

Bible Student's Notebook

The Herald of His Grace

Volume X Issue 247

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

A Holy Nation

A Look at God's Earthly Purpose in Israel

by - Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the Word of Truth** (II Timothy 2:15).

God has designed a certain way by which we are to study the Scriptures. We are to RIGHTLY DIVIDE them. This is the divinely approved approach to the study of His Word.

THE GOLDEN RULES OF BIBLE STUDY

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) articulated well the important principles of right division in the introduction to his 1535 English version of the Bible:

It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after. – *Prologue to the Reader*

We must be honest with ourselves when studying the Scriptures. Accurate Bible study must follow these simple principles, which have been termed by some as the "Golden Rules of Bible Study." When studying any passage we must ask ourselves some basic questions:

Who is doing the speaking?

To whom is it being spoken?

About what is being spoken?

When was it spoken?

What is the context in which it was spoken?

Some proclaim, "All the promises in the Book are mine!" This clearly is not true. For instance, God promised a child to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. This was a specific promise, made to a specific couple, at a specific point in history. Others simply can't claim this promise for themselves: context means everything.

Many are very careless in their approach to and use of the Scriptures. They just open up their Bibles anywhere and expect what they read to be directed toward them – that God will speak specifically to them there.

Maybe you have heard the tale of the man who made the habit of randomly opening the Bible to a couple of passages in the Bible each morning for some insight and direction for his day. He would just let the Bible fall open where it would and aimlessly place his finger on a line of text. This particular day his finger fell on the line "[He] departed, and went and hanged himself." He flipped a little further in the Bible and placed his finger on another line which read "Go, and do thou likewise."

We must remember that while **all** the Bible was written **for** us, it was not **all** written **to** us, nor was it **all** written **about** us. Thus, the Bible *must* be divided; and not *just* divided, but *RIGHTLY* divided. That is, we are to look for the many dividing marks (or distinctions) that God Himself has placed within Scripture. We must learn to

(see **NATION**, page 2319)

Bible Student's NotebookTM

Paul Our Guide - Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume X, No. 247 - June 29, 2010

This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

SUBSCRIPTION

Electronic Version (e-mailed to you)

1 Year (52 issues) – \$10; 2 Years (104 issues) – \$20

Printed Version (mailed to you)

1/2 Year (26 issues) – \$25; 1 Year (52 issues) – \$50

PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

Bible Student's Notebook™

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963 Office: (800) 784-6010 Local: (814) 701-0063 bsn@studyshelf.com www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor (clyde@studyshelf.com) André Sneidar – Managing Editor Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

Department Managers

Clyde L. Pilkington, III – Office Nathan H. Pilkington – Shipping

Copyright © 1989-2010 Pilkington & Sons

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

Do you know of someone who is hungry for truth? Who loves to study the Bible? Who is disillusioned by traditional Christianity? Who thinks outside the box? If so, why not give them a gift subscription to the *BSN*? It could be a gift that could change their life!

BOUND BSN ISSUES

We have bound past issues of the BSN, only \$19.95 each. The more recent issues of the BSN contain our most recent understanding of Biblical issues. Therefore, when ordering volumes of the BSN, we would encourage you to order the latest volumes and work your way backwards.

Volume 9 (Issues 201-225) (#8286) Volume 7 (Issues 151-175) (#8288) Volume 5 (Issues 101-125) (#8290) Volume 3 (Issues 51-75) (#8292) Volume 4 (Issues 126-150) (#8293) Volume 2 (Issues 26-50) (#8293)

www.studyshelf.com

Find many rare books and Bibles at our 24/7 online bookstore. Gift certificates are also available.

Your Editor's Books

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. has 10 books rich in Bible study material:

- •The Believer's Warfare: Wearing the Armor of Light in the Darkness of this World (#7000) \$9.95
- The Church in Ruins: Brief Thoughts on II Timothy (#3325) \$9.95
- Due Benevolence: A Survey of Biblical Sexuality It Might Not Be What You Think! (#3775) \$24.95
- The Outsiders: God's Called-Out Ones A Biblical Look at God's Ecclesia (#4125) \$9.95
- Heaven's Embassy: The Divine Plan & Purpose of the Home (#5675) \$19.95
- I Choose! Living Life to Its Fullest (#4120) \$16.95
- Nothing Will Be Lost! The Truth About God's Good News (#3750) \$9.95
- The Plowboy's Bible: God's Word for Common Man The Story of God's Amazing Book (#4425) \$19.95
- The Salvation Of ALL: Creation's Final Destination A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation (#7001) \$19.95
- Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift (#5150) \$9.95

BOOKLETS & LEAFLETS

We currently have 215 booklets & leaflets. These make good reading, as well as great tools for sharing truth with others. *Complete Set* (#1001) \$50/Pack.

