

96-10-11a

As we prepare for the study of the Word of God this evening, let's take a moment as we always do to pause and ensure that we have prepared ourselves and have taken advantage of God's grace that supplies everything that we need to accomplish our study in a meaningful manner. Shall we pray? Father, thank you for this day and for the many ways that you provide and bless us. We thank you for the opportunity that we have to live in this age at this time when so many exciting events are taking place and we see the return of the Lord imminent and we see the fulfillment of prophecy and the forward movement of your plan in so many different ways.

We pray that in these closing days of this age that we will take advantage of everything that you've provided for us, that as we look at your Word this evening, that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and guide us into all truth so that as a result we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We resume our study tonight in Romans chapter 9. This chapter is one of the most famous in the Bible in terms of varieties of approaches and interpretations and messages that people have gotten out of it. Our goal is to see this portion of the letter in the light of the rest of the letter. It's always helpful to remember that this started out as a letter with no chapters and no verses, just several pages of written text in Greek, and it is a unified argument.

It's a unified thought that flows from beginning to end to accomplish a purpose. We established at the beginning of our study by surveying the book and seeing some of the significant things that Paul says that the whole idea of this letter is to properly frame for us our priorities and our goals as believers in this age. What is it that God wants us to do? How should we live after salvation? The big opposing view was spirituality by works, righteousness by works, following a religious code which we have today in many, many ways.

Expectations, whether it's in the area of ministry or in the area of lifestyle, in the area of behavior or vocabulary or dress or whatever it might be, people develop a standard by which they measure others, and we ourselves can do this either consciously or unconsciously. We see someone making a certain move in life or pursuing a certain goal, and we say, well, I don't think that's what I would do in those circumstances, or I don't believe that a Christian ought to do that. Or on the other hand, we see things that may be praiseworthy, and we think that's a wonderful life that's being lived.

That's a wonderful testimony to the grace of God and to the power of God in the life of someone. Well, how do we make those judgments? And most importantly, how do we judge ourselves? How do we tell if our life has any significance beyond the moment to anyone besides ourselves? That's what this letter tells us, because in the course of refuting this false viewpoint in Rome and in the Church at large, Paul gives us the key truths that enable us to tell whether or not God is pleased with the way we're living. And there is no more important thing to know in life than

whether or not God is pleased.

We have seen in the course of studying the first eight chapters that God is not impressed with effort and with diligence in and of itself. You can be very diligent and invest a lot of effort in a wrong cause. On the plane trip this week to and from San Antonio, I pulled a book off of my library shelf that I have read before.

It's the first of a three-volume set. It's a paperback. It's convenient to carry, but it's the history of the Marine Corps in World War II.

But it's not a dry, pasty history book type of thing. It is told from the viewpoint of participants. And the editor or the man who collated all of these things took eyewitness accounts and just strung them together with a little bit of introduction so that you really feel like you're moving through each of these battles.

And the first place you go in this adventure is Wake Island. Right after Pearl Harbor on December 8th, Wake, as soon as they got the news, began preparing. And sure enough, the Japanese came there next.

And the incredible effort and heroism of the men who defended that island was equaled on the enemy side by great planning and diligence and effort and sacrifice on the part of the Japanese who were attempting to take the island and obliterate the Marines and the civilians that were there. And in fact, they did succeed in overwhelming the island eventually just by sheer force of numbers and taking the survivors as prisoners. And the account then moves to Guam and to some of the other Pacific islands.

But when you look at a conflict from this distance and you can set aside your immediate patriotic reaction and so forth, it's interesting to see that there are very fine officers and very devoted and obedient soldiers on both sides of a conflict. You can find instances of great personal sacrifice and great heroism on each side of the battle. But the bottom line is, what army are you in and what goal are you fighting for? Are you fighting for an imperialist government after a sneak attack? Or are you fighting for a wonderful, freedom-loving democracy that we all believe flies the flag under God? Are you fighting for a government that leads a nation comprised of pagans? Are you fighting for a government comprised of people who have the freedom to worship the Lord and so forth? And people down in the trenches can get so wrapped up in the effort and in the immediate task that they lose sight of what is this all for? What army am I fighting in? What strategy am I a part of? And what is the ultimate goal of everything I'm doing? And we can mistakenly judge good intentions and sincerity and hard work as something that's pleasing to God when it's not, because it's not done in the right way, under the right flag, for the right cause.

