

The Eight Essentials: What about Israel?

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[0 : 00] It's not even fair. I know when little girls do that to their dads. See, there you go! Wasn't dad. He was doing a fantastic job. He was just, he's dad. We are limited in our abilities! Especially when it comes to little girls. Because let's be honest, girls are complicated.

God says that. They're made in a more complicated manner. And men just can't understand that and figure that out. And sometimes they just have to say something. So we let them happen. Well, it is good to see you. This is the last of our eight essentials. This is week eight.

So thankful to be together with you. After this, so starting next week, we'll go back right into our normal Sunday school rotation and going through our normal Sunday school classes. I know I've shared this with you before, but possibly at the end of the year, and I say possibly because I'm still kind of fleshing it out in my mind, we will take another short break in our Sunday school time, maybe late fall, and do another six to eight week class session where we'll cover major doctrines. We've been covering major topics. This time we'll cover major doctrines, and we'll really kind of start fleshing out some doctrinal teaching. But for the sole purpose, and I've shared this with you, and I'll continue to share this with you, is that by the end of the year, hopefully we'll all be able to write out our doctrinal statements. This is what I believe.

And the motivation behind that is not for pride. It is just, you know, Paul tells us always be ready to give a defense, and we cannot defend what we have not defined. So we want to be able to define our beliefs. We want to know what we believe and believe what we know. And that is probably one of the greatest things that we can ever do. And that will have application even into this morning's message. I've shared, some of you know it, and I've shared it with others, but it is really telling that this morning we'll be looking in the Sunday school hour at Israel, and then during the service we'll go to Mark 13, which opens up the beginning of the Olivet Discourse, which if you know anything about the Olivet Discourse, that would be the teaching of Christ to his disciples as concerning the end times. So again, we'll look at wars and rumors of wars this morning in our Sunday school, in our message time. And then we're looking at Israel that is really entrenched in war right now during this Sunday school hour. So let's open up with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for the opportunity and the grand privilege it is of being together. Lord, we ask that you would speak to our hearts and minds, that you would give us confidence in scripture, you'd give us assurance in who you've called us to be. And Lord, that we would be intentional in our pursuit of relationship with you, and in doing that, that we would try to rightly understand and divide the word of truth, not for pride, not for arrogance, but Lord, for confidence in the days before us. So Father, we ask that you would lead our time as we consider the topic of Israel and the nation of Israel and the people of God and even the church. Lord, that you would lead us in this time and that you would be glorified and honored through it. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. When I first kind of scratched out the eight essentials, I wrote it out on a piece of notebook paper and I shared it with the elders and said, this is what I was thinking. And after hearing the feedback from the three of them, they said,

[3 : 39] I believe all of these topics are good. They're fitting. They're worthy of our understanding now. And we kind of took it out from there. And I say, I was going off of like I do everything else in my world, some pencil scratches on a piece of notebook paper. And then pastor's wife took that and made those real cool inserts that you had that you put on your refrigerator and made them look real pretty and nice and neat. And so then once you had them printed, I said, well, I guess I'm bound to those eight topics because in pencil I can erase and I could change that last one. But I had said, what about Israel before any of the attacks that had taken place, knowing the enemies of Israel are always right outside the borders and always all those matters. So to understand this, just to be transparent and honest with you, I'm not as concerned about the interpretation of current events as

they are happening before us, because we don't want to give that interpretation, but rather I am concerned about the application of our consideration of the nation of Israel as the church. And that being said, it is because we really have to confine ourselves to what scripture teaches. And this is one of the grand dangers. Many new research, I don't know, we've looked at this surveys and Barna Group researches and things of that nature have come out and they've done it on a number of issues. One of them, as Brother

Ivan pointed out to us, we're losing our young adults when they move into college, almost to the tune of about 90%. They are leaving the church and they're not leaving the church simply because they haven't heard things rightly or we haven't taught them the right things. We've seen, as he shared with us, they're leaving for a lack of discipleship. They're not seeing the truth that is being proclaimed in the classroom or from the pulpit being lived out in a daily reality among the people of God. And so there's this great void between application and understanding. And they're looking for something authentic, as we all should be. And they're looking for something real. Further surveys show us that among our young adults, even our young adults that are in church, there is a really steep rise in anti-Semitism in their not only displeasure, but almost a hatred for the nation of Israel. If you go back to the October 7th, 2024 attack when Hamas went into the music festival, there was more support for the Hamas terrorist group on the American college campuses than there were anywhere else in the world. There were festivals and celebrations about the Palestinian attack upon the nation of Israel and the promotion of those Hamas ideas on our college campuses rather than in Palestinian squares or any other place in the world. And that was coupled with this reality of a misunderstanding of the nation of Israel. And we have to get this right. We need to get it right in our churches. We need to get it right in our hearts. And we need to get it right as we talk to one another, because it is a very, very divisive issue. And you'll see in just a moment, the president of Summit Ministries, Jeff Myers, put it this way, every anti-God movement from Haman in the Old Testament, if you're going with me on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights, we're looking at actually the life of Haman. We'll see Haman being hung this evening, by the way, hung on his own gallows.