OUR ONLINE ARTICLES

Read past articles from the *Bible Student's Notebook* online: http://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/Articles.htm

DAILY e-MAIL GOODIES TM

Sign up for our free daily emails that contain short thoughts on Biblical themes: www.DailyEmailGoodies.com

FACEBOOK & SKYPE

We post our *Daily Email Goodies*, as well as new book notices on *Facebook*. Search for "Study Shelf" for our literature ministry and "Clyde Pilkington Jr" for the editor's personal profile. Your editor is also available on *Skype* – user name is "Salvation of All."

OUR BLOGS

We have 14 blogs on various subjects. To view these blogs visit: http://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/ourblogs.htm

JOINTS AND BANDS

Are you looking for other believers with whom you can enjoy fellowship and study? We have set up a blog for just this purpose.

- (1) Go to www.JointsandBands.com
- (2) Choose your state on the right-hand side.
- (3) Add a post with your name and contact information.

NATION (continued from page 2317)

make a difference where God makes a difference!

A Two-Fold Purpose

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

With the very first verse of Scripture we are immediately introduced to the two-fold purpose of God regarding His creation – "the heaven and the earth." God has a definite plan and purpose related to these two distinct domains. He did not create either of them in vain.

For thus says the Lord Who created the heavens; God Himself Who formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: "I am the LORD; and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:18).

God has a specific purpose for the heaven, which finds its fulfillment in the *ecclesia* ("church"), the Body of Christ. It is our destiny to have celestial dominion – to restore God's divine order of authority in the heavens.

God also has a distinct purpose for the earth, which finds its fulfillment in National Israel. It is their destiny to have earthly dominion – to restore God's divine order of authority on the earth.

An Arrogance

Christendom is very self-centered. It seems to think that all of Scripture is somehow just about "them." We hear arrogance in such audacious statements as "All the promises in the Bible are mine!" Yet all the promises in the Bible DO NOT belong to any one group of people. While all of the Bible is FOR us, it is not all TO us or ABOUT us.

Many today remain caught up in a mindset that wants all the truth of Scripture to apply directly to them. With such spiritual conceit many have been carried away. They propose a man-made theology espousing that God's dealings with Israel are permanently over, that somehow they themselves have managed to take ownership of her promises and destiny, and as a result have by some means managed to become a "spiritual-Israel."

Paul warned us against such self-centered conceit that did not recognize Israel's place in God's plan, and

gave disregard to the vital truth of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

For I would not, brothers, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).

God clearly is *not* done with Israel. The blindness that has happened to them at this time is (1) "in part" and (2) only "until the fullness of the Gentiles come in." Paul warned us against being ignorant of the mystery that was revealed to him, and being "wise in our own conceits."

ISRAEL'S EARTHLY DESTINY

Then answered Peter, and said to Him, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed You. What shall we have therefore?" (Matthew 19:27).

After God revealed His two-fold purpose in Genesis 1:1, He immediately begins a detailed revelation of His plan for the first part of His purpose – "the earth" – for next we read.

And the **EARTH** \dots (1:2).

This emphasis on the earth would occupy the focus of divine revelation for the next four thousand years. Israel is the divinely chosen vessel of God's earthly purpose. It is not until one gets to the revelation of the mystery that God unveils His plan and purpose regarding the heaven. The Body of Christ is the divinely chosen vessel of His heavenly purpose.

Israel's destiny and expectation is a literal, physical, earthly kingdom. This kingdom is the theme of the Jewish Scriptures. Jesus confirmed this expectation when replying to Peter's inquiry:

We have forsaken all, and followed You. What shall we have therefore?

Peter was expecting something, and he would not be disappointed – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said so! Jesus Christ was "a minister of the Circumcision" – the One Who came "to **confirm** the promises made unto the Fathers."

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the



Circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers (Romans 15:8).

Hear those words. *Christ's was a ministry to the Circumcision*. How few know that His earthly teaching ministry was to *confirm* the teaching of Hebrew Scripture concerning Israel's destiny? So many mistakenly believe that He came to teach something "new," when in fact His teaching was centered on the promises made to Israel's forefathers. His response to Peter's question was no exception!

Verily I say to you, that you who have followed Me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit age-lasting life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Matthew 19:28-30).

Jesus Christ confirmed to Peter the promises made to Israel's Fathers. When the Lord sets up His literal, physical, earthly kingdom in Jerusalem, the Twelve Apostles will sit with Him, ruling the Twelve Tribes of Israel. All that they had *physically* forsaken for Him would be restored to them *physically* a hundred-fold.

