***The Abrahamic Covenant

Colossians 1:24-29

COL-191***

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2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Philippians 2:15-16: "That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God, above reproach, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of Life, so that in the day of Christ, I may have cause to glory, because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain."

We are studying Colossians 1:24-29. Our subject is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number six.

The nation of Israel was begun with a man named Abraham, whose name was Abram at the time, who lived in 2100 B.C, in modern-day Iraq. He lived in a city called Ur, of the territory of the Chaldeans, which we refer to as Babylon. On a map, we see that the great rivers of that territory: the Euphrates; and, the Tigris. Babylon is on the east side of the Euphrates, and on the west side is the city of Ur, in this territory of the Babylonians. This is where this man Abraham was born, and this is where he lived when he comes onto the biblical scene.

God, in some way or another, that we are not given the details about, revealed Himself to Abraham, who is a middle-aged, prosperous, settled pagan, who was a devotee of the religion of Babylonianism. Babylonianism was begun at the Tower of Nimrod, and was the concept that man himself is God. Its modern day expression in the East is Hinduism; and, in the West, it's the New Age concepts in Western clothing. The religion of Abraham was that which he had inherited from his parents, who apparently were people of social standing and wealth themselves.

Babylonianism, as it came down in time, moved from Babylon to Pergamum, which then became the center of the mystery cult of Babylonianism. And after Rome took over the world, it was the religion of Rome. When Christianity, in 325 A.D., became the official tolerated religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine, it was amalgamated with Christianity. So, biblical Christianity, corrupted by Babylonian wisdom, became what we know today as the Roman Catholic Church. That's why it is confusing if you don't understand that relationship – why Roman Catholicism teaches certain things, and has certain practices, and has certain concepts that are nowhere in the Bible. They're not in the Bible, but they are from the Babylonian mystery religions. And we've gone over that in the past, so we'll not pursue that further.

Well, Abraham, upon this divine contact with God, believed God's promise of a future Savior provided as a grace gift to pay for Abraham's moral guilt. And he was told that he would then be credited by God, as a free gift, with absolute righteousness, which would then provide him with the salvation which would qualify him for heaven. This is recorded for us in Romans 4:1-3: "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.'" There you are again. The keyword for salvation is "believe."

Never permit yourself to be corrupted on that principle as a witness of the Lord God. You are the mouthpiece of God to the unsaved world. And Satan will silence you, or he will give you a corrupted message. And if you do not speak to people about believing the gospel – that God has been propitiated (He has been satisfied), and His justice is no longer angry at anybody. He has been satisfied relative to your moral guilt (your sin). And what's going to keep you out of heaven is not the wrong things you do, because those have been covered by the death of Christ. But you're going to be in the lake of fire because you will not accept the gift of God, which is eternal life through faith in Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is the only way. That's the only way Abraham could be saved. That's the only way Adam could be saved. That's the way everybody throughout history has been saved: "believe on the coming Savior;" or, "believe on the Savior Who has arrived already, and Who we look back to."

Now, when Abraham became a believer, God then proceeds to make an eternal, unconditional covenant with him and with his posterity: Israel. If you'll turn to Genesis 12:1-3, we have what we refer to generally as the Abrahamic Covenant. Please do not act like other churches and other church members, and come into this sacred hall without your Bible. We cannot teach empty chairs, and we cannot teach empty hands without the Scriptures. Otherwise, you'll think I'm making this stuff up. Genesis 12:1-3 – in these three verses, there are two commandments. Abraham is given commandment number one, and then he's told that if you do this first commandment: bing, bing, bing – three good things will happen to you. Then he's given the second commandment on the basis of that first commandment, and it says, "If you do that second commandment: bing, bing, bing – three great things will be the result."

Genesis 12:1: "Now the Lord said to Abraham, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you." Now, Abraham, as we indicated, lived here in the city of Ur. And what God was telling him to do was to follow what was called the Fertile Crescent route, like a crescent moon. There's no way you could cut over via a shortcut through the Arabian Desert. You had to follow the water line. So, he was being told to get out of that country, away from his father's household, away from his family, and head up here toward Haran, and make the turn there into the land that God was going to give him on the Mediterranean Sea – the land of Canaan, the Promised Land.

