salvation, help save himself, or save himself if he cannot even say Jesus Christ is Lord savingly apart from a supernatural work of God? It is impossible.

So he asks in verse 2: When you received the Spirit, was it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? If it was by the hearing of faith, you came as sinners. You had nothing to do with it. It was God and God alone who saved you.

Paul's Third Question: Perfected by the Flesh?

Now look in verse 3. You have the third question: “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” The word “foolish” is anoetos. It literally means unintelligent, unwise, foolish; a good South Georgia term would be dumb. Aren’t you so dumb? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Now, if God initiated salvation, if it was by grace, if it was by a work of the Holy Spirit, it had to be something that God did, says the Apostle Paul. Now he asks, how can you be so dumb as to think that you may now be perfected in the flesh? If God started it, how can you possibly think that you are the one who can finish it? Since they had to answer in verse 2 that they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, Paul is saying basically, what you are trying to do is this: You are moving from a trust in God to a trust in man. You are moving from a trust in Christ to a trust in self. He is saying it is absolutely blasphemous to think that we can in any way add to God's salvation.

Now, if God is the originator of salvation, if God is the initiator of salvation, He must also be the continuator, or upholder, of salvation, as well as the consummator of salvation. I am about to coin a word: He must also be the continuator, or the upholder, of salvation.

In fact, I want you to look in your Bibles to three passages. First of all, Hebrews chapter 12. Then we are going to 1 Thessalonians 5, and then we are going to Philippians chapter 1. Notice Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Let me show you how simple this is. I have started a book and have it on my computer. How about you finishing it? You cannot be the finisher of it; you are not the author of it. Only the author can really be the finisher. He is the author and the finisher. Now, if He is the author and the finisher, He is also everything in between.

Go back, if you would, to 1 Thessalonians 5, and look at verses 23 and 24. This deals with sanctification, which is part of our salvation. Paul says, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” Wholly means totally, completely. “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ." Verse 24: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Who is the one that continues, preserves, and upholds us? It is God. Philippians 1:6 says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." In other words, if God started it, God will continue it, and God will finish it.

Now go back to Galatians chapter 3 and look at verse 3: "Are ye so foolish? Are ye so dumb? Having begun in the Spirit, ye are now made perfect by the flesh?" You have already admitted in verse 2 that salvation is of God. How, then, could you think otherwise?

Salvation has to be either all of God, all of man, or a combination of the work of God and the work of man. It cannot be all of man, because no man can save himself. Synergism—a combination of the work of God and the work of man—cannot possibly be true, for Scripture repeatedly denies it. That leaves only one: monergism, that salvation is the work of God alone.

If your salvation depends on anything that you do, that is adding works to salvation. I am not saying that we are not going to be obedient after we are saved. We are; we shall be obedient. But our works do not add to our salvation. They evidence our salvation.

The Scripture tells us in Jonah 2:9, "Salvation is of the LORD." If you admit the truth of verse 2, that salvation initially is of God, how can you think now that you can be perfected in the flesh? Being perfected in the flesh refers to anything that flesh can do: trusting in ancestry, works, rites, ordinances, or ceremonies. You cannot be perfected by the flesh. You can only be perfected by the author and the finisher of the faith.

Paul's Fourth Question: Suffering in Vain

Now look at verse 4, the fourth question: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain." What a question. The Apostle Paul says that everything you have gone through and experienced will be for nothing unless you repent. Let me tell you what he is talking about particularly.

These Galatians were being persecuted by the Judaizers. They were being hammered left and right by these false teachers, and they had steadfastly withstood them for a while. But the pressure kept coming, and now they were beginning to yield.

I hope you understand this principle: you should never listen to things that are contrary to the Word of God. That is why you need to know the Word of God. You can hear things so often that you begin to assume they are true, or that there is some validity to them. That is what is known as brainwashing, folks. That is why the communists do it. That is why the CIA does it.

I want to admit something to you. I am brainwashed, and I know I am brainwashed, but I am brainwashed by the Word of God. I want to think biblically and scripturally, and when I hear something that I know is unbiblical and unscriptural, I am not going to listen to it. I do not want those thoughts in my mind that would lead me away from the faith that is in Jesus Christ. I am just not going to have it.

He is saying, in essence, "You withstood these people, and now you are giving in to them." If you give in to them, then you are admitting that the stand you took to begin with was wrong, and you have suffered all of this for naught.

Let me tell you very quickly: the Apostle Paul told his followers this—you might as well expect tribulation and persecution in the Christian faith. Acts 14:22 says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Paul said, "I didn't tell you the Christian life was going to be easy." There is going to be tribulation and persecution.

First Thessalonians 1:6 says, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."

Paul says, "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were

with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith; lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."

Paul said, "I've told you there's going to be persecution. I've told you there's going to be suffering." Why would you go through all this suffering and all this persecution, all this affliction, just to ultimately deny the faith and walk away from it? If you're going to deny the faith, you ought to do it to begin with and save yourself all this trouble, he's saying. You don't pitch in the towel just because there's persecution, just because there's affliction.

John said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." If you leave the faith, it's proof you were never in it to begin with. Because if you were in it, you could never walk away from it.

Paul's Fifth Question: Miracles by Law or Faith?

So the Apostle Paul is asking in Galatians chapter 3, "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" Think of what you have gone through. You do not throw in the towel now.

Now look in verse 5 of chapter 3. Here is the fifth question: "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Once again, he is summarizing everything he has said before: true righteousness does not come by the deeds of the law, but by the hearing of faith, which is followed and evidenced by the powerful deeds and fruits of the Spirit.

Literally, verse 5 refers to the supernatural powers imparted to the Galatians by the Spirit of God. Here is the question: When God gives you that Spirit, when God gives you that power, does He give you the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?

The answer is very obvious. The power and gift of the Spirit are not the result of human merit or activity. Let me put it to you like this: "Come next week, we are going to have revival." No. We may

have a meeting, but only God can give revival. I cannot command the Holy Spirit, and neither can anyone else. God gave the Spirit by His sovereign grace.

Why did the Apostle Paul ask these five questions? What did he want the Galatians not only to understand, but to confess and acknowledge? The answer is very simple. First, he wanted them to confess and understand that salvation was by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, he wanted them to understand that their salvation experience confirmed this, because they were converted by faith and not by the deeds or works of the law. Third, he wanted them to understand that it would be foolish to think they could add anything to God's salvation, since they began their converted life by the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It must be continued the same way. Fourthly, Paul wanted them to understand that it was only God who enables us by His Spirit to persevere in faith. To sum it up, salvation is the work of God alone.

Abraham as the Example of Faith

Now, in verse 6, he says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Paul demonstrates to the Galatians that their experience in grace and his teaching are the same as what Abraham experienced. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 6, Paul quotes Genesis 15 and verse 6: "And Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Circumcision was not given to Abraham and his seed until Genesis 17. Abraham's justification was before circumcision and before the deeds of the law. Circumcision was given only afterwards.

Thus, faithfulness to the law is a result of justification. Why do you not commit adultery? Because you are saved. Why do you not steal? Because you are saved. Why do you not murder? Because you

are saved. You have been justified, and you obey God's law, not in order to be saved, but because you have been saved. He has written that law in our hearts. Faithfulness to the law is a result of justification. It is the expression of our covenant status before God.

Paul does not cite Abraham to set aside the law, but to show that salvation is by God's sovereign grace, and that salvation is manifested in our works. Paul uses Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, as proof that the Pharisees, the Jews, and the Judaizers are alien to their father after the flesh. Abraham's salvation, Paul's salvation, and Paul's teaching are identical. Justification has not changed. Salvation has not changed over the centuries. God has always had only one way of saving people.

That is by grace through faith. Old Testament believers were saved looking forward to Christ; we are saved looking backward at the finished work of Jesus Christ. There is only one way of salvation.

Paul is stressing his scriptural authority. In verse 8 he says, "And the scripture, foreseeing..." Then, in verse 10, he writes, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He continues, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." He quotes from Habakkuk. In verse 22 he again says, "But the scripture." What is he saying? He is giving us the authority of Scripture.

Paul's basic principle is found in verse 6: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Salvation, as exemplified by Abraham, teaches that faith and faith alone saved Abraham. He believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Salvation is by faith alone.

Secondly, verse 7 says, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Those who exercise and possess saving faith are the true sons of Abraham. In verse 8, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." God promised Abraham that in him all nations would be blessed. Verse 9 concludes, "So then they

which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Only those who stand with Abraham in faith receive the blessings of God.

Conversely, verse 10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The Curse of the Law and the Blessing of Faith

Conversely, all those who are trying to obtain salvation in any other way are cursed. If you have the faith of Abraham, you are blessed; but if you seek salvation any other way, you are cursed. The law pronounces a curse upon anyone who does not obey all its precepts. Scripture concludes that all were under sin. As Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Since no one has kept the law perfectly, the only thing the law can do for you now is curse you, condemn you, and destroy you—if you seek salvation by keeping it alone.