So every anti-God movement from Haman in the Old Testament to the Bolsheviks to the Nazis, all sought to destroy the Jewish people because they are a people, regardless of their religious practice. Let that sink in for just a moment. They sought to destroy the Jewish people because they are a people. Haman is considered the enemy of the Jews, and his hatred for Mordecai and the Jewish people have nothing to do with Mordecai's religious practice. Because if you remember in the book of Esther, there is no mentioning of the name of God. Mordecai never offers a sacrifice. [8 : 02] He never goes to the temple. For one, he's in the capital city of Susa in the Persian Empire. He's not one of the few that went back to reconstruct and rebuild the temple. He's not one whose heart was stirred by the Spirit of God to respond. He is just a Jewish individual who is different. So Haman hates him for his differences. And if you look throughout history, the hatred for the Jewish people are simply because they are a people, not because of their religious practice.

And I need you to hold on to that for just a few moments. And we'll come back to that at the end. But that is, in reality, if you look at that, and you can trace it throughout history, it is not really about the nation of Israel. It is, as Dr. Jeff Myers defines it here, an anti-God movement.

And it is really more about their own desire. Haman's hatred was a result of his own pride, right? And if we look at every one of these movements, we'll understand that. So we have to ask ourselves, why did God choose a particular people? Some people have a hard time with this. Some people wrestle with this reality. And some think, well, man, God was so unfair. It is unfair that God would choose a particular people. And really, again, in our interpretation of Scripture, and we've said this before, Genesis 1 through 11 do what? They introduce for us every problem man has.

Genesis 1 to 11 introduce every problem, every sin that man has. We have the perfect creation of God. We have God declaring that it is very good. We have him working in a magnificent way of splendor.

[9 : 51] We have the fault of man. We have murder. We have pride. We have all these things. So every problem that man has is introduced in the first 11 chapters of the Bible. Starting in Genesis 12 is God's answer to man's problem. And from Genesis 12 all the way through the rest of Scripture until you get to the book, the end of the book of Revelation, it is how God responds, not responds, but the answer that God has for the problem that man possesses. Now, we can't say that it's a

response because we are told in Scripture as we continue to read and we continue to see, and we see the progressive revelation of Scripture that these were matters that were known before the foundations of the world were laid.

So these are God's four known plans, things which he had determined he would do. So Genesis 1 through 11 tell us that every failure and every failing of man, and in Genesis 12, we have the introduction of how God is going to resolve man's problem. And he does it, Genesis 12, verses 1 through 3, is what we refer to as the Abrahamic covenant. It is the first issuing of the Abrahamic covenant. It is where God makes this covenant with Abraham. And it's really an amazing covenant. Now, we have a lot of Scripture in this one because unlike other portions, we don't want to pull from outside sources of the Bible because if you begin to look up what about the nation of Israel and look at outside sources, then guess what? You're going to get a lot of outside sources. But we've defined in this eight essentials, by the way, we've been continuously building on that. We have defined that the only true source and the only truth and the authority that we can make our convictions upon must be that of Scripture. We want to be a very, for lack of really a better application to it, a very narrow-minded people. Okay? Not narrow-minded in the bad sense, but let's just say focus. We want to be a very focused people that we know where truth resides. And then every other thing that we read, we must interpret it through the lens of truth, which is Scripture, rather than using current events to translate Scripture, which we, if you remember, is exegesis, reading into Scripture what we want. We want to be exegesis, reading out of Scripture what it says. And we've kind of laid that out. So if you missed that, you need to go back and watch the what about the Bible, because that's kind of where we began.

We're not reading into the Bible what we think. So you have to be careful when you start looking up the nation of Israel. You say, oh, well, that's the Old Testament, and that's all this other. No, don't do that. Just go and say, what does the Word say? And then wrestle with what the Word says. Okay, that's exegesis. And we're going to look at that, because we'll see some very difficult texts. But Genesis 12, 1 through 3 says, Now the Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land which I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you. And the one who curses you, I will curse. And then you, all the families of the earth, will be blessed. Right? So that's the initial Abrahamic covenant. But there's a problem when we look at this, at this initial call. We call this the initial call of Abraham. If you were to go back to Genesis 11, where you start getting all these genealogies, and all these listing, right? So you meet all these old people that are dying, and these people who have kids, and then you're introduced to Terah. Terah would be Abram's father. So Genesis 11, 31 through 32. You can go back and look at it if you want to. It seems to place the initiative with Terah, Abram's father. Because it says in Genesis 11, 31 through 32, that Terah moved his family, which was Abram, his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot, or Abram's nephew Lot. He moved them to Haran. And then after he was in Haran, he died. Now if you know anything about where they're leaving are the Chaldeans to the promised land. Haran's halfway. So they're coming from the east.

By the way, complete side. No, this is good. In Genesis, anytime someone comes from the east, they're what? Coming to the presence of God. You say, how do you know that? Law first mentioned.

[14:03] When man was put out of the Garden of Eden, where did he put him? He put him towards the east. He put him away from his presence. Okay, this is really important in your biblical understanding. So he put man out towards the east and he sent him east. When Cain rebelled against Abel, where did Cain go?