Verse 2 says that he has to make this break; leave his relatives; leave his father's household; and, head for the land that God has ordained for the Jews as an eternal possession. There's no question today, with all the debate with the Arab world, as to who owns, and who has the right to the land of Israel. Only the Jews. And it began right back here.

Genesis 12:2: "If you obey this commandment (if believer Abraham would obey this commandment, this would be the result), I'll make you a great nation (the nation of Israel). I will bless you personally, spiritually and materially." He was a man of great spiritual understanding, and a man, in time, of great, enormous wealth: "And I'll make your name great." You will be famous. All these three things have happened. These three promises would then enable Abraham to fulfill a second divine command. And at the end of verse 2, we have the statement: "And so, be a blessing."

Now, your translation may have it as: "And so you shall be a blessing," which would be prophetic. That is a weak translation. Some of you, if you have the proper notes in your Bible, you can look in the margin, and there may be a note, telling you the correction is that it's a command. It's the second command of this very important passage. This is what all of Scripture is all about – right here. This is where salvation is going to come. This is where the Savior is going to come. This is where the line of salvation is going to come. It all happens right there, in Ur of the Chaldees: "And so, be a blessing." That's the Hebrew text more properly presented. It is a commandment – not a prediction.

Now, if he would proceed to be a blessing – to so live; to so speak; to so testify; and, to so honor God in what he did (character counts), he would become a blessing immediately to his family, and father beyond – the tribes around them, and the nations around them, and eventually, the whole world. Would he pick it up and do it? Would he run with this second commandment?

If he did, in Genesis 12:3, God said that three things would result: "I'll bless those who bless you. If you do this, I'll bless those who bless you." To bless Abraham and his posterity is to bless God. Anybody who is born again, and who has personal integrity, as expressed by the moral code and the principles of the Word of God: "That's the person who's going to come under My blessing." You can count on it. And the young you are (the sooner you can begin), the smarter you are, and the greater the blessings of your whole life.

Secondly: "And the one who curses you, I will curse." So, anybody who curses Abraham or the Jews is, in effect, cursing God. Anybody who abuses Abraham then, or his descendants, is going to come under the judgment of God. History is replete with people who have been anti-Semitic, and the consequences that they have suffered for that.

Now, the point of that is that that gives a great protection to the Jewish people. It is because of this promise to Abraham, because he obeyed the commandment to focus his life and to be a blessing, that the Jews have been able to survive over all these centuries as an identifiable racial group of people.

The third thing He said was that: "In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." All the families on earth are going to be blessed through you. The full meaning of that is explained to us in the New Testament, in Ephesians 3:8. The apostle Paul says, "To me, the very least of all saints, His grace was given to preach to the gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."

Galatians 3:8: "The Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the gentiles by faith." Mr. Munn read us a passage of Scripture this morning that stated clearly that there would come salvation through the line of David, indeed to the Jews, but also to all the world – to the nations of the world. That is the fulfillment of this third promise to Abraham of blessing all families. The Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand, to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." So, we know what that means – that Abraham would be a blessing to all nations. Through him would come the Savior for salvation for all of mankind.

Also, look at Galatians 3:16: "Now, the promises were spoken to Abraham, and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one: and to your seed; that is, Christ." Her you see that we are not foolish, and we are not ridiculous, in following the principle of expository preaching in terms of the original languages, and explaining what those languages are saying, and the grammatical historical explanation of Scriptures, as we like to put it. For example, here the singular or plural makes a big difference. He didn't say that this is all going to come about as a promise based upon *the seeds* of Abraham – his descendants. But this promise, to be a blessing to all nations, in this context, ties back with verse 8: "Is through one seed; namely, Jesus Christ."

Well, I'm happy to report to you that Abraham, by faith, obeyed God. He moved to Canaan with an en route stop at Haran. He gathered wife Sarai; all of the people in his household; all of his possessions (his animals); and, they started moving up the Fertile Crescent. They moved on up, and, for some reason, they got to Haran, which was the original family home too of the relatives, and they stopped there. And we're not quite sure how long it was, but that had been a 600-mile journey, following the fertile valley of the Euphrates.