Abraham was saved exactly the way the Apostle Paul was teaching. Scripture says he was saved by faith alone. Those who believe in and possess that same faith are the true children of Abraham. Paul was not merely opposing the Jews in their antagonism to the gospel; he was also opposing the Judaizers, who professed to believe in Christ but wanted to add circumcision, the works, and the merits of the law in order to secure salvation. In allowing man's relationship to Abraham or to the law to have a part in justification, Paul says, is humanistic to the core.

Conclusion: Salvation by Grace Alone

Whoever denies the sovereignty and transcendence of God is basically asserting his own divinity. If you deny God's sovereignty, it is only so that you may replace it with your own. If you deny God's salvation, it is only so that you may replace it with your own. Preach salvation by grace through faith alone, show God's absolute sovereignty in salvation and His right to save whom He will, and people will become angry with you and gnash at you. Why? Because the only salvation they have is that of their own making. I have had people tell me face to face that if what I am teaching is right, then

they are lost. My answer is this: What I am teaching is right, and you are lost.

Thankfully, some have come back and come around, and I believe have been genuinely converted. Others are just so angry, they never even speak to me again. But I've got news for you folks: if you get upset with God's way of salvation, then you've got problems with your own. I don't know about you, but I'd rather be saved by Him than by myself any day. I'd rather be saved by Him than by any combination of men.

Salvation is by grace through faith. Now, it's very important that you understand why the Apostle Paul used Abraham. He's showing and going to show a little bit later the promise that God gave to Abraham was actually a promise that He had given to Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Father, we ask today that You would teach us, that You would build us up in the most holy faith, that You would help us to honor Thee in all things. Thank You for Your so great salvation. Thank You for being God. Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, for repentance, for faith, for the ministry of the Spirit. Thank you for the Word of God and the truth that is enunciated in its pages. Give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Who is Israel?

Part Five of Six

SCRIPTURE READING - Galatians 3:15-29 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Galatians 3:15-29

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men, though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto.

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, he saith not, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to thy seed,' which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

> It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up to the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
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> There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bond nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Review of Previous Lessons and the Example of Abraham

We have dealt with Romans 2, particularly verses 28 and 29; Romans 4; Romans 9; and, last week, the first section of Galatians 3, especially the first five verses, where the Apostle Paul asked five questions of the Galatians. He was showing and teaching them that they were saved by grace through faith alone. Then he uses Abraham in verses 6, 7, 8, and 9 as a particular example and illustration. What the Apostle Paul is showing is that the experience of the Galatians, the experience of Abraham, and his own teaching of justification by faith alone are all the same, and therefore they are scriptural. So, just as surely as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, likewise all of those who are truly saved walk in that same faith. Thus they also are the children of Abraham, and they are blessed with faithful Abraham.

They did not obtain this righteousness by works, or by merits, or by justification by the law, but rather only by grace through faith in

Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul shows that the law cannot save; the only thing the law can do is condemn.

Paul speaks of this covenant in verse 15: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men, though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." The Apostle Paul is saying that God gave Abraham a covenant, and that covenant is not to be and cannot be annulled.

The Covenant with Abraham Cannot Be Annulled

Paul uses an illustration concerning human covenants. He says, "though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." That is a legal precept, a legal principle. When you and I enter into a covenant, and once the conditions are stipulated, we agree to it and sign our names; we do not go back and change that covenant. The Apostle Paul is arguing that if it were simply a human covenant, it would still be confirmed. But how much more will it be confirmed, since it is not a human covenant, but a divine covenant?

So he says in verse 16 that God gave this covenant to Abraham by promise: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." He says not to seeds as of many, but as of one: "He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ." We will come back to this verse, but note that the Bible says very plainly that God gave this promise to Abraham and his seed.

The question automatically arises: What about the law? That was one of the questions the Judaizers had. Look at verse 17: "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul that it should make the promise of none effect." God gave Abraham the promise in Genesis 15. Then, 430 years later, the law was given. The Apostle Paul is saying that the law came after the promise. Therefore, that which came after the promise, which had already been confirmed, cannot disannul the promise. Salvation, justification by faith, and righteousness cannot be by the law. They can only be by grace through faith.

Look at verse 18. He says it again: "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more promise. But God gave it to Abraham by promise." He says to the Judaizers, if you want to add the law or go back to the law, then what you are doing is canceling out the promise. The law cannot cancel out the promise that God gave to Abraham.

The Purpose of the Law: Because of Transgressions and as a Schoolmaster

Beginning with verse 19, he asks this question: "Wherefore then serveth the law?" The Apostle Paul takes much of the rest of this chapter to answer it. Basically, he tells us that the law was given for two reasons. First, the law was given because of transgressions—that is, because of sin. The law not only identifies sin and codifies sin; it is also used as a restrainer. It holds back. The first reason the law was given was because of transgression.

The second reason is found in verse 24: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith." God ordained the law to be our schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ. A schoolmaster was especially necessary when there were one-room schoolhouses with all the grades in one schoolroom, because discipline had to be maintained. The teacher might write on the board: cheating, five lashes; stealing, eight lashes; lying, twelve lashes, whatever it was. If you were caught cheating, you were not sent to a principal's office. You were brought before everyone, your shirt was raised, and you received the lashes from a rod the schoolteacher kept over the board.

That is what the law required, and that is what you got. The schoolteacher showed no mercy by giving exactly what the law required. How, then, can the law be our schoolmaster? First, it teaches us that we are sinners. Second, it teaches us that there is a wide chasm between a holy God and unholy sinners. Third, it teaches us that we cannot save ourselves or bridge that gap. Fourth, it teaches us that if we ever get to God, it must be through the merits of another.

Thus, the law was our schoolmaster to drive us because of its punishment and penalties, but it was a schoolmaster in another sense because it also drew us to Christ, showing us that He was the

only answer to our sin and problems. God gave the law, he tells us in Galatians chapter 3, not only because of transgressions, but also to be a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ.

The Singular Seed: Christ as the True Seed of Abraham

The verse I particularly want to deal with is verse 16, and later the latter part of this chapter. Verse 16 is crucial. Once you understand it, everything else falls into place: “Now to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ.”

Note how the Apostle Paul emphasizes the singular. He saith not as to seeds, which are many, but singles it out: “but as of one, and to thy seed which is Christ.”

Keep in mind that God entered into a covenant with Abraham in Genesis chapter 15. There, beginning with verse 1, we read: “After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.’ And Abram said, ‘Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and lo, one born in mine own house is mine heir.’ And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, ‘This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.’ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, tell the stars, if thou be able to number them,’ and He said unto them, ‘So shall thy seed be.’”

And you go right on down and you see how God entered into this covenant with Abraham. Now, you've got to keep in mind the covenantal context. By the way, there are numerous covenants mentioned in the Bible. There's the Adamic covenant. There's the Noahic covenant. There's the Abrahamic covenant. There's the Sinaitic covenant. And there is the Davidic covenant.

The Everlasting Covenant and Progressive Revelation

Now let me tell you something. There is still another covenant that stands out far above all of these that I've just named. It is known as the everlasting covenant, or the covenant of grace, or sometimes even the messianic covenant. Let me show you. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 20. Hebrews 13 and verse 20. Note, if you would, Hebrews 13 verse 20.

Look carefully at this verse. You ought to underline it. You ought to memorize it. Here it is. Hebrews 13 verse 20.

"Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Note, if you would please, that Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, was raised from the dead, He says, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. So here you're talking about an eternal covenant. One that had no beginning, and one that has no ending.

If you look in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1. And let's begin reading there with verse 9. Ephesians 1 and verse 9. Notice, if you would please, what the Scripture says. Ephesians 1 verse 9: "...having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself." Note the purpose in Himself, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him, who worketh all things out of the counsel of His own will." Now note, if you would, God has an eternal purpose.

Let me show you that spelled out. Look in Ephesians 3 and verse 11. Here it is, black and white. Ephesians 3, verse 11: "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now think, if you would please, of Hebrews 13 and verse 20. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Now the Bible tells us that God has a purpose and that God has had an eternal purpose in Jesus Christ.

Look in your Bibles at 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 9. We will come back to this passage later: “Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

It is important that you understand that the Abrahamic covenant, the Noahic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the Sinaitic covenant are all mere aspects or manifestations of the everlasting covenant. The everlasting covenant, or the covenant of grace, is foundational.

Let me spell it out to you in black and white. Had there never been a covenant of grace, had there never been an everlasting covenant—the covenant that God the Father entered into with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—there never would have been an Adamic covenant, an Abrahamic covenant, a Sinaitic covenant, or a Davidic covenant.

In that eternal covenant, God the Father gave God the Son a people. God the Son agreed to be their substitute, sacrifice, and ransom. God the Holy Spirit agreed to convict, convert, regenerate, and save them, and bring them to God the Son, so that God the Son could bring them to God the Father. This is that eternal purpose, that everlasting covenant, which was before the world began.

Do you understand what I’m saying? If that covenant of grace had never taken place, there never would have been anything else, because everything revolves around the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. Jesus Christ, then, in that everlasting covenant, is manifesting a part of that purpose to Abraham.