He went towards the east, right? He went away from the presence of God. So therefore, anytime we see someone coming from the east, they're coming closer to the Lord God. That's important because the mad guy came from the east, right? They were coming into the presence of God. It's really amazing, right? The scripture is so consistent. It makes you just go, wow, look at that. Anyway, so they're coming from the east. So Ur of the Chaldeans. Haran is like halfway. Okay, it's halfway between Ur and the nation, what would be the land of Canaan. And so when we read of Genesis 11, it's like Tara says, you know what, guys? Ur is getting bad. It's kind of wicked over here. It is, by the way, the seat of idolatry in the ancient world. Most people believe that idolatrous worship began in Ur. And so that's where Abram's from. And so we had this tendency to read it and

Tara goes, you know what, this is a bad place. Let's move. And so they move him. He moves halfway to Haran. He dies in Haran. And then God says, okay, Abram, you keep going. So the initiative looks like it's Tara until we read Stephen's defense in the book of Acts, Acts chapter seven. Now we believe in what? The progressive revelation of scripture, that the further we read, the clearer we'll see. And Stephen says something amazing in Acts seven. It's not a contradiction of what we read in Genesis. It is really a clarification. In Acts seven, he tells us that God appeared to Abram before he lived in Haran. So it is the initiative of God. And before he lived in Haran, he told Abram, I want you to leave your father and your mother and your family and all these people and go to the land I will show you. So rightly understood. I know I'm giving you a lot of scripture. What this tells us is that Abram said, okay, I feel like God's telling me to leave, but I don't want to be completely cut off. I'm going to take daddy with me. I'm going to take my nephew with me. I'm going to take all these people with me. So God held him up in Haran. He got halfway there because it was halfway obedience. And it wasn't until his dad died, which is what he was called to leave behind, that God issued a further call and said, now this is what I told you to begin with. Okay. So understand this. The initiative is not Tara trying to make life better. The initiative, this is important. The initial call is God appearing to Abram before he lived in Haran and called him out yet in his partial obedience. So we can't say Abram is anything special.

God was patient and waited because God's timetable was perfect. God chose one man. It tells us in Genesis 12, one through three to make a nation from him. And it was for the purpose that all, what does it say? All the families of the earth may be blessed. So God's choice of one was so that all the families of the earth may be blessed. We go a little bit further into the story and I don't have time to take you there, but we get to Genesis 17, one through eight. And this is where God's like, you're going to have a child. And there's this promise of this seed. And it's not going to come through, um, Hagar, it's going to come through Sarah, who Sarah, who is now Sarah. Uh, so we have this, which by the way is another great biblical principle. We find a book of Galatians, the, the, the child of the law and the child of promise. Anyway, we're ahead of ourselves. Uh, so what we have here is, is God is just kind of clarifying the call. The initial call is go, I'll make a nation out of you. And in you, all the nations and all the families of the earth will be blessed. And then he gets a little bit clearer. God as with us, the initial call he places on our life is kind of general. Come to me, all you who are labor or who are heavy, and I will give you rest. And I want the rest of Christ.

[18:07] And then the longer you walk with Christ, he's like, Oh, and this is what I want you to do. You know, this is what I want you to do. And he begins to clarify and get a little clearer. So now we see in Genesis 17, where God repeats Abrahamic covenant. He, he adds to it a little bit. He's building upon it. And there's the repetition of the multiple nations as an intended people. He says, from you, many nations will come.

He makes that statement, right? And he's referring to the one seed. We could say, well, sure, because there's Ishmael, there's Isaac. No, that's not it. There's from you, from this one seed, this child of promise, Isaac, multiple nations will come. And there is the importance in this promise of this coming seed. It is something that we see all the way back in Genesis 3, the seed of a woman who crushed the head of the serpent. And we can trace that seed singular all through scripture. But here it is this importance of the coming seed. So what we see when God clarifies this call is that God chose one man that he might raise up a separated people to draw the world to himself. But greater still is this reality that God ordained from the beginning, the very family he would use to enter into our world, that he might be a blessing to all nations. God knew what he was doing. And he ordained from the very beginning who the seed would come through that it may come into our world, that God would become flesh and be a blessing to multiple nations. Now, God had the privilege and the divine responsibility of choosing his family. You do not. You don't get to determine beforehand how you're going to come into this world. But God in doing so was choosing. Now, and I don't know about you, we can just say this here.

If I was God, I don't think I would have chose the nation of Israel, even in the Old Testament, as I began to see all their failings and shortcomings and all their rebellion and all those things. But then again, who would you choose? Who would you choose? If the microscope was put on your family throughout its history, how would it be? You know, I have the unique privilege of being, you can go into the school library and pull out books that talk about our family. And I don't say this in a prideful way, but the Calvert family kind of has some place in history, not here.

You know, they founded Maryland and Maryland state flags, our family crest, and all this other really cool stuff. Baltimore, Maryland is actually named after Baltimore Calvert. So occasionally, like Brayden brought home a book, and it was about Leonard Calvert, which is in my family. So you can go in our family tree and see it. But then we read in there and said, yeah, they called him a blockhead when he was growing up, and he was kind of a dunce and all this. And so when the microscope's put on your family, it doesn't always look good. There's a lot of mistakes they made, and it's just right there in black and white. And you're like, well, maybe we don't need to tell everybody we're Calverts, right? But there's a lot of issues in every family on the face of the earth. But God chose this family to be the one that he would enter into to be a blessing to all nations. So that's very, very quick, because I'm trying to move us forward very quickly. Recap. So how does the church fit into this? Did something change from Malachi to Matthew? Did something change between the Old Testament and the New Testament? There's a lot that takes place in that 400 plus years of intertestamental time. We're not going to take time to go through that, but did something change? How does the church fit in? I will say there is two great theories about this, okay? So there's the dispensational theory. Dispensational theory is that God always had two unique people groups throughout the course of history. He had the nation of Israel, which would be their blessing, would be an earthly blessing. They would be blessed with a land and a possession and a seed and a number of descendants. But also coinciding with that throughout history was God's unique people, referred to as the church. And the church is always kind of being in existence. But their inheritance is an eternal inheritance. It is a heavenly inheritance. And that's dispensational theory kind of in a nutshell. So if you ever read of anybody that is a dispensationalist, that's kind of what they're saying is you have these two coinciding people.