Genesis 12:4-9 describe that decision: "So, Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him. And Lot went with Him. (He was the nephew – one of his brothers’ sons.) Now, Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran." Now, this is pretty late in life to get such a dramatic direction from God – to start on this kind of a career, with all the unknowns. But here he is: 75 years old, with enormous capacity provided by God for him to be able to take up this challenge, and to lead out into: he knew not where.

"And Abraham took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan." Thus they came to the land of Canaan. After a while, when the Father died (he apparently was the influence to be staying at Heron), Abraham said, "OK, let's load up. We're going to go the rest of the way to where God has told us to go." Then they finished, as the crescent turned down to the Mediterranean Sea, and then to the land of Canaan: the Sea of Galilee; the Jordan River; and, the Dead Sea.

Verse 6: "Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanites was then in the land." The Canaanites were a variety of tribes who were extremely corrupt morally. Here's where the worship of Molech was one of their prominent ways of worshiping their gods, which is to have a great furnace in the belly of this Buddha-like image, with an opening in which to throw their infant children as sacrifices to Molech. Plus, they would cut themselves; they would make marks on their bodies; and, they would pierce their bodies in various ways. It was all the characteristics of the bloodthirsty leader, Satan, that was behind all of this.

Verse 7: "The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So, he built an altar there to the Lord, Who had appeared to him. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain in the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abraham journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev." The Negev is way down in the south: the far south end of the territory here of Canaan. Now, he was going through hostile territory. These tribes were vicious, vile people. They were not particularly fond of these strangers coming through. So, this was kind of a scary operation.

One thing more: let's go back to verse 7: "In obedience to Abraham's movement, God appeared to him in a vision." And there again, He gave him a clear declaration that he had title to the land of Israel. And Abraham responded by building an altar and worshiping God.

In verse 8, he proceeded from there, heading on toward Bethel. He pitched his tent, then went on further, all the way down to the Negev. But in the last line: "He built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." He built an altar to the Lord in the time that he was staying here in this area where he pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east. And he called upon the name of the Lord.

There again, your Bible may have a more accurate note that the word "called" there is the word "preached" or "preacher." What it says is that he worshiped God, thanked Him for the promise, and then he proceeded to be a preacher in the name of the Lord.

So, Abraham, who was told, "You be a blessing," proceeded to be a blessing by proclaiming the gospel that had been revealed to him directly by God, and that he had believed, and that had already prospered him tremendously, and had now brought him this far distance, into a land that God said, "You will have this land, and this country is going to be yours (your posterity) forever." It will go right out into eternity, and end up in the new earth and the new heaven. And that new earth (that territory) is going to be yours. This was mind-boggling.

So, Abraham really had his heart to be a missionary right off the bat. Every heart without Christ is a mission field; and, every heart with Christ is a missionary. And he jumped right in and began proclaiming. That's why you should grab those evangelistic brochures, . . . and use them. Be a witness like Abraham was. Right off the bat, this man knew that his job was to talk about God, because he came from such a pagan home, and such a pagan culture. He came from Nimrod's territory, with all the ugliness that existed there. He knew what the difference was.

So, what has God done here? He has used words that cannot be revoked. He's used words that indicate that he is making a promise to Abraham, which is irrevocable. It was not a promise such that: "If you do this, Abraham, and if you behave yourself, I'm going to do this for you. If your descendants behave themselves, I'm going to do this for you." He has given them a promise that, as a nation, the Abrahamic Covenant cannot be changed.

So, here's an irrevocable promise from God to the Jews. What does He promise them? An eternal nation (Canaan land in perpetuity, in their possession); divine blessings; and, sovereign protection for their survival. God will take care of those who oppose the Jew and abuse him.