The first great purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was to make known the stock from which the Messiah was to spring. Let me say that again: the first great purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was to make known the stock from which the Messiah was to spring. In Genesis chapter 12 and verse 3, God tells Abraham, “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse at thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

Now I want you to notice the word "earth." There is a main Hebrew word for earth, Eretz, which is not used here. The word used in Genesis 12 and verse 3 is Adamah. God said, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse at thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Let me show you how that word is translated. Look in Genesis chapter 3, and notice verse 17: "And in the Adam he said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow thou shalt not eat of it all the days of thy life.'"

Through the first Adam the ground was cursed. When you go back to Genesis 12 and verse 3, it is the Hebrew word Adamah, the same as in Genesis 3 and verse 17. Literally, what he says in Genesis 12 and verse 3 is this: "...in thee shall all the families of the ground be blessed." In other words, the curse is to be removed through the lineage of Abraham, that is, through Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter 8, verses 19 through 22, speaks again about this same curse. The Apostle Paul says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Now watch carefully, beginning with verse 19.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature" or the creation, that is, the world, "the earnest expectation of the creation waited for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature" or the creation "was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." God revealed that back in Genesis chapter 12 and verse 3. In Abraham, all the ground was to be blessed. In other words, the curse was to be removed through Jesus Christ.

Secondly, according to the principle of progressive revelation, there is a progressive unfolding of the truth. In Mark chapter 4 and verse 28, the Word of God tells us there is first the blade, then the ear, then full corn in the ear. That is exactly the way God has revealed things in the Bible.

When you go to Genesis 3 and verse 15, you find the Protevangelium. The Protevangelium is nothing more than the first promise of the Messiah. God says, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, thou shalt bruise his heel.”

This verse does not tell us too much. It tells us that there is going to be a Messiah, a Redeemer, born of a woman. He is going to be bruised by the serpent, but in return He is going to bruise the serpent’s head. In other words, there is going to be a battle, but the Messiah is going to win. The first promise of the Messiah appears here; Genesis chapter 12 reveals that it will come through the stock of Abraham; Genesis 49 reveals that He will come through the tribe of Judah; and 2 Samuel reveals that He will come through the Davidic line. There is a progressive unfolding of the truth: it is a little here and a little there.

Christ Is Greater Than Abraham and the True Seed

In Genesis 12:3, God says, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and in thee," that is, through Abraham, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now look at Genesis 22:18. God is repeating this covenant to Abraham and Isaac: "And in thy" what? "seed," singular, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." In Genesis 12, He says, "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now comes the fuller development: "in thy seed," singular, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18 reveals that it is through the seed of Abraham that the families of the earth are going to be blessed.

It is true that Abraham was the friend of God. It is true that Abraham was blessed of God. But the promise was not particularly to Abraham, but to Abraham and his seed. As great as Abraham was, there was someone far greater and far more honorable, and that was Jesus Christ. Do you know what the Bible says in Colossians 1:18? That in all things He, Christ, must have the preeminence.

Do you know what our Lord said in Matthew 12? He said, you talk about Solomon? You have heard of the wisdom of Solomon. "And behold, a greater than Solomon is here." He said, "behold, a greater

than Jonah is here." And what did our Lord do when He confused those Pharisees? He asked them a question. They were asking Him all kinds of questions, and He said, "If the Messiah is David's son, how then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord?"

You see what Christ is saying? Christ is saying that the Messiah is greater than David. So Jesus Christ is greater than Abraham. What did He say in John 8:56? "Abraham rejoiced to see My day. And he saw it and was glad." Do you remember what that Samaritan woman asked Christ in John 4? When He told her that if He asked of her living water, He would give her water that she would never thirst again, she said, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" Oh yes. Jesus Christ is greater than Isaac, greater than Jacob, greater than David, greater than Abraham.

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 1 and look in verse 1, but listen carefully to what I am about to say. The promised blessing was to be wrought out in its wise sense, not by Abraham individually and immediately, but through him immediately by means of the seed that should be given to him. And the seed must possess far higher qualities than any that were found in Abraham himself, since the blessings were going to flow so widely.

Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1 says, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Jesus Christ is the true seed of Abraham. Jesus Christ is the true seed of David. Look in Matthew chapter 8 and see what our Lord told those wicked Jews who despised him. Since he is the true seed of Abraham, he would certainly have the right to say this.

Matthew 8 and verse 11 says, "And I say to you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Since Jesus Christ is the true seed of Abraham, He has the right to determine who sits down with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven.

Now let us go back to Galatians chapter 3 and look at verse 16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith

not in the seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."

I want you to see what the Apostle is saying. All of the promises that were given to Abraham were given primarily to his true seed, which should come from him, which was Jesus Christ. Let me give you an illustration. It is true that there were many great patriarchs. We read about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and David and all of those men.

Let us go back to Exodus chapter 12. You know what happens. That is the Passover. The children of Israel are in Egypt, and God says, “I’m going to come by and kill the firstborn of every individual who does not have the blood over the doorpost.” Can you imagine all of the lambs slain that night, their blood put over the posts of each house? They also had to eat that lamb roasted with fire, but they had to put the blood there. He said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

How many thousands of lambs were slain that night? I have no idea. There were anywhere from two to four million people who came out of Egypt, maybe more. But out of all the lambs slain in Egypt that night, can you tell me what singular Lamb God had in mind when He saw the blood?

What does the Bible say in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7? “Even Christ, our Passover, is sacrifice for us.” And what did John the Baptist say when he saw Christ? “Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” Out of all those lambs that night, God saw one: the Lamb of God. Now, out of all the honorable and godly people, God sees one seed, and that one seed is His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Promises Are in Christ Alone

Paul emphasizes this in Galatians 3 and verse 16: “Now to Abraham and his seed,” singular, “were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” He identifies the singular seed as Christ. It is true that the promise of the Messiah went from Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, and right on down the line, but the promise was primarily to Jesus Christ. Paul is

emphasizing not only that the true seed of Abraham is Christ, but that the promises were given in Christ, to Christ, and through Christ.

The term seed does not and cannot refer to Abraham's posterity without limitation. Paul presents the truth that, through the word seed, the idea of an individual person who should sum up in himself the covenant people, as well as the covenant blessings for them, would be realized; and that one would be the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 1, verses 2 and 3, Paul writes: "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." If all spiritual blessings are in Christ, how many are elsewhere? None.

He says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The promises of God were never by human procreation, but rather by divine regeneration. The promises were not made to both seeds, that is, the physical and the spiritual, but were made only to one of them: Jesus Christ the Messiah.

In Genesis 21 and verse 12, what did God tell Abraham? God told him, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." But that did not signify that all of Isaac's posterity would be called or chosen. How do we know that? Because God said very plainly, in Malachi chapter 1, Romans chapter 9, and even back in Genesis, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." So when God told Isaac that in Isaac shall thy seed be called, that did not mean that all of the descendants of Isaac were to be converted. Of course not. It is only the children of promise that are counted for seed.

Believers Are Abraham's Seed and Heirs of the World

Now, let me show you something. Look at Galatians 3 and verse 16, and let us ask and answer a question. He says, "Now to Abraham and his seed," that is singular, "were the promises made, he saith not into seeds as of many, but as of one, and by seed, which is Christ." Romans 9, verses 7 and 8, makes it clear that only the children of the promise are counted for seed. That is what he says.

Now we have to ask a question: What promise? Titus chapter 1 and verse 2 says, “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised.” When did He promise it? “Before the world began.” Now, God gave it to Abraham by promise: “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Here is the promise.

But what does the Bible say? “In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began.” If God promised it before the world began, to whom did He promise it? Go back to 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 9. It says, “Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” So who did God give that promise to? He gave it primarily to Jesus Christ and to all those who were in Him.

Do you see what he is saying? “He saith not, and to seeds as of many,” singular, “but is thy seed which is Christ.”

We know that the line of the Messiah came through Abraham, Jacob, Judah, and David. This was the channel through which the Messiah was manifested. Yet not all the physical descendants of those men were called or chosen. Look at our own families today. There are many godly parents with ungodly children; a godly wife with an ungodly husband; a godly husband with an ungodly wife; or godly children with ungodly parents. That is a greater mystery. Look at David. David was a man after God's own heart, but his family was an absolute wreck. How do you explain those things?

The promises of God were never made to all the descendants of Abraham, as though there were many different kinds of seed. They were limited to those who were in Christ, for Christ is the true seed of Abraham. Therefore, unbelieving descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David were just as rejected as Ishmael and Esau were. Just as it is today, the promises of God to Abraham and his seed were never made merely to his natural descendants, but to those descendants who had the faith of Abraham and walked in that faith.

It could not be otherwise. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, the Bible says concerning Christ, “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and

in him amen unto the glory of God by us." Where are all the promises of God? In Christ. Christ was the Son, the apex; He was everything that God had in mind when He gave those promises. All the promises are in Him, and they are all true, yea and amen, to the glory of God. If you are in Christ, you are blessed and obtain the promises. If you are not in Christ, if you are outside of Christ, you are cursed and have no right to a single promise. That is simple.