And it is easy. I'm sure in the history books of many defeated nations and many nations who went to war in error, there are great heroic songs of struggle and admiration for these people that sacrifice themselves, and yet you have to look at the larger picture. That's what Paul is trying to

do in Romans, is back us up and say, you're striving and sacrificing yourself and working very hard to keep the law of Moses, because you think that that's the way to achieve righteousness and to please God.

And you're on the wrong side of the flag. You're on the wrong side of the line. You're making the wrong point in human history.

The whole point God is making is that human effort and human diligence are insufficient to meet his standard and to please him, and that he has to grant us righteousness based on our trust, on our faith. That's the big issue in this age, and that's what Paul has set forth in these chapters. And he's gone at it in many different ways, with different strands of argument and different illustrations, to point out that historically in Israel, even under the law, God honored those who had faith, not those who knocked themselves out with works alone.

Abraham, the great man that he was, the father of the Israelites and the Ishmaelites and so forth, was awarded his declaration of righteousness because he believed God, not because he labored in the service of God. And that's the fundamental issue. Now, because Israel has missed the boat and missed the point as a nation, there are wonderful exceptions individually, but the nation of Israel, if you look at their history from Abraham forward to the time of Christ, as a nation, it is a dark, bleak record broken by very occasional spots of goodness and national fervor for the Lord.

But as a whole, it's a very sad, sorry tale nationally. Today, in our age, with our calling as a church, we have a similarly dismal record. The official church, by human standards, is the Catholic Church.

The majority of Protestant denominations labor energetically, enthusiastically in a lot of things that have no grounding in the Word of God or in the plan of God or even in the mind of God. And we find ourselves in a very similar situation to where the Jews did at the time of Christ. Here we are in a group or in a corporate entity that by and large has failed to understand the and to carry it out.

So Paul is eloquently, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, pointing these things out. And he has made this great case for what the church age is all about. It's righteousness by faith.

They had a campaign button a few years ago in the presidential election. It's the economy, stupid. And they put that on a button and people wore it around, and that this was the big issue.

And they won the election by making that the issue. Well, if there was ever going to be a spiritual button, we would have one that said, it's faith. Oh, foolish one.

Oh, foolish Galatian, you know, who has bewitched you? It's faith. And it doesn't mean that we set aside works, that we don't care about works, we don't care about ministry of the lost or anything else. But first things have to come first.

You can't leap out of your foxhole and go charging the enemy with no ammunition, no weapon, no helmet, no training, no idea of what to do when you get there, just a lot of enthusiasm and a desire to achieve something. We have to know what we're about so that we can be effective. And that's what faith constitutes, because faith is not an abstract clenching of the teeth and hoping that better things are coming.

It is recognizing the truth of what God's plan is, what God has provided, and acting in the light of that truth. There is a right way to conduct a bayonet charge. There's a right way to emplace a machine gun.

There's a right way to fire artillery pieces. And if you spend time learning those things, when you have the occasion to do those things, they're effective. If you just take a bunch of guys and dress them up in camouflage utilities and say, you see those things over there? Those are howitzers.

Go fire them and help us out. You're going to get mass confusion and a lot of casualties by friendly fire. That's the way it is in our life today.

And we are surrounded by believers who are walking disasters and accidents looking for a place to happen. And we hurt each other as believers because we don't know what we're doing. We don't know what we're about.

And even in our efforts to minister, we wind up messing each other up rather than comforting and encouraging and using a spiritual gift the way God intended. We hurt each other. We're our own worst enemy.

Satan doesn't have to come down and attack us because we're already in a state of mass confusion. He's better off to let us just demolish ourselves. So it's very important.

It's very important that we keep the thread of this argument all the way through the book. Now, the reason I have reviewed that is we're coming up to Romans chapter 9. People have taken this chapter, chopped out the first eight chapters, chopped out the next six or seven chapters, and taken Romans 9 and said this is the book. And the point of this book is how salvation comes about.

Here's the way God makes salvation happen. Well, stop and think about it. This book, we're right at the center of the book.