Now, the Abrahamic Covenant was the skeleton. Its main features were later amplified, and filled out with flesh, on that skeleton by three other covenants. The Palestinian Covenant amplified the covenant of the land that they were going to have. And there was no question about it that they will have it. The Davidic Covenant now gave them a dynasty and a royal kingdom. And then the New Covenant, which would give them the ability that they did not have, under the Mosaic Law, to do right. God said, "I'm going to take those stones on which I wrote the Mosaic Law and the moral code, and I'm going to change them from your stony heart into a heart that's living, and breathing, and doing these things. So, they would be able to obey God.

In these covenants, there is promised (if we were to go in detail), you would discover that there's a promise of an eternal posterity descended from the house of David, culminating in a Messiah Savior. Secondly, there would be a throne, which is a symbol of royal authority, which ultimately would be exercised by the Savior Jesus Christ. And, finally, there would be a kingdom of political authority on earth.

This particular Davidic Covenant, with these specifications, is found in 2 Samuel 7:16. God says to David, "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever." Now, you must not treat the Bible in a slovenly way. The words are there by the placement of the Holy Spirit. These are the words of God. This is the mind of God when you read Scripture. It's different than any other book. And "forever" means "no end." Never will you find a qualification. There's only one covenant that God ever made with the Jewish people that has an "if" in it – a qualification such that they had to be able to be qualified to receive the blessings, and that's the Mosaic Covenant: "If you do this, I will do this for you in blessing. If you don't do this, I will do this for you in cursing and judgment.

In these covenants, the Palestinian Covenant, there is never a condition. In the Davidic Covenant, there is never a condition. In the New Covenant, to be fulfilled yet in the future, there is never a condition. Well, what if they were disobedient? What if they did rebel against God, as indeed they did? What if their kings became lowlifes who thought that character didn't matter? God said that disobedience to God by Israelites and its kings would clearly result in discipline. But it would not result in the annulment of the Abrahamic Covenant and its three explanatory covenants.

2 Samuel 7:14: "I will be a Father to him (speaking to David, concerning Solomon), and he will be a son to Me. When he commits iniquity. I will correct him with the rod of men, and the strokes of the sons of men. (I'll bring armies in, and I'll bring defeat to him in war.) If he disobeys, I'll discipline him with military conquest. But My lovingkindness (the Old Testament word for "grace") shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from you." The grace, as expressed in the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, would never be removed from Solomon and his descendants: "And your house, and your kingdom, shall endure before Me forever. And your throne shall be established forever." It is very clear that there can be a problem. But however God deals with any disobedience, it is not going to affect the Abrahamic Covenant. That's going to happen.

Now, you can see what I'm leading up to is to show you from Scripture that there's a basis when we tell you that Israel is one thing over here, and the church is another thing over here, and the two have nothing to do with one another. They're totally separate entities, and they go out into eternity as separate entities. God has a program for each one, and they will be fulfilled. The Reformation leaders made an enormous mistake. They never lived long enough to figure that out – that Israel and the church were separate entities. Consequently, in the average church operation, they're all mixed up together.

Now go over to Psalm 89:3-4. This is a psalm about the Davidic Covenant. Verse 3: "I made a covenant with My chosen. I have sworn to David, My servant. I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations." Do I have to explain that to you? God has made a promise that He is going to give a posterity; a throne; a royal kingdom; and, a dynasty to the household of David, and that it will last forever.

Please look at Psalm 89:27 "I shall also make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." Here you have an example where the Scriptures suddenly telescope to the future. While this is being spoken about David, suddenly, God the Holy Spirit leaps forward, in the centuries, to Jesus Christ. This verse 27 is dealing with "My firstborn," which is a reference to the Messiah Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: "I will make My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." This is a jump to the millennium, where Jesus Christ is going to rule all the nations of the world.

I will begin reading in Psalm 89:28: "My lovingkindness (My grace) I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him." My covenant – the Abrahamic Covenant, with its subsidiary explanations of the other three components: "So, I will establish his descendants forever, and his throne, as in the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments; and, if they violate my statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness." This is stated very clearly: "If you disobey, I'm going to bring the boom down on you. I will bring all kinds of suffering into your experience like you wouldn't believe. But I'll never revoke the Abrahamic Covenant. I'll never bring along something called 'the church,' and say, 'From now on, the church is the new Israel. From now on, the church has replaced Israel. From now on, I'm going to deal with the church, and I'm having nothing to do with Israel. Forget all about the promises and everything that went before.'"