In Galatians 3:16, he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed," singular, "were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." He identifies the singular seed as Christ. Now look carefully at verse 17.

Paul says, "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God," speaking now of the Abrahamic covenant, "and this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law of which was 430 years after it, cannot disannul that it should make the promise of God to none effect." The promise God gave to Abraham was in Christ. Some scholars say that "in Christ" could be translated just as accurately, "concerning Christ."

The same Greek is translated this way in Ephesians 5 and verse 32 and in Acts 2 and verse 25. Thus, verse 17 could read: "And this I say that the covenant that was confirmed before of God concerning Christ." In other words, Christ was the true seed of whom God was speaking when He gave Abraham the promise. It was in Christ, or concerning Christ.

It is important, necessary, enlightening, and thrilling to understand that in Christ we have a joint heritage with Abraham. Paul says, "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bond nor free. There is neither male nor female. You are all one in Christ Jesus."

"And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." I do not see what can be clearer. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, that is, his true seed, and your heirs according to the promise. Those who are in Christ

receive everything that Abraham was promised. By the way, when you look at verse 28, a lot of people get bent out of shape over this.

But let me explain the distinction being drawn in verse 28: “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, you are all one in Christ.” I know there are real differences between Jew and Greek, between men and women, and between bond and free. But what he is saying is that no human status confers any advantage with respect to God's salvation. It is God's sovereign and electing grace that is totally determinative. It is not whether you are Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female. You are either in Christ or out of Christ. That is the distinction made in verse 28. Therefore, verse 29 says, “if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Now, please do not say, “If I'm Abraham's seed, then all I get—and if I'm a joint heir with him, all I get—is that little piece of land in the Middle East.” That's fog wash. Go back to Genesis 17. This is once again the progressive unfolding of the truth. It is true that God gave Abraham that piece of land. In Genesis 17:7-8, God says, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” It is true: God gave Abraham that land over there.

But if you think Abraham's inheritance is limited to Palestine, or to that little piece of land in the Middle East, you are mistaken. Look to Romans 4:13. See how God Himself interprets it: “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

In the Greek word there is the word cosmos. "The promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." So when God gave him that land, the land was just a token. The promise was that he should have a worldwide dominion. That the world is his.

Now I've got a question. How do we get worldwide dominion? How do we get the world? Well, let's go in our Bibles to Romans 8 and verse 17 first. Tell you what, go ahead and find, if you would, the book of Hebrews and also 1 Corinthians. This is very important. We're going to look in Romans 8 first. Then we're going to the book of Hebrews and then to 1 Corinthians. All right. Here we go. Romans chapter 8. And verse 17, the Bible tells us that if we're children, God's children, then heirs, look what we inherit, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If so, be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." Now we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Okay, you got that? Now, if we are Abraham's seed, if we're in Christ, we're heirs according to the promise, and that puts us right here, an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Now look in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 2.

The Inheritance of Believers: All Things in Christ

Look at what the Bible says. Hebrews 1 and verse 2. In fact, we'll read verse 1 just so you can see the context. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past in the fathers by the prophets, hath these last days spoken in us by His Son, who made the appointed heir of all things, but whom also He made the world." Let me ask you a question. How much has God the Father given God the Son? All things.

And we are joint heirs with Him? You know what a joint heir is, don't you? It means someone who gets the exact same thing that everybody else gets. So if Christ gets everything, and we're in Christ, we get everything. What did Abraham get? He got the world. He got everything. Go back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 3. Watch what the Apostle Paul writes. 1 Corinthians 3. And notice, if you would please, beginning there with verse 22. 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 22. In fact, let's read verse 21. He says, "Therefore let no man glory in me, and for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." So how much does Abraham get? Everything. How much do you and I get? Everything.

The truth is that little piece of land over in the Middle East does not belong to the Zionists. It does not belong to the Muslims. It belongs to the true believers in Jesus Christ. The whole world belongs to us. If you do not believe that, hang around until our Lord comes back. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 1 that He is going to come back in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will be cast out of His presence with everlasting destruction.

In other words, He will disinherit them and kick them out of His possession. And who is going to have it? The truth is, we are. What did our Lord say in Matthew 5 and verse 5? “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” The word meek means those broken to yoke—those who have submitted themselves to God. They shall inherit the earth.

Neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob ever considered themselves bound to that little strip of land in the Middle East. How can I prove that? Look in your Bibles at Hebrews chapter 11, verse 8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed.”

"And he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country," dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, "for he looked for a city who hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Through faith also Sarah received strength to conceive seed when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

Therefore sprang there even as one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable. These all died in the faith, not having received the promises—that is, the fulfillment of them—but having seen them afar off, being persuaded of them, embracing them, and confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. If they had been mindful of the country from which they had come out, they might have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city.

What did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believe? They believed that God was going to restore this earth in righteousness, and that they were going to dwell with Him—not merely in a little section of the Middle East, but that the world was theirs.

Summary of Key Passages and the Israel of God

If they believed the land of promise was all there was, why did they look for a city with foundations and builders gone? If that little strip of land in the Middle East was all there was, why did they confess they were strangers and pilgrims? Why did they seek another country—a country where God ruled and reigned sovereignly and omnipotently?

Turn back to Hebrews chapter 6. Before reading it, let us go back to Galatians 3 and read verses 16 and 29 again: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not into seeds as of many, but as of one, and of thy seed which is Christ." Now skip down to verse 29: "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

Let us go to Hebrews 6, beginning with verse 13: “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.’ And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath of confirmation is to them an end of all strife, wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, that we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

He is talking about the promise made to Abraham in verse 13. In verse 17, he has confirmed this unto the heirs of the promise. In verse 18, he says that we who have fled for refuge lay hold upon the hope set before us: “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

What is he saying? That promise God gave to Abraham, and that promise to the heirs, all sinners in Jesus Christ, is true. We are with Christ within the veil, and we have an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, because all the promises in Him are yea and amen to the glory of God the Father.

Let us put these things together. Look in the Bible at Romans 2, verses 28 and 29: “For he is not a Judahite, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Judaite who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.” There is the spiritual, saving aspect to the true Judaite. Look in your Bibles at Romans 4, verses 11 and 12, talking about Abraham.

Romans 4:11 says, “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe. Though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed on them also, and the father of circumcision, them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet circumcised.” He is the father of all them that believe and the father of all those who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.

Romans 9:6 says, “Not as though the word of God had taken none effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel, Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for seed. And this is the word of promise, at this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebekah also had conceived by one, even our father Isaac, for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth.”

Galatians 3:16 says, “Now to Abraham and his seed,” singular, “were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, and of thy seed, which is Christ.” Verse 29 says, “and if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise.”

One passage we have not looked at is Galatians 6:16. The Apostle Paul says, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God.” The word rule in the Greek is canon, or kanon, from which we get our English word canon—not C-A-N-N-O-N, the kind that shoots, but C-A-N-O-N. You have heard of the canon of Scripture, the Old Testament canon, or the New Testament canon. The word canon simply means a rule or a measuring rod.

Look at the verse again: “And as many as walk according to this rule,” that is, the Word of God, according to this measuring stick, “peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God.” This is the Israel of God: those who walk according to this rule, those who live according to this measuring stick; those who have the faith of Abraham and walk in the steps of that faith; those who are in Christ; those whose praise is not of men, whose circumcision is in the heart and not in the flesh.

Simply because you are, or may be, a physical descendant of Abraham does not mean be doodly-squat. If you are not in Christ, all you are is a lost Israelite. Everything centers in Jesus Christ. It excites me to think that in Christ I am an heir to everything God promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. We get it all. We get everything.

Conclusion and Prayer

That is why Paul wrote, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that's going to be revealed in Christ.” We are the true seed of Abraham because Christ is the true seed of Abraham. Lord willing, next week I will show you how Paul develops this in Galatians chapter 4 in an allegory. He will sum it up, clinch it, and show us that we must focus upon Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Father, thank You once again for all of Your grace and mercy to us. Thank You, Father, for those that are so much better. Lord, those that have been sick, we thank You, Mrs. Bowen, and we give Thee praise, Lord, for her healing. We pray that You would continue to bless her. We thank You, Lord, for all these other names that have been mentioned today. Lord, those that need help, we pray

that You would undertake for them. And Lord, I pray that You would indeed speak to our hearts.

May we rejoice in Christ Jesus, have no confidence in the flesh, and give Him all the honor and glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Who is Israel?

Part Six of Six

Let us look in Galatians 4 at verses 21 through 31. I ask that you listen very closely today because the message, while it is not difficult to comprehend or understand, needs to be followed in order for you to see its full force.

