

When the national covenant was done away with the clear distinction between believing and unbelieving Israel was made very plain. This fact is elucidated by Jesus before He establishes the New, Eternal Covenant, by speaking of Branches which are broken off, but they aren't broken off that they might later, capriciously or covenantally grafted back on. They were broken off because of unbelief, and believers formerly outside the promised Covenant were brought nigh unto God. This is interesting, because Gentiles had been far off, even during the Old Testament, even some who believed. Jesus seems to refer to this, speaking presently, not in a future sense:

John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Generally, the end of this verse is what is focused upon, That all the sheep will be brought into the one fold in which believing Israelites were currently in. This is significant by itself, because believing, or Spiritual Israel was not going to be taken out of a fold and put into another with Gentiles, but Gentiles will be brought into the fold with Spiritual Israel. This is really part of the larger discussion in this particular material: that belief is what determines true Israel of God. What we will focus on at present, however, is the idea in the earlier portion of the verse. Jesus does not say, other sheep I will have. But He says that he has sheep, at that time, which were not of this fold, which was believing Israel. Who could these sheep be? Was Jesus doing a work among the heathen and pagan? Assuredly not. Jesus limited His work to the ethnic people of the tribes of Israel, believing or not, during His ministry.

Matthew 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Of course, in the broader context, in this specific instance, we find the love of God is not limited, and Jesus cares even for the Canaanite Woman (in the passage)! But these acts are severely limited, and He certainly does not seem to court them, anywhere in the Gospel, to believe in His

name. Yet He says that he HAS sheep. Leave the theologians aside who claim that this must have future significance. Jesus speaks presently. Our only reasonable result, taking all the facts into consideration: the present tense of the verb & that God is the God of the living (there is none that are “dead” to Him), is that Jesus is referring to believers from other nations, that were not in the Nation of Israel, and yet believed in the promises of God. Do we have examples of Non-Israelite believers in Scripture? Yes we do.

Jonah 3:6-10

6) For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8) But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9) Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10) And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

A quick note here. Their works are not what saved them. These are works worthy of repentance, as we know no man is saved by works of the law. There is only grace which saves. What we don't find here is that they joined with Israel, came to Israel, or even made sacrifices as Israel would have done. Yet they believed. Jesus said,

Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the

preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

One wonders, was this repentance and turning to the God of grace limited to only this specific generation? Of course, as a nation, Nineveh returned to their paganism, but what of the immediately succeeding generation of those faithful, believing Ninevites? We can at least say that there were non-Israelite converts to God, who did not come into the Sinai, National covenant of Israel. Are there other examples? Yes, there are.

1 Kings 10:4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

1 Kings 10:6 And she said to the king, ...

1 Kings 10:9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

She believed in God, and made a faithful confession to the LORD! Did she get saved? Yes, Jesus says that she did:

Matthew 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

We read nowhere that she became an Israelite, or did any of the ceremonialism of the Israelite Nation, yet she believed in God, and was saved. We could ask again, this Queen from the South, did she only effect her own faith in God, or did she bring this faith into her own kingdom? We probably cannot answer this question based on Biblical data, but it seems likely that she at least shared her faith with her kingdom! Another example? Yes a very striking one.

Matthew 2:1-2

1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to

Jerusalem,

2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Now, where these Wise-men came from is a subject of much debate and speculation. That is not under consideration here, all we need to know is whether they were Israelites. And they were not! Yet they knew prophecy (Scripture), believed it (even more than most of the Nation of Israel), and desired to worship Jesus! That is a testimony to their faith in God! To debate that they didn't have saving faith or that they were still pagans is mere speculation. Based on the data which we DO have, we can discern that they believed in Jesus, enough to bear fruits of that faith, by traveling. We could suggest at this point, that they may have been the same kind of Wise-men that are Babylonian, and that the posterity of Daniel had effected this kind of faith in Iran. This is suggested by numerous commentators on whom these Wise-men are. We must ask, then, were they the only believers from their country? It seems unlikely. Yet, they are not ethnic Israelites.

Let's return to the subject under discussion at the start. When Jesus says that He HAS sheep (believers) who are not of this fold (believing Israelites), is He not stating that this believers in His name, that were not under the Law Covenant, were waiting for the Covenant of Promise that He had established with Abraham? That they believed God would forgive them of their sins as they believed on His name that HE would be the one to make atonement for sin? If all they had was Genesis chapter 3, and believed the truth of God's Gospel preached to Adam, they would have had enough knowledge, however limited, to trust in God as Adam did. This is not, by the way, a prototype to the Gospel. It is the Gospel, it is later explained in more terms, but it is not a starting point in the sense that what would come later is significantly different. It is not. It is faith in this Gospel Message of God that is saving faith, that God will redeem, as we trust in Him and His work, calling upon Him. This seems to be precisely what at least the Ninevites believed, having learned of their sinfulness. Nationality does not determine who God is gracious toward, those who are believers of God receive His grace

Acts 10:34-35

34) Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35) But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

The point in consideration is this, they did not become Israelites after the law. This is important, and significant, because the promise comes not through the law, yet they received the promise because of their belief in God.