The earth is Israel's destiny in God's two-fold purpose.

ISRAEL'S COVENANTS

That at that time you 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 (Ephesians 2:12).

Paul tells us here that the "covenants of promise" belonged to the "Commonwealth of Israel," and that those outside of that nation were strangers to them.

Israel's earthy calling was confirmed in a series of covenants that God made with them. These covenants were *national* in nature. Israel was chosen by God to be His servant-Nation on the earth.

But you, Israel, are **My servant**, Jacob [after whom the nation is named – God changing his name to "Israel"] whom I have chosen, the seed

of Abraham My friend (Isaiah 41:8).

Yet now hear, O Jacob **My servant**; and Israel, whom I have chosen (Isaiah 44:1).

Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are **My servant:** I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me (Isaiah 44:21).

For Jacob **My servant's** sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me (Isaiah 45:4).

You are **My servant**, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified (Isaiah 49:3).

Three things are needed to have a nation:

- (1) a people
- (2) a government
- (3) a land

These three are all provided for in the covenants which were made with Israel; and indeed the covenants in Scripture did belong to Israel:

Who are Israelites; to whom pertains ... the covenants ... (Romans 9:4)

Covenants are one of the more important subjects of Jewish Scripture. One's view of the covenants will determine one's view of the rest of Scripture, therefore affecting one's walk as a believer.

Just what is a covenant? "Covenants" are contracts or agreements between parties. It is important for us to know who the parties are in the contracts of our own daily lives. It is equally as important, if not more so, for us to recognize who the parties of Scripture covenants are. The covenants of Scripture are made not with the Body of Christ, but with the nation of Israel.

Israel's covenants begin with what some term as "the Abrahamic Covenant," which was in fact a series of covenants. They were a declaration of God's earthly purpose. They were the basis and foundation of National Israel. The original covenant was laid forth in Genesis 12:1-3, and it was confirmed and amplified in Genesis 12:6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-18.

The nature of the Abrahamic covenants were NATIONAL. These covenants were about a NATIONAL PEOPLE with their GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES. They dealt with who the citizens of this nation were, and with their divine landgrant. This grant was given by covenant from the hand of "the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:22). "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1, c.f. Exodus 9:29), therefore He can give it to whomever He chooses. He chose to give Israel a very specific area of land mass. In Genesis 15:18 the borders are generally given: "the river of Egypt" – the Nile, and "the great river, the Euphrates." 430 years later God confirmed these "covenants of promise" through Moses (this is sometimes referred to as "the Palestinian Covenant" – Deuteronomy 10:11; 28:1-2, 15, 36-37). This covenant gave the specific details of Israel's national borders.

Numbers 34:1-15

- a) Southern Border (:3-5)
- b) Western Border (:6)
- c) Northern Border (:7-9)
- d) Eastern Border (:10-12)

The Jewish covenants given to the "Commonwealth of Israel" were not idle "Covenants of Promise." These are real promises from God. One needs to be extremely careful that they are not "wise in your own conceits." Israel's current state of partial blindness is only temporary. This judicial blindness is the decree of God "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."

For I would not, brothers, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part** is happened to Israel, **until** the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so **all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel]: For this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God has concluded them all in unbelief, that He might

have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:25-33).

One day, when God is done with the Gentiles and their vanity, He will restore National Israel, and she will fully possess her borders in the righteousness of God.

But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions (Obadiah 1:17).

And I will turn back the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, says the Lord your God (Amos 9:14-15).

"Therefore fear not, O My servant Jacob," says the LORD; "neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid" (Jeremiah 30:10).

When I shall have gathered the House of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to My servant Jacob (Ezekiel 28:25).

There will be a national divine restoration of Israel. This will not be accomplished under the power or authority of the United Nations, or any other human instrumentality. Rather, it will be accomplished by the hand of God under the power of the New Covenant (*c.f.* Jeremiah 31:31-40; 33:7, 14-16; Ezekiel 36:24-30, 35-37; 37:1-14, 21:28; Amos 9:11-15; Zephaniah 3:14-20).

Among other things this restoration will include:

- Restoration of Israel's Judges (Isaiah 1:25-26)
- Restoration of Israel's Law (Isaiah 2:1-4)
- Restoration of Israel's King (Isaiah 24:23)
- Restoration of Israel's Kingdom (Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-8)
- Restoration of Israel's Blessings (Isaiah 61:6-9; 66:19; Zechariah 8:13-15; 22-23)
- Restoration of Israel's Health (Jeremiah 30:1)

God clearly is not done with Israel. The blindness that has happened to them at this time is (1) "in part" and (2) only "until the fullness of the Gentiles come in." Paul warned us against being ignorant of the mystery that was revealed to him, and thus in arrogance becoming "wise in our own conceits."