Paul says, “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory? For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, who is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not. For the desolate have many more children than she which hath a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so

it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

Introduction and Review

By way of introduction, may I remind you that we have covered Romans 2:28–29, where the Apostle Paul asks, Who then is a Judahite? He proves that the true Judahites are those whose circumcision is of the heart and not of the flesh, whose praise is of God and not of man. We have looked in Romans 4 and seen that the children of Abraham are those who have the faith of Abraham. We have looked in Romans 9, where the Apostle said very pointedly that they are not all Israel who are of Israel. He goes on to say that those who are of the flesh are not the children of God. Then we looked in Galatians chapter 3, especially at verses 16 and 29, which I will mention again a little later.

We ended last week with Galatians 6:16, where the word of God says, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God."

When the Apostle Paul begins Galatians chapter 4, he begins very bluntly, with a rebuke of sorts. In verse 21 he says, "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?" Paul is saying, You say that you want to be under the law, but do you not hear it? You do not even know what the law teaches or what it is saying. The Apostle Paul is applying the truth of Matthew 13:13, where the Scripture says, "They have ears, but they hear not."

Paul's Rebuke and the Law

"They have eyes, but they see not. Neither do they understand." Paul says, You hear, but you do not hear; you see, but you do not see; and you really do not understand.

After rebuking them in verse 21, Paul refers them to Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and to their sons, Ishmael and Isaac. It is important to note that what we normally consider history, Paul counts as law. When we read Genesis—the first several chapters, and

chapters 12, 15, and 17—we think of patriarchal history. But the Apostle Paul says it is law. Even our Lord considered the Old Testament to be law, for He said in Luke 24:27, “the law and the prophets.” Usually, they simply divided the Old Testament into the Law and the Prophets, so everything was considered law except the prophets.

Based upon the Apostle Paul's teaching in Romans and in Galatians, he explains the difference between Abraham's fleshly seed and the promised seed. Patriarchal history is indeed employed to illustrate the persecution of the promised seed of Abraham by the fleshly seed of Abraham. In verse 29 he says, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Hagar and her son, Sarah and her son, are the prophetic types of the mutual relations between the two seeds of Abraham. As the elder son, Ishmael, the firstborn, was cast out for mocking the freeborn child, Isaac, so fleshly Israel, under bondage to the law, has brought upon themselves and continues to bring upon themselves the judgment of God Almighty by persecuting the true Israel of God, whom Christ has endowed with His free spirit.

The Seed of Abraham is Christ

The force of Paul's argument in Galatians chapter 4 is seen more clearly in the light of Galatians 3:16 and verse 29. In verse 16 he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed," and notice the word is singular, "were the promises made." All of the promises went to Abraham and his seed. Paul emphasizes, "He saith, not unto seeds as of many, but as of one," and then identifies who the true seed of Abraham is: "And to thy seed, which is Christ." Very clearly, all of the promises that God gave to Abraham and his seed were given to Jesus Christ, who is the true seed of Abraham. That is why the Bible says in verse 29, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." If we belong to Jesus Christ, we are the true seed of Abraham; therefore, we are heirs according to the promise, and we receive everything that God promised to Abraham. In Galatians chapter 4 as well as Galatians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul draws a distinction between the mere physical seed of Abraham and the seed of promise.

Paul informs us that the life of Abraham with Hagar and Sarah is an allegory. In verse 24 he says, "Which things are an allegory? For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar." Before we consider these things in order, we must ask: What is an allegory?

The Greek word is allegoroumena, made up of two Greek words. The first is allos, A-L-L-O-S, meaning "other." Then there is agoreuo, meaning "to speak in public." Other, to speak in public, or to speak in public other. Agoreuo comes from the noun agora, the marketplace. The marketplace was a public place in ancient Greece where all the teachers taught and all the public proclamations were made. Thus, allegory basically means to speak in public.

However, what it means is this: what one speaks of signifies not only what he says, but something far greater and more important. In other words, it not only reveals something that is being said; it reveals something else that is far greater, far more important, and far more revealing. An allegory is a parabolic method of conveying instruction and spiritual truths that are set forth under material figures. Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Ishmael, and Isaac were real, historical, material individuals. Yet, although there is historical truth there, there is a far greater spiritual truth to which the Apostle Paul is referring. When God gives us their history, it is factually correct, real, and genuine. But there is something far greater, far more important, and far more revealing if we understand that their lives are indeed an allegory.

There are allegorical books today. In fact, the greatest allegorical book, and one some of you may have read, is John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It is a tremendous book, and everything said there has a far deeper meaning than what is simply being written. It is indeed an allegory.

A Divinely Ordained Illustration

Let me give you a warning, a caveat. Simply because Paul uses an allegory and says, "which things are an allegory," it does not in any way cast doubt upon the actual historical events recorded about Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. In fact, Paul stresses the historical reality of this. In verse 22 he says, "for it is written." Yes, the history

is real and genuine; it is written. The Word of God gives us this historical reality, but Paul goes on to show that there is more truth than simply the historical reality.

Our first point is a divinely ordained illustration, found in verses 21 and 22: “Tell me ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.”

The historical facts are exceedingly clear. Every Israelite knew them by heart. God had promised Abraham and his posterity that in time they would inherit at least all those areas of the earth familiar to them in Genesis chapter 15. Later, God made it clear to Abraham and his seed that they would be heirs of all things and the source of blessing to many nations. You will find that in Genesis 22:17-18.

When Sarah saw herself childless, she undoubtedly assumed that while the promise applied to Abraham, it did not apply to her. Therefore, in an act of faith, and out of love and regard for Abraham, she gave her maid, Hagar, to Abraham to conceive a child by her, in Genesis chapter 16.

There is no woman alive today who would say to her husband, “We are childless, and I want you to have a child; therefore, I have a maid here, and I am going to let you marry her and have a child by her.” But understand this: what Sarah did in giving her handmaid to Abraham was in perfect conformity to the customs and legalities of the time. Abraham was speaking to the Lord, who was about to enter into a covenant with him, and the question before him was what would happen if he had no seed.

"After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." And Abram said, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and, lo, one born in mine house is mine heir."

Do you hear what Abraham is saying? "Lord, you haven't given me a seed. One born in my house is my heir, and my eldest servant is this Eliezer of Damascus." In other words, if Abraham died without a seed, Eliezer, his servant, would get everything. So Sarah gave

Abraham Hagar, at least so that he could have a son—not necessarily by Sarah, but by his maid. At least that child would be his flesh and blood, and not simply a servant like Eliezer. Sarah's act was not unconscionable. It was a very practical, although fleshly, way to bring to pass the promise and acquire an heir for Abraham.

However, later on God made exceedingly clear, in Genesis chapter 17, that Ishmael was to be rejected and that Sarah herself would give actual birth to the promised seed. The point I want to give you about this illustration is very simple: the entire episode was under the control of divine providence from the beginning.

When we look at the simple historical facts, we tend to see a man and woman doing everything in a normal way, living their everyday lives, coping with circumstances, and trying to work them out to the best of their abilities. Yet, in all their daily struggles, Abraham and Sarah were under the sovereign providential care of the sovereign God of heaven and earth. He was ordaining and bringing to pass their everyday circumstances to teach a far greater truth than what they were simply going through. This illustration was divinely ordained. Sarah gave Abraham Hagar, and through Hagar Ishmael was produced. Later, God came to Sarah and blessed her, and Isaac was given.

Here is an illustration taken from actual history. God was in control, and He declares a greater truth than these mere historical figures. Let us return to Galatians chapter 4, verses 23 and 24, and look at the divinely ordained declaration. We have seen the divinely ordained illustration, in which God superintended the lives of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to produce these two children and give us an excellent picture. But here is the declaration in verses 23 and 24:

“But he that was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh. But he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory? For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar.”

A Divinely Ordained Declaration

Paul has already given us a doctrinal dissertation on justification by faith alone and the truth of God's sovereign grace as being the foundation of salvation. What the apostle is about to do is give us a picture, drawing it so that we may have a greater understanding. Picture in your minds Sarah and Hagar, two women. Then picture their two sons, Ishmael, the son of Hagar, and Isaac, the son of Sarah.

God makes declarations not only concerning the sons, but also concerning the mothers. First, consider the declarations concerning the sons. Verse 23 says, "But he who was born of the bondwoman was born after the flesh." Verse 23 informs us that Ishmael was born after the flesh; that is, he was born through natural procreation. There was nothing special about Ishmael. Husbands and wives have produced children in exactly the same way down through the ages that Abraham and Hagar produced Ishmael. There was nothing different about the way Ishmael was conceived. He was born after the flesh, without a special promise from God and without a special word from God, merely at the request of Sarah. God did not command Abraham to take Hagar, nor did God promise to bless that union. It is evident, then, that Ishmael was a son of Abraham after the flesh, and not after the promise. That is what verse 23 says: "But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh."

Everything was natural and normal. "Born after the flesh" does not mean that Abraham lusted after Hagar; it means only the natural way of producing children. That is all there was to it. He was just another child—nothing special. God never promised anything to Ishmael, or to Abraham and Hagar.