Verse 34: "My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have spoken by My Holiness, I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever, and his throne is a son before Me."

Now, the amillennialists have a lot of problems with that verse. So, what they do is that they resort to the trickery (the deceit) of changing the meanings of words. And they say, "This is spiritualized. 'His descendants' are saved people – not Jews. And 'what shall endure forever, his throne,' is the throne of Jesus Christ in heaven. And as the sun is going to last forever, so the throne will last forever." But that is not integrity of the language. And that is not how God speaks. When He speaks in symbols, it makes it clear that that is what it is.

Verse 37 said, "It shall be a forever, like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful." God says, "As long as you look up there, and you see that sun and you see that moon, it is My reminder that the Abrahamic Covenant will not ever be ignored, rescinded, or thrown aside. I will fulfill My promises to Abraham."

Now, it is interesting that, upon the announcement to Mary that she was about to bear the Christ Child, of all things that God should talk about, what should He talk about?" He reiterates that what is going to happen here now is going to have some dramatic results never revealed in the Old Testament, because not only was this the Messiah Savior promise, Who was going to now provide the satisfactions to God's justice as the Lamb of God, dying for the sins of the world, but it was also going to eventuate into a whole new body of believers: never dreamed up by anybody; never revealed by God; and, called "a mystery" in the New Testament, and suddenly reveal that, out of Jews and gentiles, God was going to form a whole new group of people who are going to be given privileges and powers and blessings that the Jew never dreamed possible. They would be the most favored people in the history of mankind: the ordinary, everyday Christian, who belongs to the royal family of God.

Notice the tie-in in Luke 1:31-33. To Mary, the angel says, "And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a Son, and you shall name Him 'Jesus'" (Joshua – God saves). He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And His kingdom will have no end." Those who reject the coming millennial 1,000-year kingdom of Jesus Christ upon this earth, which is the ultimate expression of the Abrahamic Covenant, are hard-pressed now to deal with these verses: "He shall be great, and He'll be called the Son of the Most High." He will be not only man, but He will be divine: "And the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David."

To the amillennialist, "the throne of His father David" becomes the throne of Christ in heaven. Mary had no problem understanding what "the throne of His father David" meant. It was that earthly throne in the city of Jerusalem that was now out of operation because of the conquest of the Romans, which was because of the disobedience of the Jews: "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever." And, to the amillennialist, "the house of Jacob" becomes "Christians." Yeah, that's what the amillennialists say: "They're Christians." So, suddenly, anything in the Bible that you want to have, you can just twist it around, and make it mean what you want it to mean. You don't have to let words say what they say. "His kingdom will have no end." The amillennialist says that this is not an earthly kingdom (though that's where the throne is), but this is going to be a heavenly kingdom.

However, that isn't what the Scriptures say. That is not based upon all the background of the Old Testament – that this promise from the angel was based upon. This was common knowledge in the Old Testament. And Mary knew what it was all about.

Now, here's where, at least, the liberals, who oppose the Word of God in Christianity, in Christian circles, are consistent. Whereas, the more biblical people from the Reformed (Reformation teaching) are not, which is also Roman Catholic teaching. Mary was told here before, that she was going to have a Child. She would be found with Child, and she would conceive in her womb. She would bear a Son, and she would name Him "Jesus."

What do the amillennialists say? The liberals say, "Oh, that's literal. Yes, this is a virgin woman. Yes, she had a supernatural conception, and her Son would have a supernatural birth. Yes, she bore a child by supernatural conception. She had to do that because the sin nature is passed on through the genetic structure of the father. He could not be born with a human father if He was to be born sinless without a sin nature, back to where Adam was originally. So, she's going to bear this Son. That's literal. His name will be called 'Jesus' ('Jehovah saves'). Yes, that's literal."