[22 : 22] Now they have what they call progressive dispensationalists that believe something totally different. Well, not totally different, a little bit unique because they had to change that because, I don't know, I'm talking, some of you are saying you're talking over my head, but it's okay.

Some of it will bounce off the wall and hit you maybe in the back of the head in just a moment because this is what that all means. What they're really saying in dispensational theory is that the church has always been in existence, but we don't see it until we get to the New Testament. That's kind of scary because then you're telling me that the church was in existence before Christ said, I built my church. And what we find in the book of Acts is not the birth of the church because the church had already been in existence. That's just the manifestation of the church. And I don't get that in scripture. So to kind of wrestle with that, they did this thing called progressive dispensationalism and said, oh, well, the church is really not there, but still what they're saying is the possession of Israel, the blessing of Israel is an earthly possession and the blessing of the church is a heavenly one. Then you have what they call covenant theory. And covenant theory is that God is a God of covenants. And in his covenantal theory, there is the covenant with the nation of Israel and there's a covenant later on with the church. And I'm not here to define all those and I'll tell you exactly which one is right. I'm just kind of here to make you think about them. Okay. And you'll see why in a moment. So how does the church fit into this? Has the church always been existent? And all of a sudden now we see it in the new Testament or is the church something else? And how we answer this is really of great importance because is the church, the reaction to God, not is the church, the reaction of God to the failings of his people is that's a typo there. Uh, I think, but I'll fix it. Uh, but did God have a plan that he started setting the motion with the nation of Israel and all of a sudden the nation of Israel couldn't do what they were supposed to do. That is to be a light to the community and draw the world to him. The nation of Israel was this billboard that God said, you would look unique. You'll look different. This is why they have all these laws and you're going to draw the world to me. And they didn't do it because they began living like the world. They began acting like the world. They began behaving like the world.

And so therefore the world was not being drawn to a holy God. Rather, they were kind of wagging their heads saying what's going on. So is the church God's response to their failures? Since they failed, God says, well, they failed. Let's start all over. Let's do it again. Now I'd be careful with that because it almost seems like when we read the book of Exodus, where God calls the nation of Israel, Egypt, and then they have the golden calf and God looks at Moses and I'm going to make a new nation out of you. I'm going to wipe my hands of this. And Moses says, wait a minute. Oh God, these are your people. And he said, I'll make a nation out of you, Moses, and we'll start all over. I don't think he ever intended to do that. I think he was showing us the heart of Moses where he was

like, no, no, no.

These are your people, God. You entered into promise. And so if he wasn't willing to start over then, why would we think he's willing to start over now? If he wouldn't do it in the height of their debauchery, dancing around a golden calf with probably all types of immoralities, the singing that Brother Jamie talked about us about that they heard the sound of singing in the camp was not a love song to the Lord God. It was a debauchery song to mankind. And so if he wouldn't just say, well, let's start all over now. Why would we say that now? Okay, well, they went into Babylon. They failed. They didn't build the right temple. Forget it. I'm going to respond by doing it. Or is the church the very thing which God had planned from the beginning? Understanding the church is the called out people. How we consider this, or this helps us to consider where the church, did the church replace Israel? Or is the church a part of the plan which God began in Israel? It's kind of how we have to think about how the church fits in. Romans 9, 6 through 8 says, but it is not as though the word of God has failed, for they are not all Israel who descended from Israel, nor are they all the children because they are Abraham's descendants.

[26 : 21] But through Isaac, your descendants will be named. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise as regarded as descendants. Now, if you really want to understand Israel in the New Testament, you have to go to Romans 9, 10, 11. We'll see that a lot in just a moment. But what is Paul saying here? God's promise that hasn't failed because God counts Israel not as those who are just the flesh descendants of Abraham. They are the children of promise. They belong because they are the seed of promise.

And it is, remember this refrain, the multitude of nations, the multiple nations will come from you. The multiple nations will come from you. In this church, we have the blessing of seeing that in a number of families, right? We have a number of adoptions in our church. We have a number of families that look different. And one thing that I have noticed in each one of those adoptions, they carry the family name of the family they belong to because they were added to that. They might not carry the DNA or the bloodline of that family, but they are a part of that family because they have been adopted into that family. And that's exactly what Paul is saying here. They are not all Israel just because they were born through Abraham, but rather they are the children of promise. And then he kind of fleshes it out a little bit more. Paul reminds us that the covenantal promise of God was for a multitude of nations. It was never to be just one particular people. The church, it tells us in Romans 10 verses 1 through 20, I don't have time to take you there. The church has been grafted into the nation of Israel by faith. This is where he says that the wild olive branches have been grafted into the native olive tree and the native olive trees have been taken up. The natural olive branches have been taken out because of their rebellion.