Paul contrasts the birth of Isaac: "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by the free woman," and, "he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was born of promise." Isaac was the child of promise. God had promised Abraham a seed, and He had promised that seed through Sarah. Through His supernatural power and miraculous grace, God brought that promise to pass when Abraham was one hundred and Sarah was ninety.

Let me put it to you very bluntly: Isaac would never have been born except by divine intervention. I know of no one-hundred-year-old woman who can bear a child, and I do not know of any ninety-year-old man who can beget a child. Everything about Isaac was special; everything about Isaac was supernatural. His birth was not natural, although it was produced and brought about by natural means. It was not natural in the sense that it came about by God's divine and sovereign power and promise. Had God not intervened, Isaac would never have been born, humanly speaking.

Here, then, is the declaration: Ishmael was born after the flesh; there was nothing special about him. Isaac, however, was born of promise by the power of God. This was something God did that man could not do, and it would never have been done had God not miraculously intervened.

There is also a declaration concerning the mothers. Hagar was a bondmaid, a servant, a slave, and an Egyptian. Sarah, whose name means princess, was Abraham's wife and was with him when God called him to leave Ur of the Chaldees. Thus Paul declares that Abraham had two sons, one by a bondmaid and the other by a free woman, and that the son of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but the son of the free woman was born of promise.

A Divinely Ordained Interpretation

"Which things are an allegory? For these are the two covenants. The one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, who is the mother of us all." God tells us that Sarah and Hagar represent two covenants. When God says these two are an allegory, we understand that they mean they represent two covenants. They were not actual covenants in and of their own persons, but rather they embodied, represented, and were pictures of the two covenants. The Bible tells us that Hagar represents Mount Sinai, where the law was given. Sarah represents the covenant of grace, or Jerusalem, which is above.

This type of symbolism occurs many times in Scripture. Let me give you two illustrations. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, speaking of the children of Israel out in the wilderness, the Bible says that they did all drink that same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.

Is Jesus Christ a real, literal rock? No. He is the rock of ages, that is sure. But the rock symbolized Christ. The rock was a type of Christ. Ezekiel 23:4 gives another illustration: "And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister, and they were mine, and they bear sons and daughters. Thus were their names, Samaria is Aholah and Jerusalem Aholibah." He is using names there to represent two literal cities. What he is doing in Galatians chapter 4 is the same thing. He is using two names, Sarah and Hagar, to represent two real covenants. Thus far we have two mothers, two sons, and two covenants.

A Divinely Ordained Interpretation

We have seen a divinely ordained illustration and a divinely ordained declaration. Look, thirdly, at a divinely ordained interpretation. We must ask this simple question: What do we make out of all this? What does it mean? What are we to learn? First, let us go back and consider Hagar and Ishmael. Hagar, of course, is the bondwoman. Ishmael, her son, was born after the flesh. He tells us that this bondwoman is Mount Sinai. Verse 24 says, "Which things are an allegory, for these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar."

The word “gendereth” means to procreate, beget, produce children, bear, or bring forth. Now look at verse 24: “Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.” What does Hagar do? What does Mount Sinai, the covenant from Mount Sinai, do? It produces bondage and servile individuals; it produces slaves.

The same word is used in 2 Timothy 2:23, where Paul writes, “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” During medieval times, there was a great theological dispute over how many angels could stand upon the head of a pin. Can you

imagine people being so silly as to waste their time trying to prove or disprove how many angels could stand on the head of a pin? What difference does it make? That is what the Apostle Paul says: “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender,” or procreate or beget, “strife.”

The same word is used here when it says that Hagar begets or produces children with a servile spirit. Look at verse 25. He wants you to understand this interpretation: “For this Agar,” that is, Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia, “and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” Mount Sinai is where the law was given. He is saying that this law begets children with a servile spirit. Their mother, Hagar, is in bondage with her children, and she is a picture of Jerusalem, which now is—or, put another way, exists by fleshly means. Just as Ishmael was born after the flesh, Hagar is Mount Sinai, which represents Jerusalem, which now is and is in bondage with her children.

In other words, the order of things under which the nation of Israel was placed at Mount Sinai was appointed to keep them a separate people. Because of its legalistic nature, it was fitly foreshadowed by the bondslave, Hagar. This covenant from Mount Sinai produces those of a servile spirit, for it made slaves of all who sought to be justified by their own works, their own efforts, or obedience to that law.

The relation entered into between God and Israel at Mount Sinai was entirely a natural one, just like the birth of Ishmael. How could it be said that it was entirely natural? If you go back to Exodus 19:8, God offered, and Israel accepted. Israel said, "All that the Lord has said, that we will do." This was simply a natural covenant. It was natural in the sense that, once that covenant was made with the nation, all their descendants, upon being circumcised, automatically became subjects of the covenant without any spiritual change being wrought in them. You could be a thief and a robber, but as long as you were circumcised, you were part of that covenant back then.

You could be a murderer, but as long as you were circumcised, you were part of that covenant. It is true that God told them not to do those things. But there were plenty of whoremongers, adulterers, and thieves back then who had been circumcised and were members

of that covenant nation. It was all flesh. If you were born and were circumcised, then you were simply part of that covenant without any spiritual change being wrought in you.

Patrick Fairbairn, one of the greatest scholars on the Old Testament and Old Testament law, said this concerning the covenant. This helps explain where we are in the New Testament. He said, "So far as this covenant gave birth to any children, those were not the true children of God, free, spiritual, with hearts of filial confidence and devoted love, but rather miserable bondmen, selfish, carnal, full of mistrust and fear. Of these children of the Sinaitic Covenant, we are furnished with the most perfect example in the scribes and Pharisees in our Lord's time."

That is exactly the truth. The scribes and the Pharisees were the most perfect example. They had all their rules and customs. Consider the Sabbath day's journey: one could walk only so far on the Sabbath day. They had so perverted the law and filled it with legalistic interpretations that many would not even walk on grass on the Sabbath, because they feared that, if the grass was headed out and their foot struck it, causing some seed to fall to the ground, they would be guilty of sowing on the Sabbath. That is the scribes and the Pharisees.

Look at what he says in verse 25: “For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” The word “answereth,” or “corresponds with,” means that Hagar’s origin, status, and condition supplied an exact analogy of the state of Jerusalem, not only in the Apostle’s time, but subsequently to Judaism and all those who trust in the flesh. Judaism was nothing more than an endless round of ceremonial institutions that were totally unbearable.

Hold Galatians 4 and look back at Acts 15:10. At the Jerusalem Council, the apostles said, “Now therefore why tempt you God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” They were speaking of all those ceremonies and legalities of the ceremonial law.

The Contrast Between Sarah and Isaac

They said it was a yoke which neither our forefathers nor we are able to bear. Even those who were genuinely converted under the Old Covenant did not possess or enjoy the spiritual freedom that we have in the New Covenant. They did not understand the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ. The larger part of Israel, the larger part of the nation, had no interest in the promise of the covenant made to Abraham, whereby faith was a necessity. They did not want to be justified by faith.

Instead, they were like Hagar and Ishmael. They were born in a servile spirit; their outward obedience was slavish in character, and their privileges were nothing more than carnal. So here he says, "This Hagar is Mount Sinai," and this Mount Sinai, this Hagar, answers to Jerusalem that now is. Just as Ishmael was produced by the flesh, nothing more, so the Jerusalem that now is is produced by the flesh, nothing more.

Now let us consider secondly the contrast between Sarah and Isaac. In Galatians chapter 4, beginning with verse 26, he says, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Sarah and Isaac were freeborn and born of promise. Sarah corresponds to the Jerusalem that is above. In other words, Sarah represents the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, who is the true seed of Abraham.

The word "above" is the Greek preposition ano, indicating above. He is drawing a contrast between the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem; between the natural Jerusalem and the spiritual Jerusalem; and between the fleshly seed and the promised, or spiritual, seed.

I want you to hold Galatians 4, but turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews chapter 12, because we are going to read Galatians 4 and then a verse from Hebrews chapter 12. Go back to Galatians 4 now and look at verse 26 again. He says, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, who is the mother of us all." Now, Jerusalem which is above. Look in Hebrews 12:22. He says, "But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

If Hagar represents the Jerusalem that now is and is in bondage with her children, then Sarah represents that heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem, or that Jerusalem which is in Christ, the true promised seed whereby we have freedom in Jesus Christ. So he says in Galatians 4:26, "But Jerusalem which is above is free." Suitably does Sarah represent the liberty that we have in Jesus Christ. Because in Jesus Christ, we are not only redeemed from all of our sins, bondage, and death, but we are also free from the curse of the moral law and from all the ordinances, basically, of the ceremonial law, because that law has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we now have the substance and reality of all those ceremonies back in the Old Covenant. So we are free in Christ.

Now look at verse 27. Before I read it, let me put it to you one other time like this. I want you to see this contrast once again between these two covenants. Hagar was earthly, carnal, slavish, and temporary. Sarah is heavenly, spiritual, free, and eternal. That is the difference between the two covenants. Now Paul quotes verse 27: "For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband." In verse 27 the Apostle Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1. Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 to confirm his interpretation of the covenant allegory. How does Isaiah 54:1 confirm the apostle's interpretation?