However, when we come to the next verses, 30-33, all of that is symbolic. They teach you in seminary that there are laws of hermeneutics which govern interpretation. And that's one of the laws: you can't suddenly switch, in the context, from what is literal to (speaking about the same thing) what becomes symbolic. You cannot have a case where part of it is literal, but part of it is symbolic. That, in itself, mitigates against trying to blow this off as not a real kingdom of God upon this earth.

So, this is what God promised the Jewish people. And He said, "If you disobey Me, I will judge you." And, eventually, they split into two kingdoms. They still couldn't get themselves to obey God, with all the revelation that they had. Then, in came the Assyrians, and they hauled off the ten tribes of the north, and they dissipated them. Then came Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar), and he hauled off the two Southern tribes: Judah; and, Benjamin. And then the kingdoms came along, one after another. First, the Medo-Persian kingdom governed the Jews. Then came Greece. It governed. Then Rome governed. And they were just completely out of all the blessings that God had.

Now, with the official rejection of Jesus Christ as Israel's promised Messiah Savior, on Palm Sunday, April 11th, 32 A.D., God's eternal plan for Israel was now put on hold. God's eternal plan for Israel was now put on hold. That's the whole point. You can see how it all began. You can see what is promised to the Jews. You can see how you have the problem of the eternal promises (eternal words that deal with eternity) and what God is going to do for Abraham, and all that was involved in that promise. You cannot simply, suddenly change, and God goes against His Own Word; He undermines His Own integrity; and, when He said, "I promise you forever," He goes back on His Word.

That Palm Sunday, April 11the, 32 A.D happened to be (our chronologists have figure figured out) exactly the 483rd year, to the very day, of God's allotted 490 years, revealed to Daniel as the fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant would be completed. When Daniel wanted to know how long before all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and the associated covenant are fulfilled (your plan for the Jew that we've all been waiting for and looking for will be fulfilled, God gave him the answer. And the clock on these 490 years started ticking when the Persian king authorized them to go back to the land and start rebuilding the wall.

Daniel 9:24-27: "Seventy weeks (these are weeks of years) have been decreed (490 years) for your people. Incidentally, the angel sent to bring this answer to Daniel was interposed by powerful forces of the angelic world of Satan. They didn't want this message to come through, because this is a key timetable that we need. And it took him three weeks, trying to fight through, because angels have military ranks, and they have different power accordingly, and the demons the same way. So, finally, God had to send his archangel in there to break the bottleneck; to turn that angel loose; and, to be able to bring the information to him.

Now, 490 years have been decreed for your people Israel, and your holy city: to finish the transgression; to make an end of sin; to make atonement for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up vision and prophecy; and, to anoint the most holy place." All those words are simply saying one thing: "Everything I've ever promised to the Jewish people, at the end of 490 years, it'll be done."

Verse 25: "So, you are to know and discern that from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince." And that decree was in 445 B.C., by the way. We know exactly, precisely the year that that decree was given by the Persian King: "You are to know and to discern that from the beginning of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be built again with plaza and moat in times of distress. There was a division to two segments of time. One was seven weeks long, and the other was sixty-two weeks. And I won't get into the significance of that. But here is a total of sixty-nine weeks – 483 years. Then what?

"After sixty-nine weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. That was April 11th, 32 A.D. That's when they rejected Him finally and officially – on that Palm Sunday, and they were going to railroad Him to the cross. With that, the Scriptures' timetable indicates Messiah is going to be cut off from fulfilling the promises to Abraham. That was because, instead of making Him their king, they crucified Him, and He became the Lamb of God for the sins of the world: "After sixty-nine weeks (483 years), the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing." The people of the prince that is to come – the antichrist who is to come, from that Western European territory, that will then rule the world in the time of Christ, will destroy the city and the sanctuary. That happened in 70 A.D: "And its end will come with a flood to the end; there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant (he – the prince who shall come, the antichrist) with the many for one week (one year)."