What is this book about? What is this letter about? Is it about salvation? Has he said, let me tell you about salvation? Oh, you unbelievers, come and hear this story I'm about to tell. He's talking to believers about the Christian life. It's going to be extremely unusual if we suddenly fall off a cliff and find ourselves addressing a completely different subject.

So in Romans 9, you're going to see and hear over the course of a lifetime lots of stuff said and

pointed out and observed and extracted and interpreted out of Romans 9 that has to do with salvation and the way it comes about. Paul, in a very incidental way, addresses some of these things, but it's not his point. So what is his point? Let's take a look at the chapter.

He has been talking about life in Christ, life in this age, righteousness by faith, not by works. And he has been talking to an audience that is partly Jewish, partly Israelite. And he has said, you people have been doing it all wrong.

We as a people, he's an Israelite, we have been doing it all wrong for centuries. And here's God's plan, and the Gentiles are in it, and here's faith, and there's nothing unique about Israel now. It's all up to the individual to see and pursue the plan of God.

Well, the question arises in people's minds, okay, then what about Israel? I thought Israel was God's chosen people. You're saying that the law, Mount Sinai and the thunder and lightning, the clouds and the tabernacle and the temple and all these things we've done for 1,400 years have all been set aside. How can you say that? And if you put yourself back in the first century, after 1,400 years of history under one revelation from God in the Old Testament, this is a pretty monumental change.

And if you're an Israelite and you start hearing this new thing, you say, but what can God be up to? I mean, even if you're positive, even if you're trying to understand this, you say, well, what about us? What about Israel? What about everything we've done for 14 centuries? Well, that's what Paul stops. Before he gets into his application section in the letter, he's going to stop and explain what the status of Israel is now under this new dispensation, this new emphasis in God's plan. And people might accuse Paul and say, well, you're the apostle of the Gentiles.

You've got a heart for the Gentiles and you like them and you're ministering to them and so forth. And you're dismissing Israel as an insignificant thing. So he begins by countering that.

He says, I'm not dismissing Israel. I am an Israelite, essentially. He says, I tell the truth in Christ.

I am not lying. My conscience also bearing the witness in the Holy Spirit. We saw last time that when Paul uses these oath-type formulas, he is emphasizing something in his own soul and in his own mind.

And this is a very heartfelt truth. And he says, God can see into my conscience and he knows I'm telling you the truth. When I say that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart, any time I think about this subject, it grieves me.

A cloud passes in front of the sun. Every time I think about Israel, I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren. And immediately, because people have salvation on the brain, they think, well, when he says anathema from Christ, he's saying no salvation.

And what we saw last time, it was, I grant you, it was kind of a tough study to get through. But if

you look at anathema, if you look at the books that are kept in heaven, there is more than one way to be separated from Christ. We saw, for example, in Galatians, Paul say that if you fall back into a system of righteousness by works, you have fallen from grace and you are cut off from Christ.

Now, does that mean we've lost our salvation? No, it does not. There are too many passages that teach us security and salvation. Once you've expressed faith in Christ, you're saved whether you like it or not.

You can't be unborn in the family of God. It's like Nicodemus, can I go back in my mother's womb and be born again? You can't. Once you're born again, you're born and you're a child of God forever.

So what does it mean to be cut off from Christ? We have seen in Galatians that being cut off from Christ means that everything that is coming to Christ as a son, in terms of inheritance, in terms of glory, in terms of rulership, all of the things that are promised to Jesus Christ are promised to us as well. When he said in Romans chapter 8 that we have been pre-designated to be conformed to the image of Christ so that he will be the firstborn among many brethren, we share his destiny. If you want a quick definition of pre-destination, it is in eternity past God destined us to share Christ's destiny.

God the Father mapped out a destiny for Jesus Christ and he said I want some brethren to share it with him and he designated us. He said everybody between the year zero and the year of the rapture, A.D., are going to, those who express faith and see the calling according to the purpose, are going to share the destiny of Christ. That's pre-destination.

It doesn't mean that God destined people to heaven or destined them to hell. It means that that's the opportunity that exists in this age. And so Paul says I wish, I could wish, that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren.

He says I would stand with the worst unfaithful disobedient believer on the planet. Those that are cut off from Christ are those that have no reward, no opportunity to advance in the plan of God because their decisions are consistently bad. Their priorities are all self-oriented, self-centered.

