

Lesson Ten — A New Nation, a New Creation, a New Man

Day One — The Corner Stone

Day Two — Living Stones

Day Three — A New Man, a New Creation

Day Four — The Body of Christ

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In the past two weeks we have studied issues and events surrounding the first appearance of Jesus Christ and the purposes thereof. We have seen that not only did Jesus come to die on the cross to make reconciliation; He initially came to offer the kingdom of the heavens to Abraham's descendants — Israel. But Israel, as a nation, refused the offer of the kingdom and Jesus withdrew the offer, saying that He would raise up a new nation who would produce the fruits of the kingdom (Mt. 21:43). This new nation would be a new creation; it would make up a new man — the Body of Christ — with Christ as the Head, and the individuals members forming the Body. And this is the topic we want to study this week — the new creation.

But first, here is a thought to consider. Sometimes we are tempted to think that “the Church” is a building on a corner in town, into which we go once or twice a week and participate in the activities therein. That is not the Church! That is only a building on a corner in town, into which we go once or twice a week and participate in the activities therein. This building often houses the Church, but it is not the Church.

Rather in a literal sense, the Church is a living organism, not a physical building of bricks and mortar. It is referred to in Scripture in several different ways, each description giving a different aspect of this living organism. The Church is a new nation, a new creation, a new man. It *is* a building, but not a physical one; it is a spiritual building. It *is* a house, but not a physical house; it is the house of Christ, the household of God. Along with understanding this, it is important to realize that the Church has been created for a specific purpose, and called to perform certain functions. Therefore, as we discuss things about the Church throughout this week of study, please think of the Church in the terms Scripture uses, rather than in terms of a brick and mortar building on a corner in town.

Day One — The Corner Stone

At one point in time prior to the last week of Christ's public ministry, Jesus spoke of the Church. It was at a time when it had become apparent that the Jewish nation as a whole would not believe that Jesus was Who He said He was. In this setting, Jesus mentions the Church for the first time. Let's read about it.

Matthew 16

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. 19 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."

What two questions did Jesus ask?

What was Peter's answer to the second question?

Write in your own words how Jesus responded to Peter's answer (v. 17ff). (Be sure to note that He deals with both realms of the kingdom in v. 19.)

The Greek word for *church* is the word *ekklesia*, which means "called out." This new entity — the Church — would be made up of individuals who, through placing faith in Jesus Christ, have been *called out* for a purpose. And the purpose for this calling out is seen in several passages in the New Testament, some of which we will cover in this week's homework and some of which we will cover in this week's lecture. This passage in Matthew chapter sixteen (printed above) is the first one of the passages we will consider as we look to see what the purpose of the Church is. With this in mind, go back to the passage and see if you can ascertain what one of the purposes for the Church might be. Write out what you find.

In Matthew 16:17, 18, Peter made a statement, the essence of which had been revealed to him by the Father in heaven. The statement was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The phrase *the Christ*

means *the Messiah, the Anointed One*. This phrase involves all three offices which Jesus would, at some point in time, hold — that of Prophet, Priest, and King. He appeared the first time as *Prophet*, proclaiming the coming kingdom; He is presently appearing in the heavens, at the right hand of the Father, fulfilling the office of *High Priest* on behalf of God's people, offering a cleansing for sin with a view to entering the kingdom; and He will appear on earth a second time, when He comes as *King*, ushering in His kingdom. All three offices — prophet, priest and king — required an anointing by God (*cf.* Isa. 61:1, 2; Lev. 8:30; I Sam. 10:1), and all three offices have to do with an ultimate goal in view, that of the coming kingdom. Hence, He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. Thus, it is easy to see that Peter understood these things, as He connected the title “the Christ” with His being the “Son of God,” an obvious reference to the prophecy God gave to David in II Samuel chapter seven.