The grand promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:4 was that he would be the father of many nations, and the promise to Sarah in Genesis 17:16 was that she should be the mother of many nations. Just as the historical Sarah was barren for many years after she became a wife, so likewise the spiritual Sarah, the heavenly Jerusalem, so to speak, lay fruitless for centuries until the time of the promise.

The Divinely Ordained Application

Look in Galatians 4, beginning with verse 4: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

When the fullness of time had come, do you realize there were 400 silent years between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?

Look at the promise God gave to Abraham. For centuries it basically lay dormant. Oh yes, there were some people converted in the Old Testament. God has always had His elect; He has always had His remnant. But when the fullness of time came, just as Sarah, when she was ninety, received Isaac, God sent Christ to redeem His people. Just as Sarah became fruitful, so the church is now fruitful.

God is redeeming His people through Jesus Christ. As the historical Sarah ultimately became a mother and had a numerous seed, so, when the promise fully came, a numerous seed was given to Jesus Christ. In fact, before it is over, there are going to be far greater numbers of individuals who convert. For what does he say in verse 27? “For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not. For the desolate,” that is, the one that waited so long, Sarah, “hath many more children than she who had a husband.” So God’s grace is going to be poured out.

A Divinely Ordained Application

Now let us look at the divinely ordained application in verses 28 through 31. “Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Let us put two and two together. We have seen two mothers, two sons, two covenants, and two ways of worshiping: one in the flesh and one in the Spirit; one based upon the works of man, and the other based upon the work of Jesus Christ alone.

The marriage between Abraham and Sarah symbolized the covenant union between God and His people. For many years, Sarah was barren, foreshadowing that lengthy period in which the promise of God was dormant. Hagar, the bond slave, took Sarah's place in the family of Abraham, typifying his natural descendants being placed under the Sinaitic covenant. Hagar did not permanently supplant Sarah, typifying the fact that Judaism and all that was merely

temporary was to be done away with. In God's time, Sarah ultimately came into her own and was divinely enabled to bear a supernatural seed, illustrating the children of promise under the new covenant.

Now, look at what Paul said in verse 28. I don't see how you can get around this: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." What's he saying? If we are in Christ, we have been specially, supernaturally, and sovereignly called, chosen, regenerated, converted, and justified. We are the special children, just as Isaac was. Isaac would have never existed without the supernatural sovereign power and grace of God. Likewise, we would never exist and never be converted except for the sovereign supernatural work of God in our lives. We are the children of promise.

Once again, there is a contrast. If we are the children of promise, what does that make all the others? Children of the flesh. Our standing is entirely different from that of Ishmael and those like him who are still under the curse of the law, endeavoring to earn, merit, or bring forth their own salvation through the works of the flesh.

The relationship in which we stand with God the Father is a miraculous, supernatural one, given of grace through Jesus Christ. Verse 29 says, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

In this passage, the Apostle Paul is referring and quoting from Genesis 21:9. In that passage, Ishmael, Sarah called Ishmael, mocked Isaac—ridiculing him, making fun of him, denouncing him, denigrating him, vilifying him. Look at verse 29 again: "But as then he that was born after the"—what?—"the flesh persecuted" whom? "Him that was born after the"—what?—"the Spirit."

"Even so it is now." The persecution and mocking of Ishmael has found its counterpart in the Jews and Judaizers who hate and persecute true Christians. Those adhering to the Sinaitic covenant, trying to be saved by their works, hate and despise those who are in the covenant of grace.

One objection the Apostle Paul is dealing with is evident: "If we're God's called and chosen, why are we so bitterly hated and opposed by all those who call themselves Jews?" Paul gives the answer: It's

always been like that. They're flesh and we're spirit; they're the children of the flesh, and we're the children of promise.

Paul asks, "Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture?" Then he quotes Genesis 21:10-12: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." Sarah said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for she will not be heir with my son Isaac." When Abraham came to God, God told him, "You listen to Sarah in this. You get rid of them."

God was superintending. This is the final point in the apostle's allegory, incontestably clinching his argument that Israel after the flesh is finally set aside by God. Hagar represented the Sinaitic Covenant, and Ishmael represented carnal worshippers. Their being cast out of Abraham's household prophetically signified that God had set aside Judaism, all the works of the law, all the flesh, and all the ceremonies. The children of the flesh would not inherit with the children of promise.

Christianity and Judaism are mutually exclusive. There is no such thing as a Jewish Christian. You may be a Christian, or you may be a Jew in the religious sense, but you cannot be both. You are either Christian or embracing Judaism. Judaism is broad: it includes all who are after the flesh, follow the works of the flesh, and try to earn salvation any other way.

None who are outside of Christ, or the covenant of grace, can be considered Abraham’s true children. That is what Paul said in Galatians 3:29: “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Paul’s conclusion in Galatians 4:31 is impossible to escape: “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” If we are Abraham’s true children, we belong to Christ. We belong to Him alone. We do not look to our flesh in any way whatsoever.

We do not depend upon our ancestry, our works, our merits, our deeds, or our righteousness. We depend only upon Jesus Christ. Paul says in Philippians 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” He continues, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs,” not the four-legged

kind. “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,” that is, the circumcision. “For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.”

So if you could prove undeniably that you were a direct fleshly descendant of Abraham, it would really mean nothing. We have no confidence in the flesh. Our confidence is not in our ancestry.

It is not in our works. It is not in our merits. It is only in Jesus Christ.

Look at what Paul has done in this allegory. Picture two women: Sarah and Hagar; their two sons, Isaac and Ishmael; and their two covenants. They represent two different ways of worshiping. In these two covenants, you have birth by nature as opposed to birth by grace. Hagar and Ishmael were by nature; Sarah and Isaac were by grace. You have a state of bondage as opposed to a state of liberty: Hagar and Ishmael in bondage; Sarah and Isaac in liberty and freedom.

You have a status of temporary tenure. Hagar temporarily supplanted Sarah, but not for long. In contrast, we have permanent possession in Jesus Christ. That is what Paul is saying. Here is the picture: Just as Hagar was rightfully the handmaid of Sarah but wrongfully accorded the position of Abraham’s wife, so the Sinaitic covenant was designed to supplement the Abrahamic covenant, but it was perverted by the Jews when they tried to seek salvation by it.

Conclusion: One Way of Salvation

There has never, ever been but one way of salvation: by grace through faith. Those Old Testament Israelites who were saved were saved by grace through faith, looking forward to the coming work of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Likewise, in the New Covenant, we are saved only by grace through faith, looking back at the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul says that we are the children of promise. Everything that God gave to Abraham, and everything that God gave to Christ, He now gives to us. For we are in Him, and, as Scripture says, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. If you

cannot understand his teaching, look at the picture. You will understand. God's true seed is Jesus Christ.

Father, we ask that Your blessing and help would be upon us, that You would teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. Father, we ask that You would give us grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: Who is Israel? Part 1 of 6
JW01083 | SermonAudio

Chapter 2: Who is Israel? Part 2 of 6
JW01082 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: Who is Israel? Part 3 of 6
JW01081 | SermonAudio

Chapter 4: Who is Israel? Part 4 of 6
JW01080 | SermonAudio

Chapter 5: Who is Israel? Part 5 of 6
JW01079 | SermonAudio

Chapter 6: Who is Israel? Part 6 of 6
JW01078 | SermonAudio

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

A Divinely Ordained Application p. 128

A Divinely Ordained Declaration p. 121

A Divinely Ordained Illustration p. 118

A Divinely Ordained Interpretation p. 122, p. 123

Abraham as Father of Believers Only p. 44

Abraham as the Example of Faith p. 88

Abraham's Nationality and Idolatrous Background p. 32

Application and Conclusion p. 71

B

Believers Are Abraham's Seed and Heirs of the World p. 104

C

Christ Is Greater Than Abraham and the True Seed p. 101

Circumstances of Abraham's Experience: Justified Before Circumcision p. 43

Conclusion and Prayer p. 27, p. 112

Conclusion: Faith Alone Makes True Children of Abraham p. 49

Conclusion: One Way of Salvation p. 131

Conclusion: Salvation by Grace Alone p. 90

D

Declaration 1: Abraham's Faith Was a Work of God Alone p. 39

Declaration 2: Abraham Was Ungodly and a Sinner p. 40

Declaration 3: Scripture Confirms Abraham's Experience p. 41

E

Eschatological Views of Israel p. 8

Exposition of Romans 2:17-29 p. 21

G

Galatians 3:1–14 p. 73

God's Righteousness in Election (Romans 9:14-18) p. 69

H

Historical Meaning of 'Jew' p. 14

I

Identification of Israelites (Romans 9:4-5) p. 59

Illustrations of Sovereign Election (Romans 9:9-13) p. 67

Introduction and Approach p. 7

Introduction and Context p. 51

Introduction and Overview of Galatians p. 73

Introduction and Reading of Galatians 3:15-29 p. 93

Introduction and Review p. 29, p. 116

J

Judaism vs. Christianity p. 15

Justified Before the Law Was Given p. 47

N

New Testament Fulfillment in Christ p. 24

O

Old Testament Witness to Heart Circumcision p. 23

P

Paul's Affirmation and Heaviness (Romans 9:1-3) p. 53

Paul's Fifth Question: Miracles by Law or Faith? p. 87

Paul's First Question: Bewitched Galatians p. 77

Paul's Fourth Question: Suffering in Vain p. 85

Paul's Heart and the Nature of His Kinsmen p. 55

Paul's Rebuke and the Law p. 116

Paul's Second Question: Receiving the Spirit p. 81

Paul's Third Question: Perfected by the Flesh? p. 84

Practical Application and Closing p. 50

R

Review of Previous Lessons and the Example of Abraham p. 94

S

Saved Israel vs. Natural Israel p. 9

Scriptural Foundation: Romans 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 p. 8
Spiritual Relationship Transcends Physical p. 10
Summary of Key Passages and the Israel of God p. 110