This is what I want in my life. This is what I would like to achieve. This is what I would like to experience.

I have goals. I have dreams. I have plans.

I have a mindset of how the universe should be and how my world should be and I'm going to bend every effort to attain that. And it's the old pre-Copernican, everything revolves around the universe. Those people are cut off from Christ because Christ is going to have reward and honor and glory in the eternal future because of his faithfulness and his obedience.

And those who are faithful and obedient will share that destiny with Christ. So Paul does not say I could wish that I was going to the lake of fire. He says I could be anathema from Christ.

I would spend the millennial kingdom in the southern tip of Africa instead of in Israel, instead of in the land, in the city of Jerusalem seeing Jesus Christ seated on the throne. That's where many of the Pharisees are going to be. They're going to be off in Tibet and India and the Sudan and Brazil and places other than in the land of promise because they sought righteousness by works instead of by faith.

And Paul is willing to join them and that's who he's really talking about. He says I wish that I myself could be anathema from Christ. I could wish that for the sake of my brethren.

That's the brethren he's talking about, those that are already cut off from Christ. Even those who are in this generation, Old Testament saints, many of them never did latch on to what was happening in the church age and they couldn't get away from the righteousness that they thought they were getting by the law. I could wish I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh who are Israelites to whom pertain and then he lists eight things to whom these things pertain.

Now stop and think about it. Do you think that an unbeliever in the nation of Israel, do you think that the adoption and the covenants and the law and the promises apply to unbelievers? Do you think that they are the possession of unbelievers? They're not. Those things as we have seen, cardinal rule of Old Testament interpretation, Israel represents believers.

Sure there were unbelievers scattered in there that didn't know or care anything about God, but Israel and the brethren that Paul is talking about here are believers. This should be a scary thing to us. This should make us alarmed because we can have everything and have nothing.

It's like someone saying, guess what, you won the Texas state lottery. Sixteen million dollars has been transferred into your bank account and you walk around for the rest of your life with no checkbook and it's yours, but it's not yours. It's yours, but you have no access.

You take no advantage of some wonderful thing that's been given. That's where Israel is. Israel has been given many things from God and they've missed the boat and completely overlooked it.

Look at what he says, my brethren, my countrymen, according to the flesh who are Israelites to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises. Those are eight things and I don't think it's accidental that there are eight of them. How does circumcision work when a male child is born? When is he circumcised? It's on the eighth day.

It's the seventh plus one. Seven is the number of completion and perfection and the eighth is like

these three things the Lord despises. These four are an abomination to him or these three things are great.

These four things are too wonderful for me. You know, there's always that number plus one pattern in the Old Testament. Well, the eighth is it's like perfection plus.

This is everything and a bonus icing on the cake. Here are these eight things that Israel has. They have the adoption.

They have the glory. What is meant by each of these things? If I can find my note here, I'll tell you. Let's look back at Exodus chapter 4 verse 22.

We're going to first talk about number one here, the adoption. What does he mean when he says Israel possesses the adoption? There's adoption spoken of in the New Testament, isn't there? As many as received him, to them he gave the right or the authority to be called the sons of God. We have been adopted as sons.

But there's a similar case for Israel and in Exodus chapter 4 verse 22, this is pointed out. The Lord said to Moses in verse 21, when you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. We'll be back here to this hardness of heart later in Romans nine.

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, Israel is my son, my firstborn. This is very significant. This is before all of the plagues, right? But what's the last plague going to be? Who's going to get the brunt of the last plague? It's the firstborn in the land.

God says, Israel is my firstborn. Why did God send the death on Passover night to the firstborn? Those were the prized children. That's where your hopes and your dreams and your future was, your firstborn.

That's the continuation of your family and your line. That's going to be your heir and the one that's going to carry on your name and your family business and ownership of everything that you have. That was the most precious possession in terms of human families that people had.

So what does God say here? Israel is my firstborn. That's how protective, how much love, how much concern. When you think about your child, any of your children, certainly the firstborn is no exception, but any of your children, what do you think about in terms of a threat to them? I remember the first time when our girls, when Elizabeth actually was a baby, the first time she got an insect bite, I was livid that a bug had bitten my daughter.