So the wild olive branches are grafted in. And there are multiple passages in the New Testament that imply that the church is a now part of Israel. Romans 8 really is a big one. Actually, the whole book of Romans, but Romans 8 is a big one. It starts speaking about our high priest and the order of worship and the book of James, in particular, 1 Peter. Each of these are letters and there are multiple other passages which we could see. They're being written to the church, but they use Old Testament phraseology and Old Testament imagery. 1 Peter tells us that we are a royal priesthood. It's where we get the priesthood of the believers, which is so central to baptistic theology that you have the right to discern the mind of Christ without someone interceding for you. You can go to Christ by yourself. We call that the priesthood of the believer. Well, do you know the first people that were called a royal priesthood? This is a nation of Israel at Mount Sinai where God says, I've called you to be my people. You are my peculiar people. I will make you a nation of priests.

And so that reference that we cling to so hard to say, well, we have, you have a right to have access to God because in Christ you are a priest. You say, oh, wait a minute. I don't like that term. Well, it's the, you know, you are a royal priesthood. It tells us being built up as a spiritual house. Those are Hebrew references or Israeli references that are now applied to the church. So it seems to say, it doesn't seem to say if we read it in its face value, the church is taking on kind of the Israeli people groups place and position. We've been grafted in, but it is clear that the church has not replaced Israel, but rather that has become a part of Israel that we see in scripture.

[29 : 59] Okay. It's very clear nowhere because God did not change his terminology. He did not change his wording. The church did not replace Israel, but we've become a part of that through faith in Christ.

And so then we have to ask ourselves, so what about the present and the future? How do we consider or how should we think of Israel today? And this is kind of the one thing that everybody really wants to know, but how do we think about Israel today? If it is clear that God did choose a particular people for a purpose. And if it is clear in scripture that as the church, we have been grafted into the nation of Israel. And now let's wade into the very deep waters and see what we say here, but let's put some kind of, um, caveats in there. Uh, Romans 11, and I don't, I haven't asked you to do that a whole lot here, but Romans 11, turn, turn to Romans 11. Okay. I didn't type all this out for you. Um, and I'm not going to take you through every bit of this, but I want you to see it so that you don't say, oh, well, that's just what he said. Um, because if I can point to in scripture and you can see it in the Bible and you have a problem with it and you come to me, then I can say, oh, that's not my word.

You know, that's his. And so then you got to wrestle with him, not wrestle with me. So that's why I like scripture. Um, I like it because we don't come with opinions. We just come with what the word of God says. So Romans 11, 25 through 36 is where Paul is really kind of, kind of clarifying because Romans nine, 10, 11, I don't have time to kind of take us through all Romans nine, 10, 11. And, and honestly, I mean, we would wrestle with that for weeks on end and just to kind of rightly interpret that and rightly see it, but we don't want to separate it from its context. So we'll see it in its context in just a moment, but Romans 11 and 25 tells us, and did I miss a slide? Let me see if I missed a slide. Yep. Here it is. It tells us for they don't want you to, for I do not want you brethren to be uninformed of this mystery. So first of all, here's kind of the first little caveat I'll give you. There's the caution that this is a mystery that we must approach with care. Okay.

Paul himself said, this is a mystery. He's really in the midst of referring to the nation of Israel for three chapters. And he's kind of been kind of fleshing it out in Romans eight, really rich passage. And then he goes right into the nation of Israel. And he says, this is a mystery. And he said, I don't, I don't want you to be, I don't want you to be unaware of the fact that this is kind of, kind of difficult, kind of deep stuff. But we also need to understand that it does not have to be a matter of division among believers. And I underline half because too often consideration of the nation of Israel is a matter of division among believers. It doesn't have to be. Okay.

It is a major issue. Um, and we, we approach with caution because there are some things that we can interpret when we start looking at eschatology and end times events, there are some things that we can interpret differently. Some of us think, um, pre-tribulation rapture, right? That we'll be gone before the tribulation starts. Some believe mid-tribulation rapture. Some believe post-tribulation rapture. Some believe that there is, uh, the amillennialism. Some believe in the millennial reign of Christ and all these different things. And those things don't have to divide us. Now we don't have to be contentious about them. I can define why and defend why I believe what I believe when it comes to end times. And, but it doesn't have to defend. Like Adrian Rogers used to say, know the mountain you're willing to die on. Okay. Sometimes we have good intentions and I love this.

[33 : 43] Adrian Rogers could give great examples. He said, some pastors are like that bull standing on the train tracks. We see the train coming, but we're so mad that the train's coming. We're just snorting and raging and bucking our heads and we're willing to face that train and we don't understand that that's not a hill worth dying on because that bull's not going to make it against that train.

Know the mountain you're going to die on. When it comes to the consideration of nation of Israel too often, the people of God called the church have made this something they're willing to die on and it becomes divisive and it doesn't have to be because it's a mystery. It's something that we have to say, wow, okay, I want to consider it accurate. I want to consider it honestly and open-mindedly, but Paul says it's a mystery.