(Remember our study in II Samuel chapter seven? God told David, through the prophet Nathan, that David would have a Descendant Who would sit on an eternal throne and would establish an eternal kingdom, and this Descendant would be the Son of God (vv. 13, 14). The essence of the statement that Jesus is “the Son of God,” encapsulates the idea of His Kingdom, as revealed through the contents of the prophecy made to David through the prophet Nathan. *Sonship has to do with rulership*. Therefore, whenever the title *Son of God* is used in Scripture, it carries the idea of His coming kingdom. The two cannot be separated. And we would do well to remember that.)

Upon Peter's identification of Who Jesus is, Jesus said that it is upon *this rock* — the statement that had been revealed to Peter by the Father — that Jesus would *build* His Church. The first mention of *ekklesia* (the called out [ones]), was that it (the *ekklesia*) would be built upon a Rock (inferring a building being built). The Rock is Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God, the Coming King. The inference is that this spiritual building being built upon the Rock, represents the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the One coming to establish His kingdom; and that the *ekklesia*, the spiritual building itself, would have the keys to the kingdom, inferring that this spiritual building would eventually have control over the heavens and the earth — both realms (v. 19b). Thus, one can see that the Church, being built upon the Rock, has to do with a people being called out to receive Christ's kingdom, establishing His household. Therefore, one of the purposes for the establishment of the Church is that God would call out a people to Himself, and build a spiritual household, a people who would administer His kingdom in the heavens, with Christ in their midst as King.

Now let's look at another place wherein the purpose for this Church can be seen. We studied this passage in Lesson Eight, Day Five, but we want to look at it again as it helps to fit this picture together.

The context of this passage is the Parable of the Vineyard. (If you would like to review the parable, turn to p. 135.) Jesus gave this parable to the chief priests and elders, and at the end of the parable, He asks what the vineyard owner should do to the tenants who refused time and again to give the expected produce to the owner. They responded that the owner should bring “those wretches to a wretched end,” and “rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons” (v. 41). Now read Jesus words in response to their response:

Matthew 21

42 Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’? 43 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

In the way of review and according to this passage, essentially what did the Jews reject?

And as a result of this rejection, what is Jesus going to do (v. 43)?

Do you see how the new nation is the recipient of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens?

But how can Jesus offer the kingdom of the heavens to anyone other than Abraham's seed? After all, the promises concerning these things were given to Abraham and to *his* descendants. So how can anyone other than Abraham's descendants receive this offer? The answer is, "Jesus can only make this offer *to Abraham's descendants!*" Just watch, though! See how this "IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES"!

Through the Apostle Paul, it is clearly established *how* the offer can be made to a people who are not Abraham's *physical* descendants in his epistle to the Galatians. Chapter three deals with the subject matter extensively. So let's take a look at a few of the verses.

Galatians 3

...6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

...14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Who does Paul say are the sons of Abraham?

What does Paul say the Scriptures foresee?

Rephrase v. 14.

Now read how Paul sums up the subject in the last few verses of this chapter.

Continuing in **Galatians 3**

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Based upon the truth set forth in this passage, how can God offer the kingdom of the heavens to someone other than to Jews?

Rewrite v. 29 in your own words.

From what we have studied thus far, what would Paul mean when he talks about the blessings of Abraham? In other words, what would individuals making up the Church now be able to acquire through faith? (At this point, it may be somewhat difficult to answer this question, but give it a try. We will review it in the lecture this week.)

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Two — Living Stones

We are learning some things about the inception of the Church and the purposes thereof. We will continue to build upon these ideas as we work through the study. Please be in prayer that you may grasp the significance of the Church and your participation in it.

As we have seen in Matthew chapter twenty-one, the Jews were symbolically shown not only to be the tenants of the vineyard, but also the ones who would not produce the fruits of the vineyard. There was no repentance on the part of the Jews, and consequently, no fruit-bearing (*cf.* Mt. 3:7, 8). The fruitless tenants of the vineyard rejected the Messenger and His message. (Notice that *producing fruit* has to do with the kingdom. This is an important connection to make.)

The Jews were also symbolically shown to be “the builders” who rejected “the Chief Corner Stone.” The use of the phrase *corner stone* implies the subsequent building of a superstructure upon a corner stone which had been laid down. Notice what Paul writes in Ephesians chapter two.