Aha! Here are the missing final seven years. It was to be 490 years (seventy weeks of years). We were one short. Here it comes in. That week will be fulfilled: "But in the middle of that week, he (the antichrist) will put a stop to the sacrifice and grain offerings. And on the wing of abomination will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." I won't go into all of that. It is simply saying that in the middle of the seven-year period, the antichrist puts his own image up into the temple that he has enabled the Jews to rebuild under his protective care against the Arab world. And he will demand that they worship him as God. And those who don't, he will go after, to kill them. This is a midpoint sign of the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

Then all hell will break loose upon this earth, as we have seen in the book of the Revelation. The abomination of this man will then rapidly bring, during that last three-and-a-half years, the final completion of this seven-year period.

So, what I'm telling you is that God made a very precise point in time in completing His promises to Abraham. And the time period got interrupted. Messiah got stopped dead (stopped cold). So, seven years still remain unfulfilled to complete God's promises to Israel – to be completed in the future, which we refer to as the tribulation from the last three-and-a-half years. The Bible calls it the Great Tribulation. This follows the rapture of the church.

Exactly where is the rapture? I know some of you have asked me that question, and I'll try to get back to that another time. From the time of the rapture, and the time that the tribulation clock starts ticking, there may be a timespan. We have some question about extra days, and we'll get back to that later. But in any case, the clock starts ticking after the rapture of the church – not before. The church does not go through this bloody time.

Between the sixty-ninth, the, and the seventieth year of God's timetable for Israel is inserted the totally new church age, creating a new body of believers, living under spiritual grace privileges as the body and bride of Jesus Christ. That's where the church comes in. It has nothing to do with Israel before. It has nothing to do with Israel that follows – when Israel is again picked up by God for the final seven years of the completion of the promises to them. In between is an intercalation. That fancy word means something that is shoved into a time span, and it's an intercalation. It's in between two time periods. It has nothing to do with the period before, and nothing to do with the period after. It's an excellent word. The church is just shoved in here, for 2,000 years, and I doubt much longer.

A few Scriptures indicate this special group of people (this special body), since it was never revealed in the Old Testament. No one knew anything about it. And the person who got the primary doctrinal information about this was the apostle Paul, in his three-year stay in the Arabian Desert, being taught by the Lord Jesus Christ after he was saved.

In Matthew 16:17-19, Jesus steps out of the land of Israel. On this occasion, He's on gentile territory. And now He makes a dramatic statement that they didn't fully understand: "And Jesus answered and said to him (to Peter), 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father, who is in heaven.'" This was in response to Jesus' question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is, and who do you say that I am?" And in verse 16, Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter says, "You're the Messiah Savior – the one that father Abraham was told that God was going to send. That's who you are. You are the God-man." And Jesus say, "You didn't come to this because you're smart, Peter, but because God has revealed this to you.

Then, in verse 16, the Lord says, "Now I'm going to tell you something else. And I also say to you that you are Peter (a pebble). And upon this rock (a huge boulder)." That's a difference of the Greek language: "I will build My church" – five dramatic words: "I (Jesus Christ) will (in the future) build (it’s an ongoing structure of development) My (it belongs to Him) church." What in the world is the church? They said, "I have never heard that before. What is this? We know about Israel, but we don't know what the church is:" "And the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Jesus says, "I'm going to give you the keys of the gospel. I'm going to give you the keys to eternal life. This church is going to have the power to open eternity to people in the New Jerusalem, instead of death in the old Jerusalem."

Move over to Acts 15:14. Simon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the gentiles a people for His name. Now we have another clue. This church is going to be mostly gentiles, and it's going to be a special group of saints related to Jesus Christ in a very special way, such as has never been done in the history of saved people before.

Ephesians 1:22-23: "And He (God the Father) put all things in subjection under His feet (Jesus Christ), and gave Him as Head over all things to the church, which is His body: the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Or: "Which is His body, which is being filled by the one who fills all in all with blessing."

So, here this church has a very special relationship to Jesus Christ. It is mostly made up of gentiles. And this body of special believers – not just Jews, and not just gentiles (not Israel) has a special relationship, such that Christ is the Head, and they're the body.

Have you ever noticed how close your head is related to your body? Sometimes when people can't remember to do things, your mother says, "You'd lose your head if it wasn't attached to you." Well, if you lost your head, there wouldn't be anything else you would do. The head runs it all. The head is a lifeline. The head is what controls it all.