And I went around the house with raid and we went around the outside with insecticide and I thought, this is my, this is our little defenseless baby. This is my daughter here and this bug has just come in and bit her. And it just made me livid.

You know, you just have very great concern for your children and just mindless concern when you're, when you have your first one. And it is an expression of God's special favor and special concern for Israel. And he tells Pharaoh this, he says, Pharaoh, you're custodian of my firstborn and you'd better treat them right.

When I say, let them go, you better let them go or bad things are going to happen. So this status of being the firstborn is granted to the nation of Israel. No other nation on the planet, no other nation in history has ever had that privilege or ever will have that privilege.

There's one nation in all of history that has that. And that's Israel. Israel is God, the father's firstborn.

And there's an echo there and a foreshadowing of God's only begotten son. That's where his humanity is going to come from. That nation there in slavery in Egypt is the, is going to be the progenitor and the source from which the humanity of Christ will spring.

And so it's like a huge blessing by association. The fact that Christ is going to come from them backs up and it's a blessing for the whole nation. The whole nation is treated as the firstborn.

And that's what God tells them. And this same concept is mentioned also in Hosea chapter 11 and verse one. Always when you see this in God throughout the Old Testament, it is such a mark of honor.

God identifies himself. He's the God of the universe. He's the God that created everything and everybody.

But when he identifies himself in the Old Testament, what does he say? He says, I am the God of Israel. I am the God that brought you out of Egypt. I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

God, the omnipotent, immutable God of the universe identifies himself with Israel consistently. But if you look at Hosea chapter 11, verse one, God says, when Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt, I called my son.

As they called him, so they went from them and so forth. And he gives the account of the abuse that he has received from Israel in return for his fatherly care. And the message of the prophets is look at the, at the goodness and the mercy and the grace and the compassion that God has lavished on Israel as a nation and the unresponsive, hard-hearted, stiff-necked response that as a nation, they have returned to God.

And it's so easy to see when you look at it from a, from this distance and in the pages of scripture and you say, how, how could these Israelites that saw the water's part and saw the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, and they saw the man array down from heaven and they saw these mighty

works of God, how could they turn around and say, he's brought us out here to die. We should have stayed in Egypt. We look at it and we say, oh, I, you know, no, how could anybody do that? But they did.

And many of us in the same situation would do the same thing. And many of us in our situation today have done that same thing. God has done tremendous things for us.

And we are so quick to forget, but it doesn't change Israel's status, even though they eventually received such discipline that their nation essentially disappeared in terms of a national entity. The race has existed and been preserved, but the nation has been gone for 2,000 years. It never changes their status as the adopted son of God.

And that's God's faithfulness to his promise. That's a possession of Israel. The adoption pertains to them.

The second thing that Paul mentions is the glory. Now, what kind of glory is there? There's really only one true glory, and that's the glory of God. And the glory of God is Israel's peculiar possession.

It's not their glory in battle. It's not the glory of David's throne. It's not the glory of their accomplishments as a race or as a nation.

They possess the glory. They are the residence place. They are the keepers.

They are the vessel in which the glory of God is supposed to be shown forth. Take a look at Exodus chapter 24, verse 17. This is the record of the glory of God descending to Mount Sinai.

Exodus 24, verse 17. You can actually start back in verse 15. Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.

So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain, and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. No other place, no other people except Israel had the manifestation and the possession of the glory of God in this fashion. Exodus 24, verse 17 talks about the glory of God at Sinai.

Exodus chapter 40, verses 34 through 38 talks about the glory of God at the tabernacle, when the glory of God came down and filled the tabernacle upon its completion and its dedication and the sanctification of the Levites. The glory of God, the manifestation of the presence of God, was located in Israel. It was their peculiar possession.

God never did that in Nineveh. He never did it in the land of the Hittites or the land of Egypt or any place except Israel. If you go to Leviticus chapter 16 and verse 2, you have the record of the glory of God descending and manifesting itself at the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies.

If you go to First Kings chapter 8, verse 10 and 11, this is one of the last times that the physical manifestation of the glory of God takes place. First Kings 8, 10, this is the occasion of the dedication of the temple under Solomon, and that's an endeavor that we've seen David get underway in our study of Second Samuel. But in First Kings 8, they emplaced the Ark of the Covenant, nothing except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel.