T

The Central Question of Galatians 3-4 p. 77
The Contrast Between Sarah and Isaac p. 126
The Covenant with Abraham Cannot Be Annulled p. 95
The Curse of the Law and the Blessing of Faith p. 90
The Declaration of Abraham's Experience p. 38
The Divided Kingdom and Migration p. 16
The Divinely Ordained Application p. 127
The Everlasting Covenant and Progressive Revelation p. 98
The Inheritance of Believers: All Things in Christ p. 108
The Objection and Paul's Explanation (Romans 9:6-8) p. 62
The Promises Are in Christ Alone p. 103
The Purpose of the Law: Because of Transgressions and as a Schoolmaster p. 96
The Question of Romans 4:1 p. 37
The Seed of Abraham is Christ p. 117
The Singular Seed: Christ as the True Seed of Abraham p. 97

W

Who is Israel? Part 1 of 6 p. 7
Who is Israel? Part 2 of 6 p. 29
Who is Israel? Part 3 of 6 p. 51
Who is Israel? Part 4 of 6 p. 73
Who is Israel? Part 5 of 6 p. 93
Who is Israel? Part 6 of 6 p. 115

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 3 p. 100, p. 101
Genesis 3:5 p. 83
Genesis 11 p. 32, p. 33
Genesis 12 p. 34, p. 39, p. 100, p. 101
Genesis 12:3 p. 101
Genesis 14 p. 32, p. 33
Genesis 15 p. 39, p. 88, p. 95
Genesis 17 p. 56, p. 88, p. 107
Genesis 17:16 p. 127
Genesis 17:4 p. 127
Genesis 17:7-8 p. 107
Genesis 21 p. 104
Genesis 21:10-12 p. 130
Genesis 21:9 p. 129
Genesis 22:17-18 p. 119
Genesis 22:18 p. 101
Genesis 24:10 p. 35
Genesis 25 p. 64
Genesis 25:20 p. 35
Genesis 28:1 p. 35, p. 36
Genesis 31:20 p. 36
Genesis 31:41 p. 36
Genesis 32 p. 36
Genesis 49 p. 101

Exodus

Exodus 14 p. 60
Exodus 19:8 p. 124

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 4 p. 59

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 p. 59, p. 60

Deuteronomy 10:16 p. 23, p. 24

Deuteronomy 26 p. 36, p. 37

1 Kings

1 Kings 12:15 p. 16

1 Kings 12:25 p. 19

2 Kings

2 Kings 16 p. 14

2 Kings 16:6 p. 14

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 11:14 p. 18

2 Chronicles 15 p. 20

2 Chronicles 30:11-12 p. 20

Ezra

Ezra 2:2 p. 20, p. 21

Ezra 3:1 p. 20, p. 21

Ezra 4:4 p. 21

Ezra 5:1 p. 21

Psalm

Psalm 32 p. 42

Isaiah

Isaiah 38:1 p. 53, p. 54

Isaiah 51 p. 34

Isaiah 54:1 p. 127

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 4:4 p. 24

Jeremiah 9 p. 24

Jeremiah 31 p. 60

Ezekiel

Ezekiel 23:4 p. 123

Ezekiel 44:9 p. 24

Jonah

Jonah 2:9 p. 85

Matthew

Matthew 2 p. 18

Matthew 5 p. 15, p. 16, p. 109

Matthew 8 p. 102

Matthew 11 p. 39

Matthew 12 p. 101, p. 102

Matthew 13:13 p. 116

Matthew 15 p. 15, p. 16

Matthew 16 p. 40

Matthew 18:11 p. 41

Matthew 23 p. 15, p. 16, p. 31

Matthew 27 p. 31

Matthew 27:37 p. 17

Mark

Mark 3:31 p. 10

Luke

Luke 24:27 p. 116, p. 117

John

John 1 p. 9, p. 10

John 1:17 p. 13, p. 14

John 1:20 p. 53, p. 54

John 4 p. 102

John 8:56 p. 41, p. 102

Acts

Acts 2 p. 17, p. 106

Acts 6:10 p. 25

Acts 7 p. 34, p. 35

Acts 14:22 p. 86
Acts 15:1 p. 43, p. 78, p. 79
Acts 15:10 p. 125
Acts 15:5 p. 43
Acts 26 p. 60, p. 61

Romans

Romans 2 p. 7, p. 8, p. 14, p. 30, p. 31, p. 94, p. 111
Romans 2:17 p. 21, p. 22
Romans 2:17-29 p. 21
Romans 2:28-29 p. 116
Romans 2:29 p. 26
Romans 3 p. 38, p. 48, p. 49
Romans 3:1 p. 63
Romans 3:23 p. 90
Romans 4 p. 32, p. 33, p. 38, p. 42, p. 43, p. 46, p. 47, p. 48, p. 65, p. 66, p. 94, p. 111, p. 116
Romans 4:1 p. 37
Romans 4:1-17 p. 29
Romans 4:11 p. 44, p. 111
Romans 4:12 p. 38
Romans 4:13 p. 107
Romans 4:16 p. 38
Romans 4:17 p. 68
Romans 4:3 p. 39
Romans 4:5 p. 40
Romans 4:6-8 p. 41, p. 42
Romans 4:9-12 p. 49
Romans 5:6 p. 41
Romans 8 p. 38, p. 53, p. 108
Romans 9 p. 53, p. 56, p. 58, p. 66, p. 67, p. 71, p. 94, p. 104, p. 116
Romans 9:1-18 p. 51
Romans 9:1-3 p. 53
Romans 9:14-18 p. 69
Romans 9:4-5 p. 59

Romans 9:6 p. 111
Romans 9:6-8 p. 62
Romans 9:7 p. 10, p. 71
Romans 9:9-13 p. 67
Romans 11:1 p. 56, p. 57
Romans 13 p. 50
Romans 16:17-18 p. 80

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2 p. 80
1 Corinthians 3 p. 108
1 Corinthians 5 p. 103
1 Corinthians 10:18 p. 9
1 Corinthians 10:4 p. 123
1 Corinthians 11 p. 81
1 Corinthians 12 p. 83
1 Corinthians 15 p. 8, p. 11, p. 12

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 1:20 p. 105, p. 106
2 Corinthians 5 p. 11

Galatians

Galatians 1:13-14 p. 15
Galatians 2:3-4 p. 79
Galatians 3 p. 47, p. 48, p. 77, p. 78, p. 80, p. 94, p. 103, p. 104, p. 110
Galatians 3:1-14 p. 73
Galatians 3:15-29 p. 74, p. 93
Galatians 3:16 p. 106, p. 111, p. 117
Galatians 3:29 p. 130
Galatians 3:6 p. 49
Galatians 3:7 p. 50
Galatians 4 p. 58, p. 71, p. 115, p. 125, p. 126, p. 127
Galatians 4:11 p. 79
Galatians 4:26 p. 127
Galatians 4:31 p. 130

Galatians 5:6 p. 26
Galatians 6:16 p. 112, p. 116

Ephesians

Ephesians 1 p. 98, p. 104
Ephesians 2 p. 25, p. 26
Ephesians 2:11 p. 25
Ephesians 2:8-10 p. 82
Ephesians 3 p. 98
Ephesians 5 p. 106

Philippians

Philippians 1:6 p. 85
Philippians 3:1 p. 130, p. 131

Colossians

Colossians 1:18 p. 101
Colossians 2 p. 25, p. 26
Colossians 2:8 p. 25, p. 26

1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:6 p. 86
1 Thessalonians 5 p. 84, p. 85

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 1 p. 109

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 3:16 p. 61

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1 p. 66
2 Timothy 2:23 p. 123, p. 124

Titus

Titus 1 p. 66

Philemon

Philemon 13 p. 57

Hebrews

Hebrews 1 p. 108
Hebrews 6 p. 110
Hebrews 9 p. 12
Hebrews 10:1 p. 13
Hebrews 12:22 p. 126
Hebrews 13 p. 98

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