Ephesians 2

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

What does Paul say of the Church?

Then think back to what Jesus told Peter in Matthew chapter sixteen, "Upon this rock I will build My Church..." Having these things in mind, study through the following passage. (Notice that the author of this passage is *Peter* — the one who answered Jesus' question in Matthew 16.)

I Peter 2

...4 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Based upon the passages that we have considered in last week's lesson and thus far in this week's lesson, what do you think it means that *He was rejected by men*? (In other words, who were the men who rejected Him?)

List everything you see about ‘living stones’ in this passage.

From what Peter wrote, what kind of building is presently being built?

In v. 6, what does it say about those who believe?

According to v. 8, what happens to those who reject the Stone? Why does it happen?

Put vv. 9 and 10 into your own words.

John the Baptist told the Jewish leadership that, from stones, God is able to raise up descendants for Abraham, inferring that others would become the recipients of the promises.

Matthew 3

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

Make a note as to the connection between what John told the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:7-9,

with what Peter says about the Church in I Peter 2:4-10, with what Jesus said about the Rock in Matthew 16:18-19. What connections can you make?

Go back and read 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10. About whom is Peter speaking (v. 10 gives a good hint)?

Now we have a comparison to make. Looking back in the Old Testament, the children of Israel were called out of Egypt for a specific purpose. They were told of it as they arrived at Mt. Sinai. (We studied it weeks ago, but it bears on what we are presently studying.)

Exodus 19

5 ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

The Church (the *ekklesia* [the called out]) has been called out for an identical purpose. Write out the similarities between Exodus 19:5, 6 and the passage in 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

God has raised up children to Abraham. He is still in the process of building His Church upon the Rock of Jesus Christ. He is raising up sons of Abraham, a people who *were not* a nation, but because they have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and King, they have become a *new* nation and are spiritual descendants of Abraham. Therefore, Gentiles, along with the Jews, can partake in the promises of Abraham. It is an awesome picture, isn't it? Any thoughts?

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Three — A New Man, a New Creation

Let's look at more passages that reveal what actually takes place when one puts faith in Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 5

17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Galatians 6

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

What do these passage say?

At the beginning of yesterday's homework, we looked at a passage found at the end of Ephesians chapter two. For the remainder of our study time today, we are going to look at the complete chapter. This chapter encapsulates some of what we have learned throughout the study thus far, covering our condition prior to faith in Christ, touching on the fact that Satan is the present ruler of the world, revealing what God has done for us — *how* we are saved, *why* we are saved, and *the benefits* of being saved. Wow! All in one chapter.

We'll begin with the last two verses in chapter one, then we'll go right into chapter two. If time allows, it would be a good idea if you could read through the chapter two or three times, making your own study notes in the margins. Then answer the questions which follow.

Ephesians 1:22-2:22

...22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we

are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

11 Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands — 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

According to vv. 1 and 5, what was our condition prior to coming to Christ?

Verses 12 and 19 further describe this condition. What was it?

According to various verses throughout this chapter, what did Christ accomplish for us? Make of list of the things you find.

Relating v. 11 with v. 14, who are the two groups brought together as one?

Look at vv. 14-18 and relate what Jesus has done for these two groups. Be sure to see that He has made the *two into one new man*. Then underline that phrase in v. 15.

How did Jesus make the two groups into one new man?

Paul quotes a prophecy from Isaiah 57:19, revealing that this prophecy has been fulfilled. What was the essence of the prophecy as quoted in v. 17?

Because of the cross, Gentiles (who believe) are no longer strangers and aliens, but what are they (v. 19)?

Finally, what do vv. 20-22 picture for us?