So, Christ is related to this group. He was never said to be the Head of Israel. He's king of Israel, but He is the Head of the church.

In Colossians 1:18, He is also the head of the body. Now the church is the body: "He is also Head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning (the firstborn) from among the dead, so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything:" "The firstborn from among them" means that He has preeminence.

Then, Revelation 19:7-9, concerning this special group of people who was never heard of before in the Old Testament Scriptures, says: "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready." So, not only is this group, called the church, the body of Christ, but it is also going to be related to Him like a bride is to her husband. We are going to be His bride. Now, that's a relationship that you can't break. That's an eternal relationship. Did any Jew have a relationship to Jesus Christ under Israel as a bride? Never. They wouldn't even think about it – a Jew who would be the body, as one of the members of the Godhead? That was unthinkable. Who could be that? A special group of people, especially prepared for a special relationship to God Himself, in a very special way, in a very special time.

Revelation 19:8: "And it was given to her (the church – His bride) to clothe herself in fine linen." That's what brides do. They have a garment, bright and clean: "For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Now, how nice a garment we Christians will have, because what he's leading up to is our wedding feast. As soon as the rapture takes place, we go to heaven. Marriage ceremony officially unites us forever to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, distinct from all other believers in all other ages. Then comes the celebration – the wedding feast. He is saying that what the bride will wear at the wedding, following rapture, are the garments she has prepared for herself. A lot of brides sew their own wedding dress. But they had to have materials from which to do it. The wedding dress that you will sew for yourself is going to be your divine good works of service. That's it.

You're going to go up there to the window where the quartermaster who supplies the material and the information. And you're going to say, "How much do I have to work with?" He will say, "Well, let me see. You have so many divine good works. You fulfilled your mission to this extent. OK, you have two yards." And you will reply, "Two yards? How can I make a dress out of two yards? Look at me. I haven't been on Dr. Atkins diet. I'm not even prepared to do this." And He will reply, "Sorry. All we can give you is your allotted cloth that you prepared for yourself by the fact that you lived your life for God, and you didn't let the devil so tie you up with the world that you didn't have time to live for God, and really earn the valuable rewards that counted." You were always earning rewards down here. So: it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Verse 9: "And he said to me, 'Write: blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the Words of God." What a simple little phrase: "These are the Words of God." The angel says, "I'm not making this up." You must always know that when you speak Scripture, it is the Words of God. And everything in this Scripture (in the Bible) is the Word of God, not just the red-letter words that Jesus actually spoke. This is the Word of God.

Well, what is the marriage supper? As soon as Christ comes a second time of the earth, at the end of the tribulation, then everything is finished off. And Israel's program and promises under the Abrahamic Covenant are fully instituted. And Jesus Christ rules from Jerusalem. Israel becomes the leading nation of the world (the only superpower of the world). All other nations are still there, but they're in subordination to the nation of Jesus Christ. He rules the whole world. And one of the first things that happens is that everybody who is unsaved will have been put to death, so that the millennium begins with only saved believers, and they're all invited to the marriage suffer of the Lamb. And for 1,000 years, we have a great time celebrating our distinct unique relationship to the Son of God as His bride. Is that worth serving and looking forward to? I'm glad I'm not part of Israel. I'm glad I'm not down there in that legalistic system that never went anywhere, and never was able to do anything good for anybody. We have a very special place, so let's get out, and do the job of witnessing. And let's get out, and live life with integrity, no matter what anybody else does around us.

One time, one man said he had an opportunity to do something that was wrong. And he was being encouraged to do it. He was told, "Go ahead and do it." There will be a valuable financial advantage. Nobody will know." Well, he said, "That's not true. I'll know it, and God will know it.

Dear Father, we thank You for this time in Your Word, and we pray that You will help us to appreciate who we are in Christ, and what God has done for us. We are the church. We're the royal family of God. We pray that we shall not live as commoners, but that we shall live as the special people we are. Please bless our offerings, which we bring to You this day, and bring all of our traveling Bereans safely back to us as we resume our lives this week, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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