He declares, look at what it says in this Romans 11, 25, for do not want you brethren to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation. So again, be careful. Don't be wise in your own estimation. We approach with humility and here it is that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Paul is very clear that he declares from this passage that a partial hardening has happened. And that this work is a work of God. So that's why you have to be careful how you approach the nation of Israel today. And we'll clarify that in just a moment. He says that a partial hardening, now it's not a complete hardening because surely we see Messianic Jews or we see people who come to Christ, right? I've met people of Jewish descent who come to Christ. Moody Bible Institute, one of there,

um, Dr. Michael Rydelnik, uh, is of Jewish heritage and is a defender of the Hebrew scripture, but he's also a strong believer. I've heard him in person, uh, uh, in Chattanooga. Uh, he, he talked down there one time when Hunter was living in Chattanooga. We went down there as actually, I was, so Sunday morning I went and we, we sat at church and I heard Dr. Michael Rydelnik speak. And then later on that morning I was here preaching. So it was a wonderful thing about time change in Chattanooga.

Uh, so he's great. He was one of the co-authors or co, um, editors of the Moody Bible handbook, the Moody commentary. And that's why I say it's so great because there are a number of authors. [36 : 00] Uh, but when you want to study Hebrew scripture, go to someone who has a Hebrew heritage and he can tell you what those things mean about. So he's, he's hasn't been hardened to the gospel. He's definitely responded to the gospel. There are others. I've met a number of them. One of the most, uh, rewarding things that I ever had as a pastor is, uh, when I was pastor in Normandy, we had a strong believing Jewish individual come during the Easter season and he walked through the Passover meal with us. And you saw, you saw the imagery and everything it meant. It was all laid out before us. I was like, okay, it makes more sense. Right. Why? Because I'm an outsider looking in. He grew up taking it and he could tell you everything that it stood for. And really then the other side of it, he could tell you the fulfillment of it in Christ. So understand when Paul says a partial hardening doesn't mean they always, it means what it means. It's a partial hardening. Hardening has happened.

It is through this hardening that the gospel message was taking to the Gentiles. If we go read the book of Acts, we don't have to, when the church is born, uh, in Acts chapter two and following, and when you have Peter's message, what we call the Pentecost message is delivered. Do you remember how that ends? Peter makes this declaration. He says, repent and turn to Christ so that times of refreshing may come. Now that times of refreshing is a very Jewish phrase. And it is a reference to the book of Joel, I believe, in which God says that when the nation would turn to him with all of their hearts and with all of their mind, then the refreshing of the Lord would come upon the nation and the restoration of them as a distinct people. And so what Peter is saying is that if you repent and come to Christ, times of refreshing may come. And that would have been the fulfillment of the Hebrew prophecies.

They didn't. And the reason they didn't, Paul says, is because God hardened their hearts. Some of you, I know you're going a little bit off on me here, but stay with me. But it was for the purpose that the Gentiles would have the opportunity to respond. Because if that had happened, immediately Peter preaches the message, and all of the Hebrew people had returned to the Lord, times of refreshing may come, it would have brought an end to the prophetic age and have brought an end to the Old Testament promises. And at that moment, that would have been, if you read the prophecies that are found in the Old Testament, we would refer to that as the millennial reign of Christ, and it's over.

But Paul says that this partial hardening has happened until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. So what we see there is there is a divine timetable connected to this hardening. And I think that phrase, and you have to be really careful with it, I had to define that one time. I had, some of you met him, he came and spoke. He loves eschatology, loves end times, brother. Kenneth Swan came when I was preaching the book of Revelations and took us through the stones of Revelation. He has a unique gentleman to tell, he was the only person that ever told me I wasn't old enough to be a pastor. He told me he didn't like me as a, he didn't like me to be a pastor. I was too young to be a preacher. And later on, he said, you know what? I love you. You're my pastor. And so it's great. I love brother Kenneth. I was formed and fashioned so much under him. One time he challenged me. He said, answer for me what this means, the fullness of the Gentiles. So I had to take like about a three or four week time just studying. And I had to write out this paper for him for one, because he just wanted to know.

I probably forgot most of that because that was many, many years ago. But there is this divine timetable. And really this is what is utilized if we're careful because we see it mentioned again in the book of Revelations, uh, Revelations three or four beginning of four. Um, so we see it connected to the rapture of the church, uh, as, as we can understand it there, Paul refers to it time and time again. It's kind of this key to understanding what is happening in the end times. It is this one phrase, this timetable, if you will, of the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. So we see that it was for the purpose of the hardening. If this is the purpose of the hardening that Gentiles would have the

opportunity to, okay, they're coming. They saw we were doing something. They're going to another room.

[40 : 10] No danger, danger there. No stranger, danger. I don't know who they were. Um, I saw your head turn around cause the door shut. Um, so if the purpose of this hardening is so that the Gentiles, that's you and I would have the opportunity to respond, then it would follow that when this purpose has been achieved, it would bring an end to the hardening of Israel. If God had a purpose for it until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, it should follow that whenever that last Gentile comes in and we don't know the number. I don't, you don't, no one does that whenever the fullness is reached, it would bring an end to the hardening. Cause purpose for it. Then when it is fulfilled, it only follows if we're linear in our thinking, then that would mean, okay, it's done. So just to clarify this, and these are the passages that many of us wrestle with and I understand admittedly. So Romans nine 18 tells us that this hardening is indeed the work of God. And this is why Romans nine, 10, 11, we read in context, but it is there, which seems Paul kind of seems to get off track and talk about Pharaoh and, and all the plagues and everything else there. And when God makes this reference, he says, so then, this is the quote, so then he has mercy on whom he desires and he hardens whom he desires.