ISRAEL'S OLD COVENANT

Who are Israelites; to whom pertains ... the giving of the law (Romans 9:4).

Paul clearly tells us that the "giving of the law" pertained to Israel. God did NOT give the Law of Moses to everyone – He gave it to the nation Israel.

This "Mosaic Covenant," as it is sometimes referred to, is also called the "old" covenant in the Greek Scriptures that were written to the Hebrews.

In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first **old** (Hebrews 8:13).

This Old Covenant concerns Israel's National Law. As we mentioned previously, there are three things needed to have a nation: (1) a people, (2) a government, and (3) a land. Law is necessary for there to be a government. Three fourths of Israel's 613 commandments were governmental in nature, not personal. Read carefully the prelude to the giving of the law. These are God's words spoken to Moses.

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep **My covenant**, then you will be a **Peculiar Treasure** unto Me **above all people:** for all the **earth** is Mine: and you shall be unto Me a **Kingdom of Priests**, and a **Holy** Nation. These are the words which you will speak to the **Children of Israel.**" And Moses came and called for the **elders of The People**, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all **The People** answered together, and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." And Moses returned the words of **The People** unto the Lord (Exodus 19:4-8).

The Law of Moses was clearly given to a specific people – the Nation Israel. Every nation needs a law, and this was Israel's.

Little wonder that Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision (Galatians 2:8), wrote to Israel some 1400 years later and said,

But you are a chosen generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People; that you should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9).

Notice the unmistakable language of Israel's Apostle Peter and its parallel to the earlier passage of Exodus 19.

Peculiar Treasure – Peculiar People

Kingdom of Priests - Royal Priesthood

Holy Nation - Holy Nation

Sadly many miss Peter's entire point. Peter is NOT addressing members of the Body of Christ; he is addressing Israel's remnant. Paul *alone* is the divine spokesman of Christ to His Body. Members of the Body of Christ are not a "Royal Priesthood," nor are they a "Holy Nation." These positions belong to Israel alone.

We are NOT a nation, but a body. We are His Body among the nations – an international out-calling (ecclesia).

We are NOT priests, but ambassadors. Ours is NOT an earthly, ceremonial, national calling. This belongs only to Israel. Ours is a celestial, international calling, of which we are heavenly ambassadors.

Moreover, many do not realize that God gave the law to Israel as a *test* for them (Exodus 20:20), to show them (as a divine illustration to the rest of humanity) that they were sinners and needed Christ (Acts 13:38-39). Under God's wise hand, the law's purpose was to:

- Give the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20),
- Make sin abound (Romans 5:20),
- Produce guilt (Romans 3:19),
- Curse mankind (Galatians 3:10) and,
- Work wrath (Romans 4:15).

Some list, isn't it? Contrary to what religion may teach, the law could never justify a man (Galatians 3:11). Instead, the law would work in the hands of the Master

Designer as "schoolmaster" (or "escort" – CLT) to lead to Christ (Galatians 3:24-25).

With these truths in mind, we are now better prepared to hear the grand revelation concerning the law given to Paul our Apostle. Here is a simple outline of these enormously liberating truths:

Christ Abolished the Law

Having **abolished** in His flesh the enmity [hostility], even **the law of commandments** contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace (Ephesians 2:15).

We Are Delivered from the Law

But now **we are delivered from the law,** that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6).

We Are Not Under the Law

For sin shall not have dominion over you: **for you are not under the law,** but under grace (Romans 6:14).

We Have Been Made the Righteousness of God

For He has made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made **the righteousness of God** in Him (II Corinthians 5:21).

The Law Was Not Made for a Righteous Man

Knowing this, that **the law is not made for a righteous man** ... (I Timothy 1:9).

Nothing Is Unclean of Itself

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that **there is nothing unclean of itself:** but to him who esteems anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean (Romans 14:14).

All Things Are Pure to the Pure

To the pure **all things are pure:** but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure;

but even their mind and conscience is defiled (Titus 1:15).

All Things Are Lawful

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (I Corinthians 6:12).

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (I Corinthians 10:23).

Love Is the Fulfilling of the Law

Owe no man anything, but to love each other: for he who loves another has fulfilled the law ... Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

For, brothers, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve each other. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; "Love your neighbor as yourself ..." (Galatians 5:13).