That's what's in the Ark now. It's just the tablets, Aaron's rod that budded, the pot of manna, and so forth, no longer there. But the two tablets of stone.

By the way, if the Ark of the Covenant, the original one, is actually in the Temple Mount in a cave, if you hear them say there's anything in it besides the tables of stone, then it's a fake because the Bible says at this point, which was 3,000 years ago, all that remained were the tables of the law. So if they find a pot of manna or if they find a stick in there, then somebody's been up to mischief because the Bible says those were no longer there in Solomon's day. But it came to pass when the priest came out of the holy place that the cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priest could not continue ministering because of the for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

That was a peculiar privilege of Israel. And we have seen in surveying, when we were going through Mark and talking about why John the Baptist was baptizing at the River Jordan, if you went through that study, you know that the reason, it seems like an unrelated subject, but the reason John the Baptist baptized out there in the wilderness in the Jordan has to do with the glory of God. We went back to Isaiah chapter 40, and we saw that the message is prepare the way of the Lord, make a straight path, make a highway in the desert for our God.

And why is that? Why does God need a highway? Because the glory of God had departed Israel by the time of Jesus Christ. And by the time John the Baptist heralded the coming of Messiah, the glory of God had departed. We went back in Ezekiel, and we saw in Ezekiel's vision, the glory of God rise up from the Ark of the Covenant and go to the entrance to the Holy of Holies.

And then it went to the entrance of the temple, and then it went to the gate, and then it went up and hovered over the Mount of Olives, and then it disappeared heading east. And it left Israel and departed Israel. That is the ultimate discipline.

And this is the loss of a privilege. It's the loss of a reward. It's not loss of salvation.

It's not damnation in the lake of fire. It's the loss of a very great and precious privilege to be the residence place for the glory of God on earth. Israel lost that through gross negligence and disobedience and unfaithfulness.

Why is John out there east of Jerusalem at the Jordan River, the crossing place into the land? Because it's time for the glory of God to return. It's time for the people of God to treasure the presence of God enough to make a straight path. Let the valleys be filled in.

Let the mountains be made low. Do whatever it takes to make a path for the return of the glory of God. And of course, the glory of God is summed up and embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why John the Baptist proclaimed where he proclaimed. You would think, well, he'd be at the temple. He'd address a big crowd and say, hey, the Messiah is coming.

Let me get the media on the line here. Let me get the papers and the press and make sure this is widely... He went out in the middle of nowhere because people should have understood what the significance of it was from knowing their Old Testament. So the glory of God is a very dear and precious possession and it belongs to Israel.

It pertains to them, as Paul says. Now what's the third thing that he says in verse four of chapter nine? The adoption, the glory, the covenants. We're on fairly familiar ground here.

We know that there were several covenants in the Old Testament that belonged exclusively to Israel, beginning with the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12, where God promised Abraham the land. Get thee up from thy people and thy kindred unto a land that I will show thee. And over the course of Abraham's life, God communicated with him several times.

And he said, go to and fro and up and down every place that you set your foot. That's the land that I'm giving you. So God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai.

Then you have the Abrahamic covenant. You have the Mosaic covenant or the Mosaic law. You have the Palestinian covenant, which is the specific promise of the land.

You have the promise to Abraham that he would be a great nation and a great people. You have the Davidic covenant that we've studied in 2 Samuel 7, which is the promise of a throne and a descendant of David ruling on that throne perpetually. And among the other covenants, you also have the New Covenant, which is communicated in Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 24 through 27.

Let's take a look at that. This has been the subject of some head scratching. Ezekiel chapter 36.

What I would like to do is start up in verse 16. Ezekiel is writing and he says, The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds. To me, their way was like the uncleanness of a woman and her customary impurity.

Therefore I poured out my fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land and for their idols with which they had defiled it. So I scattered them amongst the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries. I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.

This is God's judgment on his people, his adopted sons, the custodians of his glory and his covenants. When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned my holy name. When they said of them, these are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of his land.

Now, this is a terrible indictment to carry the name of the Lord and it brings shame. It defiles the name of the Lord to bear it, and it's obviously something we would not want to commit. God says in verse 21, I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

Therefore say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. You get the idea that God is focusing on the profaning of his name, don't you? He's mentioned it about eight times here already.

The nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you out from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. You shall be my people, and I will be your God.

I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it and bring no famine upon you." And he goes on to give a description of what this period of time is going to be like. We know from studying this that this is the Millennial Kingdom, and this is the result of the resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

The nation of Israel is going to be purged. How is the nation going to be purged? In history, every generation was full of both believers and unbelievers, both the faithful believers and the disobedient believers. And the nation of Israel we primarily think of as believers.

They recognize God, but they're disobedient, they're unfaithful, and so forth. Now, when all of the Old Testament saints are raised, when Christ returns at the second advent, the second coming, seven years after we leave, and he sets up his Millennial Kingdom, what's he going to do? He is going to sit on the throne of David, and he is going to rule over the historical Israel that has the boundaries that God promised Abraham. It is the boundaries that existed pretty much at the time of Solomon.

It's going to extend up into Lebanon in the north. It's going to extend over to Syria in the east. It's going to extend south to Egypt in the south, and it's going to be bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

That is Palestine. That is the land of Israel. That is the covenant promised land to Israel.

Who is going to dwell in that land? The nation of Israel is going to be sprinkled clean. He is going to cleanse it from the filthiness and from the idols, worshipers, and so forth. Now, were a lot of Old Testament believers disobedient? Did Old Testament believers fall away and start playing with idols? Yes, they did.

Will those particular believers dwell in the historical boundaries of Israel? No, they won't. They'll live in probably North Dakota or maybe in Columbia or Panama or southern tip of Brazil or something. Maybe in the mountains of Ecuador.

Maybe they'll be off in the middle of China someplace. Maybe they'll be in the vicinity of the South China Sea on some tiny island. I don't know where they're going to be, but I know where they're not going to be.

They're not going to be in the land. This is a consistent pattern that God preserves throughout His statements on future times. Even in the new heavens and the new earth, in the new Jerusalem, those that worship idols, those that love a lie, those that are adulterers and fornicators and so forth, don't have the privilege of going into the new Jerusalem.

They dwell outside. It tells us that in Revelation 20 and following. Same thing in the Millennial Kingdom.

Jesus told the Pharisees, you will see many coming from the east and west and north and south and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom and you yourselves thrust out. That is the fulfillment of this covenant, the new covenant. God says, I will take the nation of Israel and purge it clean.

Who's going to dwell in the land and be close to Jesus Christ on His throne? The faithful, the obedient, those that saw what God had provided and took advantage of it and were granted righteousness by faith. People like Job, people like Moses and Joshua and Caleb. Caleb is going to be probably 15 feet away from the throne of Jesus Christ, I am sure.

Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada. Many faithful in Israel will be in the land and in the city and many unfaithful Pharisees and Sadducees and religious types are going to be scattered around the earth sending their taxes and their obeisance into the nation of Israel. It's interesting to me that even in the Millennial Kingdom, even in the perfect government and the perfect thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, we will not have a one world government.

Jesus Christ will subjugate the world but it's still going to be broken up into nations and that's why the prophets talk about the fact that the nations will send emissaries to Jerusalem with gifts and with obeisance. It'll be kind of like the days of David when he subjugated the peoples. He didn't take them over and annex them into Israel but they were subservient.

There would be a suzerain vassal treaty between Israel and these nations. That's what Jesus Christ is going to do. He's going to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

He's not going to rule Israel and make everybody a part of Israel. It's one of the misconceptions about the Millennial Kingdom is that Jesus Christ is just going to make everything one big one world government. He's going to be the central and the most powerful government under which all of the other nations of the earth will be subservient.

It's quite probable that many faithful believers will be leading those other governments and will be extending the authority of Jesus Christ all over the planet. But the point here is this passage like many others has been taken in an individual way that God is going to arbitrarily and with no volition on the part of the person remove their negative thoughts and their negative ideas and their bad attitudes and their lack of diligence and their lack of obedience and their lack of faith and he's just going to stick a faithful obedient heart into each one of these individuals. It's not talking about that at all.

What does it say about this in verse 22? Who is he talking to? Say to the house of Israel. He doesn't say say to each man in Israel or say to each one of my people in Israel.