In the way of a summary, God has made a new creation! He has brought two groups of people together, making the two into *one new man*! Now rather than there only being Jews and Gentiles in the world, now there are Jews, Gentiles, *and Christians*. Any Jew or Gentile who puts faith in Jesus Christ becomes a new creation — a Christian — and becomes part of the Body of Christ. That individual is no longer a Jew or no longer a Gentile (whichever the case may be), but is made new into a new creature. The old things have passed away (II Cor. 5:17), he has become new. (These passages have nothing to do with the doing away

of our old sinful nature [the man of flesh] as so many people teach. These passages have to do with our becoming *a new creation in Christ*, part of His Body. This is the topic of the study tomorrow.)

And as a new creation, now being neither Jew nor Gentile, an individual can receive the inheritance promised to Abraham (*i.e.*, things surrounding the offer of the kingdom of the heavens), through faith in Jesus Christ. Abraham's physical descendants, as a nation, rejected the offer. Therefore, Jesus said that He would withdraw the offer from the descendants who refuse to produce the fruits, and will give it to a new nation who would produce the fruits. Then Jesus calls out a people for the purpose of offering the kingdom to them. This entity is a new nation, a new creation, a new man, who is set apart for purposes having to do with a kingdom — the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Four — The Body of Christ

Thus far, we have seen that the Church is a living organism, a living temple of God, a spiritual building, a new creation, a new nation, a new man. This new man is also described in Scripture as "the Body of Christ." We will focus today on the Church being identified as the Body of Christ.

There are several passages in the New Testament that deal with the Body of Christ, each teaching things pertaining to different aspects of the Body. We will only glimpse a few of the passages in order to understand some of the facts about the Body. We will need this as a building block for further study, especially for our lecture time this week.

Let's glimpse some passages.

Romans 12

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many.

...27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

From these few passages, what is the picture you get about the Church?

Here is an admonition from the Apostle Paul to the Church at Ephesus. (Notice the admonition has to do with a calling [v.1].) Spend a bit of time on this passage. There is a lot here. Remember, we have been

called out for a purpose — to be built into a spiritual house, administering the kingdom with Christ when He comes into His kingdom.

Ephesians 4

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, **3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all...

... **11** And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. **14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

In your own words, explain the purpose of the Body and how it is to work together.

Colossians 2

19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Describe the picture this passage gives us.

Now, let's take this picture just a bit further. With the individual members of the Church making up the Body of Christ and with Christ as the Head, we have something else to learn about this Body, the new man. Read the passages below and make note of what you read.

I Corinthians 15

45 So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

Obviously, who is "the first man"?

Who is "the second man, the last Adam"?

How does this passage describe both?

Now look at what Paul says about these two individuals.

Romans 5

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

In the last part of this verse, what does it say Adam was?

This English word *type* is from the Greek word *tupos*. It has the sense of something bearing the exact representation of something else. As it is used here, Paul reveals that Adam is *an exact representation* of Christ. Adam is the type; Jesus is the antitype. Information gained through studying Adam becomes instructive for us in studying Jesus Christ. The whole picture is instructive beyond degree for us!

Adam was *created* as a son of God. Jesus is *the only begotten* Son of God. Adam was created to rule over a restored creation. Jesus was begotten to rule over the restored creation. Adam's helpmate (his wife) was taken from his body. Jesus' helpmate (His bride) will be taken from His Body. Through an action on the part of Adam (partaking of the sin of his wife), he died. Through an action on the part of Jesus (taking the sin of the world upon Him), He died. Death came through the one, but life through the death of the Other. It is all a part of larger picture (*i.e.*, not larger in size, but larger in the sense of more details being added from other types).

Any thoughts or questions?

Day Five — God's People

This week we have seen how God made a way for the Gentiles to be grafted in as a seed of Abraham through the blood of Christ. At the present time (the present dispensation), because of their rejection of the King, Israel has been set aside. Presently, God is calling out a people unto Himself. This called out group is the *house* through which God will administer His heavenly Kingdom (Heb. 3:6). Once this dispensation comes to a close — which will occur at the “catching up” (the rapture) of the Church — God will begin dealing with Israel once again. Certain promises now pertain to the Church that do not pertain any longer to Israel. And the reverse could be said as well. Certain promises still pertain to Israel, that do not pertain to the Church.