The law was a national law given to the Nation Israel. It was designed and used by the hand of God to demonstrate and illustrate the absolute failure of man without Him. The law was never given to the Body of Christ as a rule of life by which to live (Galatians 5:22-23).

God's Spirit produces in us a fruit, and "against such there is no law."

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free ... (Galatians 5:1, KJV).

In the freedom, then, with which Christ did make you free – stand ye ... (Galatians 5:1, Young).

Christ has set us free in freedom; stand fast therefore ... (Galatians 5:1, Darby).

For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then ... (Galatians 5:1, Concordant).



ISRAEL'S NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 31 – Hebrews 8

The New Covenant (or New Testament) is a subject which has caused much confusion when it comes to Bible doctrine, because many members of the Body of Christ have erroneously mistaken it as belonging to them. The New Testament, as is commonly thought, is not a set of books making up the last part of the Bible (i.e., the Greek Scripture). It is a "contract" which God will make exclusively with the nation of Israel.

"Behold, the days come," says the Lord, "that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31; c.f. Hebrews 8:8; Ezekiel 20:37; Isaiah 59:21).

Israel is God's covenant people (Romans 9:4; Ephesians 2:12). They were the "Old Testament" saints, and they will be the "New Testament" saints one day. Often we hear "New Testament Church" or "New Testament Believers" used in relation to what God is doing today; yet in doing so we neglect the great duty of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15). How is it that saints of our day can take a "contract" to be made between God and Israel and make it their own? This is simply another case of spiritual larceny, which is a common crime against Scripture.

It is God's objective to carry out *all* of His purposes, laid forth under the Old Covenant, with the New. The failure of the Old Covenant was not with the covenant itself, or with God; rather, it was with the Nation of Israel itself. Israel did not fulfill her responsibilities, and therefore "defaulted" on the contract. Yet God shall perfect Israel with the New Testament (Hebrews 8:6-8; *c.f.* Romans 8:3). He will give them Divine enablement, by His Spirit, to accomplish all that He requires of them (Ezekiel 36:27). This is the *better* covenant with its *better* promises of which He wrote to the *Hebrews* (8:6). When God establishes this New Covenant with Israel, He shall:

- 1. Gather Israel to their own land (Jeremiah 32:37; Ezekiel 11:17; 36:24).
- 2. Purge Israel's sins (Ezekiel 11:18; 20:38; 36:25, 29; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17); and as a result, all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26-27).
- 3. Put the law in Israel's inward parts, (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16).

In this we see that the primary difference is between the two Covenants: the Old was written on stone, the New will be written on Israel's heart. Therefore Israel will not need to "teach every man his neighbor" in the days of this New Covenant (Hebrews 8:11), but they shall then be the witnesses (under the "Great" Commission) to the Gentiles of which Matthew 28:19-20 speaks (c.f. Isaiah 60:3).

The New Covenant fulfills the Old, thus making the Old obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). The Old was only a shadow and figure of the New (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). Israel shall regain her holy days as well as other ceremonial practices that were dictated under the Old (Ezekiel chapters 40-46).

The death of Israel's Messiah (Ephesians 2:12; Romans 9:4-5; 15:8; Matthew 1:21; Isaiah 53:8) is the basis of her New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15-17; Matthew 26:28). It is at this point that many make their mistake: since God made this Covenant with the blood of Christ (the same blood which paid for our own sin), many assume that this Covenant must be ours also; but Israel's New Covenant was only a portion of the great work which Christ's blood accomplished. There was a hidden purpose in Christ's cross-work, which Paul calls the *mystery* of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19) and the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4:3). The common ground between the Body of Christ and Israel is the blood of Christ, not Israel's special benefit (i.e., the New Covenant, with its distinctively Jewish characteristics).

Peter, James, John and Jude all wrote their epistles in harmony with this New Covenant. The blessings of this New Covenant began to be enjoyed and demonstrated after the cross on the Jewish feast of Pentecost in Acts chapter two. This was interrupted, though, until God's present purpose with the Gentiles is accomplished (Romans 11:25). Paul wrote progressively concerning this new administration, which he identified as "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2). In God's present purpose all covenant and national distinctions between Jew and Gentile are gone (Ephesians 2:14-15), and each believer can now enjoy the "fellowship of the mystery" (Ephesians 3:9).

In our study of the Scriptures we must learn to make right divisions (II Timothy 2:15), leaving distinctive doctrines where we find them (i.e., where God has placed them), so as not to diminish the glorious high calling of the Body of Christ by mixing teaching from other dispensational workings of God. The New Covenant (New Testament) is one of those distinctive doctrines that we must leave where we find it – with Israel.

(to be continued)