Now, in the context of that passage, what Paul was saying is God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. He has mercy on him. And then he uses the passage says, Esau, I have hated Jacob. I have loved and he says, we just have to surrender this reality that God is God. It's difficult, but the hardening of the hearts is from God. So, and when we understand that we can't, well, they just, they crucified Christ. They hated him. They wanted nothing to do with him. Uh, they, they turned their back on him.

They are a deranged people group. And you say, well, pastor, where are you getting that from? Well, Hey, listen, there are very, very, very strong Christian believers in the past who had that mindset that the Jewish people were not the elect of God, never would be the elect of God because they crucified the savior and wanted nothing to do with him. And once they denied him, the blood was on their own hands and they wanted nothing to do with him. So God would never use them. And one of those would be Martin Luther. He said on his commentary to the book of Romans that we can clearly see that Paul did not mean that this would happen because clearly in his day in the 1500s, uh, the Roman people are such, uh, he has such antisemitism towards the Israeli nation. He said, there's no way in the world they will ever be a people group again. He wasn't alive in the 1940s.

Be careful because if this hardening is from God and you can't blame them as a people group. And if it is so that God could extend his mercy to the Gentile people, then we have to rejoice in it because without it, we wouldn't have had the opportunity to know Christ.

[43 : 15] And so it's a double-edged sword. If you say, well, I can't believe in a God that will harden the hearts of people. Well, then how would you have the opportunity to respond? Because Paul tells us that he does it until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in so that we can have the opportunity to respond so that all, and he says a little bit later, if we keep reading on that after this hardening has happened, uh, let's read on just a little bit longer in verse 26, after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, so all Israel will be saved just as it is written. That's what it says in verse 26 there. The quotes that follow this, so then all Israel will be saved. Uh, the first one is Isaiah 59 and the second one is from Jeremiah 31.

Those ought to pique your interest just a little bit because those are, are prophetic words issued during the Babylonian captivity. So God's people are in Babylonian captivity and God is issuing these promises through Isaiah. He's through Jeremiah. Uh, Jeremiah was there. And so there, there's all these promises coming while his people are in captivity. Uh, so while in Babylonian captivity, God spoke numerous times through varying prophets concerning his plan for the national restoration of his people. Each of these quotes that Paul references here speak of the restoration of God's people as a nation and times of peace being, uh, ushered in and, and hearts being made new and hearts of stone being pulled out and hearts of flesh being put in and the word of God written on the hearts of his people and the nations coming to worship God among them. But here's the thing. Historically, we have not yet seen the fullness of these promises.

So for those to say, well, God's promises to Abraham made in Genesis, he gave them a land and they failed all, but God also made them promises in the midst of their rebellion. And we have yet to see them being fulfilled. And so now the matter of the question is, does God keep his promise or

not?

And if God doesn't keep his promises, if he won't keep his promise to the nation of Israel, that he very clearly made them that are written in the word of God, then what hope do you have that you're actually saved? Because your salvation is based upon a promise too. Whosoever comes to me will be saved. And if he doesn't keep his promise there, how do you know he's going to keep his promise now? See the character of God is at stake.

If we were to look forward to the events of the book of Revelation, all appear to focus, and I'm trying to wrap this up really quick, the events of the book of Revelation all appear to focus on the nation of Israel. We see that because once we get past Revelation 4, where I believe we see the church gathered around the throne and a multitude of elders and praising God, what do we see? The 144,000 that are called out, the 144,000 witnesses that are called out, where are they from? [45 : 59] The tribes of Israel. So by the way, this means if you ever meet the Jehovah's Witness, they tell you they're part of the 144,000, ask them what part of the tribe of Israel they're from, and most of them are Gentiles, okay? So it just doesn't correlate. And if there's so many of them that's been going on for years, then I think we would have reached 144,000 by now. And some of them were part of the lost tribe of Israel. There is no lost tribe of Israel. They'll say, well, Simeon's the lost tribe of Israel.

No, it was absorbed into the tribe of Joseph. So anyway, Judah kind of took on the tribe of Simeon. It was the center of the donut. There's a donut hole there in the promised land. Anyway, it's not lost. God has his purposes. Because Simeon isn't even listed in the book of Revelations. But the 144,000 all come from the tribes of Israel. The two witnesses, we don't really know who they are. We have prophetic thinking of who they might be. There are two men in the Old Testament who never died. So I think since it's appointed unto man once to die, that these two men have an appointed day of death, it just happens to be very much later on, Enoch and Elijah. Some say, oh, no, that's Moses and Elijah because you have all that. Well, Moses has already died once. It's appointed unto man once to die. So my interpretation is, I think I know who they are. I'm not going to die on that hill. If you're different than me, that's fine. But I just have a hard time when Scripture says it is appointed unto man once to die. And we find two men that haven't died. And then later on in Scripture, we find two men that are still alive. And then they die. I go, oh, that must have been their appointed day. Their appointment was just delayed in the divine timetable. That's just how I interpret it, okay? If you have a different interpretation, that's okay. But we have these two witnesses that are very Jewish in nature. And by the way, it is this whole Jerusalem and Babylon picture, which is a Jewish terminology. They are killed. And then three days later, they're called into heaven. So we properly understand a number of these events by interpreting them through the lens of the Old Testament prophecies such as those found in the book of Daniel. If you really want to understand what's going on in the book of Revelation, you need to study the book of Daniel, right? It's kind of weird because that's a very Hebrew portion of Scripture. So it seems the focus here is on the nation of Israel. And what does the Word of God tell us here in Romans 11? For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. My interpretation, just very quickly, is that the tribulation is God's final calling of His people back to Himself for the Scripture. For in the Scripture, God uses trials and tribulation to call His people back to Himself. And so when you put the 144,000 with the two witnesses and everything that's going on, the tribulation was the church's rapture, the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. God is working again on the nation of Israel. He's calling His people back to Himself.