Presently, individuals are being *called out* of the various nations of the earth. Through faith in Jesus Christ, an individual, whether Jew or Gentile, becomes part of this new and distinct nation. It is not an earthly nation that is being created, it is a heavenly one. And as such, the individuals making up this nation are presently *sojourners* passing through, *ambassadors* for Christ. Their citizenship is in heaven. And as such, these citizens will receive the promises *that have to do with the heavens*. (We'll see the development of this in upcoming weeks of study.)

There is coming a time when this new nation will be called heavenward so that the promises pertaining to the heavenly portion of the Abrahamic covenant can be fulfilled for Abraham's spiritual descendants. Many things will take place in the heavens at that time. (The heavenly events following the rapture will be our subject of study in upcoming weeks.) Both realms are dealt with in the reconciliation through the blood of Christ. Read the passage below, noting how Paul puts all of this together. (We've studied this passage before, but it bears repeating here.)

Colossians 1

16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Study through this passage and make notes as to what you can learn from it. Notice that Paul brings together several of the things that we have been dealing with in these past weeks of study.

Now relate the concluding promises that God made to Abraham as he had just offered his son Isaac on the altar. God stops Abraham from slaying his son by first saying to him —

Genesis 22

11... “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 12 And he said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” 13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”

This *first statement* (vv. 11-14) has to do with the *first coming of Christ*. It has to do with the means of redemption from bondage, that of death and shed blood. It has to do with a substitutionary death, pointing to the death of Christ. Verse 14 summarizes it beautifully!

Now the Lord calls to him a *second* time. In the passage, underline the words *a second time*. Verse 15, the *second* time God called to Abraham, has to do with a future redemption, that of the redemption of the inheritance. (Yes, that’s right — a *future* redemption!)

Continuing in Genesis 22

15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Verse 17 refers to two realms wherein Abraham’s seed will exist. What two realms are they?

What does the passage say that Abraham’s seed in *both realms* will do (v. 17b and 18)?

Once the Body of Christ, the new man, has been taken up, God will turn His attention back to Israel so that He can fulfill the promises pertaining to the earthly portion of the Abrahamic covenant for Israel. Those promises to the nation of Israel are irrevocable. In order though, for these promises to be realized by Israel, Israel will have to be brought into a place of repentance (which will happen as a result of the coming tribulation [“Jacob’s Trouble”]).

Words inadequately express how awesome it is to see the way God has put this altogether. He gives Abraham an *unconditional covenant*, telling him that his seed will be as numerous *as the sand on the seashore* (Isa. 10:22; 48:19; Hos. 1:10; Ro. 9:27 [the land of Israel lay at the shore of the Mediterranean Sea]), and stars in the sky (Dan. 12:3 [our citizenship is in the heavens]). The numbers of the grains of sand and stars represent numbers in two distinct realms — earth and heaven — which has reference to the two realms of the kingdom. At the time of the covenant and because of Abraham’s faithfulness, God irrevocably deeded over a land (Canaan) within the earthly realm to Abraham’s physical seed (through Isaac and Jacob). This land would be the place from which a theocracy on the earth would emanate.

God continues the working out of His complete plan of redemption. (His plan involves redeeming fallen man, as well as redeeming the earthly and heavenly places of authority [Col. 1:16, 20].) He took Abraham's descendants into a land that was not theirs (into Egypt), allowing them to increase in numbers; they fell into the bondage of slavery, wherein they had need to be redeemed. God accomplished this redemption by the means of slain animals, the blood of which was to be appropriated on the door posts and lintel of their houses. This redemption put Abraham's descendants in a position wherein they could become a nation of kings and priests, a kingdom of priests. All of this was enacted with the idea of Israel claiming their own land, the land which God had previously deeded to Abraham and his descendants 400 years prior with the nation of Israel inhabiting that land as the head of all the nations and not the tail.