But still we do not know, what Paul says, so all of Israel will be saved. If all of Israel is to be taken literally or to be understood as those who place their faith in Christ, either way, none will be saved from the works of the flesh, for all are saved through faith in Christ alone. And then look at what Paul says, oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. And he says it in context of how do we understand the mystery of His dealing with the nation of Israel. So, final word, regardless of our interpretation of these events, any anti-Semitism among the people of God should be shunned completely.

[49 : 21] And I'll say that beyond a shadow of a doubt. Why? First, this is the very historical people group that we have been grafted into in the gospel. You can't escape that reality. You are grafted into the nation of Israel through faith in Christ. And so, you cannot have a hatred for the very people group you've been grafted into. Second, hatred for any people group since and simply because

they are a people group is of the enemy. How do we start out? Any anti-God movement throughout history has sought the annihilation of the Jewish people simply because they are a people, regardless of their religious affiliation to practice. So, any hatred for any people group whatsoever should never be a reality for the people of God. There should, not only should we not have anti-Semitism, we shouldn't have anti-anything.

There should be no hatred for any people group whatsoever. Sure, we ought to pray for the peace of Jerusalem as it tells us in the book of Psalms. We also ought to pray for the peace of Palestine. We ought to pray for the peace around the world. We ought to pray for all people groups that are being affected by these realities. But there should not be any hatred towards this. But now, we do not have to endorse or even accept everything we see being done today. Just don't. However, we must acknowledge the sovereign favor of God in calling Abraham to himself and raising up the Israeli people for without it. We wouldn't be here. Not as the people of God. The church wouldn't be in existence.

And so, we have to be careful how we approach it. We can say, man, I wish they didn't do that. And now it's, right? But if we're still living in this time of partial hardening, what did your life look like when your heart was hardened?

I know what mine did. And I know the atrocities and the evil and the wickedness that was in my own heart simply because it was hardened until the Lord moved upon me. Any questions? I'm really, really, really pressing time. Go ahead and make it an easy one. I can answer, Mason.

Okay. I agree. This is a, I mean, we're people of God who shouldn't hate any group or whatever. Right. I would confidently say that a good group of Israel themselves hate Christians.

[51 : 44] So, it's kind of a, you know, I know, love your neighbor and love yourself, so on and so forth, but that's the majority of them think that we're in a way that it's called Catholic. We are, we are not. We think that we are, if that makes sense.

Well, I agree with you there, but I also agree with you there are a vast majority of people all around the world that hate Christians. Yeah. And so, I wouldn't have to combine that to the nation of Israel. And so, yeah, most of them say that we, we, we usurped to their place and position and took on their scriptures and misinterpreted it and saw it in a different route. Yeah. There's another people group that think that way too.

The Islamic think that we took the Old Testament and we twisted it and contorted it and we, we took, they'll, they'll take the first five books of the Bible, but they won't take the rest of it and say, well, we messed it all up from there on. So again, our response to that should not be one of going, oh, well, okay, I'll accept your hatred for me, but rather it ought to be, well, okay, I'm not going to hate you in return for that. Yeah. But yeah, they're, they're a little bit more vested in their hatred because they have the entirety of the Hebrew scriptures. Yeah.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah. I mean, it's a valid question, but we can't say they were kicked out for their religious practice as determined in scripture because Jerusalem fell in AD 70. So there's been no temple since AD 70. So there's no temple worship. There's no, no priest. There's no priesthood.

[53 : 37] There's no sacrificial system. So they're not practicing. They haven't practiced it since AD 70. Now maybe because of their peculiar tendencies and their family traits and things of that nature.

Sure. But again, we'd have to be kicked out of a lot of nations. List those nations and go back and look at the crusades and go back and look at most of the fights and the battles that were going on and everything that was going on around Jerusalem and, and kind of the root cause. And that's where a lot of that hatred for the Israeli people started and which by the way, it was the Christians who were fighting the crusades, trying to restore the nation of Israel by our own power and own authority rather than letting God do it in his own divine timetable. And so there's this great hatred that happens that has been spurred for years and years and years and years. I mean, you know, what is old in America is not old over there. So their, their battles are being fought in the, you know, in the millennia, not in the centuries. So, uh, yeah, that'd be kind of a quick answer to that. Make it really quick.

Right. Yeah. Yeah. And some of it, man tried to take things in their own hands. All right. We need to close in a word prayer because I'm past 11 o'clock. Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for your faithfulness. And Lord, I know there's so many questions to be asked, so many discussions to be had on this. So father, I pray that you give us clarity and give us a heart in that. And Lord, help us to press forward, to know you in a greater and greater way. And we ask it all in Christ's name.

Amen. Hey, it won't be tonight, possibly next Sunday night. We can do a Q and a C. C. C. C. C. C.
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