But, as is God's way, after He redeemed the Children of Israel, He tested them; they had to prove themselves worthy to inherit the land and be placed in rulership. The point of proof was their obedience. (Obedience is always the point of proving oneself worthy.) The Children of Israel unanimously agreed to the conditions of the covenant, and God, through Moses and the angels, instituted a *conditional kingdom covenant* with Israel (the Mosaic covenant [Ex. 19:8; 24:3; 24:7; cf. Gal. 3:19]), a covenant which would be based upon their obedience.

From that first generation, the individuals who were wholly devoted and obedient to God — Joshua and Caleb — received their inheritance in the land; the individuals who were not wholly devoted — the remainder of the first generation — lost their inheritance. Not one redeemed person, however, was sent back into slavery, even though going back to Egypt was their stated desire. They remained God's redeemed people; He never left them and never forsook them. Going back into to slavery in Egypt was a moot point. God didn't address their expressed desire.

(Their going back into slavery — in the sense of becoming unredeemed [after they had once been redeemed] — would be equivalent to saying that a person today could become unsaved [after one had once been saved]. It was a moot point in Scripture *then*; it is a moot point in Scripture *now*. Just as it couldn't happen in the OT, it cannot happen in the NT. The issue of losing one's salvation is simply not addressed in Scripture. A person redeemed by the action of God cannot become unredeemed by any action on the part of the individual.)

For two thousand years, from Abraham to Christ, though both realms of the kingdom (earthly and heavenly) could be seen through all that God had revealed, attention was focused on the earthly, not the heavenly. However, even though attention was focused on the earthly realm of the kingdom, certain Old Testament saints aspired to a higher calling. They looked beyond the earthly to the heavenly (e.g., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived as aliens, dwelling in tents [Heb. 11:9], as well as others, many who are mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven).

Finally, at the appointed time, the King appears in order to climactically offer *the kingdom of the heavens* to Abraham's descendants. As a nation, they rejected the offer (though a number of individuals believed). And while the earthly land had already been irrevocably deeded over to Abraham's physical descendants, the heavenly land would now be given to another people — a new creation, a new nation, a new man — the Body of Christ.

This new creation is also Abraham's seed, through the blood of Christ, Who is Abraham's Seed. Now, for the first time in the entire history of mankind, there are three distinct groups of people — Jews, Gentiles, and Christians. Jews and Christians are both of the seed of Abraham. But, since the rejection of Christ by Israel (Abraham's physical seed) at His first coming, Jesus is presently offering the realm of the heavenly kingdom to Christians (Abraham's spiritual seed) — to anyone who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, individuals are made partakers of Abraham's promises

through the blood of Jesus, Who is Abraham's Seed. Now, for the past two thousand years, this offer is being made to the Church, the new nation, and will also climax in Christ's second coming when He comes to judge His people and set up His Kingdom.

Do you see the picture? Isn't it exciting? God is faithful to His Word! Praise His Holy Name. Jesus is the Chief Corner Stone, and we are the living stones, being built into a spiritual house. And we are made partakers of His house, *if we continue in faithful obedience* (Heb. 3:6). After the leaders of Israel had rejected Christ, and the kingdom had been taken away from them (as depicted through the Parable of the Vineyard), Jesus pronounced woes upon the leaders of Israel (Mt. 23). In the end, He describes what the leaders have done, but also states the ultimate hope in v. 39.

Matthew 23

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Due to their stubborn and unrepentant heart, Israel lost a great blessing. Presently, their "house is left desolate." But there is coming a time when God will turn back to Israel, and begin dealing with His wife — Israel — again. And following their national repentance, when the Jewish people see Him again, they will say, "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord."

In the interim, God is calling out a people separate from Israel, to inherit that which Israel rejected — the heavenly kingdom. The next weeks of study will be taken up with what the implications are for us as the Body of Christ. I hope that these last couple of weeks have laid a good foundation upon which we can build, so that we can see the purpose for the Church. Please continue to pray for spiritual insight and discernment for yourself and others who are in your class. We have some very exciting things to learn yet.

Do you have any thoughts or comments?

See you in class.