Isn't this the Unconditional Covenant of Abraham? Isn't it fulfilled in Jesus, as God says that He will bless the nations through Abraham's Seed? And isn't that Seed Jesus Christ? Paul answers all these things as yes, in Galatians 3 through 4. Even before the giving of the Law or circumcision, Abraham was promised the Land, and was thus the heir of the whole world. (Romans 4) And believers are heirs of such a promise, not because of the establishment of the Law with a fleshly Nation of Israel, but by faith (Gal. 3:29), and are thus the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), part of the one fold, one flock.

The gathering together of the one flock occurred at the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ when both the living and the dead and the later joiners became part of ONE body, not two separate bodies with different and unique promises.

Ephesians 2:13-17

13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

What we find in the history of the fleshly Nation of Israel is they continued in unbelief, these were never the true children of God, they were children of the flesh, what Paul would call Ishmaelites in Galatians chapter 4. Despite all the light that was shone to them, they continued in unbelief and rejected the light, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, and God gave them over to the error of their ways (Romans chapter 1), in what is often called judicial hardening. He did not harden them despite their openness, but because of their hardness, He gave them over to that.

John 12:34-43

34) The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

35) Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

36) While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

37) But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38) That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39) Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40) He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

41) These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

42) Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

43) For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

This hardening, prophesied in Isaiah, was done, ultimately, because of their own unbelief. As such, this judicial hardening accomplished salvation because it brought about the sacrifice of Christ, so that Salvation might be brought to all. That iniquity would be entirely taken away from Jacob, and even the entire world. These things were plainly prophesied in Genesis, and in the prophets. But those of the flesh cannot understand the things of the Spirit, for they are spiritually discerned. These distinctions are not new to the New Covenant, though their nuance and impact are in difference of magnitudes.

Yet for approximately 1,500 years there was a difficulty of distinguishing between the two. It was of course not impossible during that period of time to discern who the true children of God were. These were the remnant, the faithful, those that never bowed the knee to other gods (1 Kings 19:18), these always trusted in God not to remove sin by sacrifice but believed in the grace of God to forgive sin (Psalm 32:1, 51:2; Proverbs 16:6). Thus, one might say that it was easy, even then, to determine who the true children of God were. Nevertheless, this distinction was made clear when Jesus took away the first Covenant, and thus removed the basis of the institution of the Israelite Nation (Hebrews 10:9). This was not mere accident, Jesus Himself spoke of it:

John 15:1-6

1) I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2) Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

- 3) Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
- 4) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.
- 5) I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
- 6) If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Jesus speaks here of belief and unbelief. Fleshly and Spiritual Israel. The true people of God are those that believe, and this is what National Israel commonly and routinely got wrong (see John chapter 8). But they were broken off because they continued in unbelief. It is only by belief that they are grafted back in to the tree Jesus spoke of and Paul speaks of as well where all these themes we have been speaking of come into focus:

Romans 11:11-24

- 11) I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.
- 12) Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?
- 13) For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:
- 14) If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.
- 15) For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

16) For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

17) And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18) Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19) Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20) Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21) For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

22) Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23) And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

24) For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Jesus speaks of individuals being broken off for their unbelief, here Paul speaks broadly in terms of Nations. This should not be surprising given what we have learned up to this point considering the Nation of Israel, which was not a covenant of Faith, but of do and do not. It was a national covenant, based on personal obedience. And here we find, just as Jesus had said, that nation was thrown off, broken off of the olive tree, because of their unbelief. They already did not believe. Now, it was made plain that they were not under the covenant of Grace, the Covenant of Promise. Have they stumbled, then, that they should fall? Not at all! Rather Salva-

tion has come upon all for their hardness brought this about, because they would not open their eyes to see, and God made their eyelids heavy, etc. Thus, the nations were brought to the tree to be grafted in. This was done and has been accomplished. Unbelieving Gentiles, however, have obviously not been grafted in, and believing Israelites were not broken off. The tree has been pruned of its unbelieving constituents and is entirely composed of believers, the faithful. This has been accomplished. And Fleshly Israelites can be grafted in and are grafted in by their belief.

They will not be grafted back in as a nation, however. That covenant of Law, that National Covenant has been done away with (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 8:13, 10:9). And truly, they have been dead in trespasses and in sins! Because they did not come to believe in the Covenant of Promise, but leaned only on their own works of the Law, which do not save. Thus, if they are received individually in belief, what will the receiving of them be, but life from the dead! As we all come to life from the dead, when we come to faith in Jesus Christ. The point that Paul is making here in a larger sense is that God made it clear that National Israel needed and needs to be saved just as all unbelievers do, by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the covenant of Promise, and it has been accomplished, and the purpose of judicially hardening fleshly Israel has been accomplished.

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

We should note quickly that “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” is in the aorist, or past tense. But it is not past imperfect, as though it were ongoing. Furthermore, it is not past perfect, as though it occurred in the past and still ongoing (enduring results).

It was an event which was accomplished as of once. That is the sense of the aorist, it is a completed event, not an event TO BE completed. We must as then, when did the fullness of the Gentiles come in? Didn't Paul just speak of it? Weren't they grafted in? Indeed, they were. As Paul is painting in broad strokes speaking of nations in the prior verses, he has

not suddenly begun to speak of smaller details.

These are still broad strokes so that we can understand the fullness of things. Our English translation makes this difficult to understand as being a completed action, but it is nonetheless accomplished and done already. The hardening no longer being necessary, because these things have happened. The hardness sounds continual when it says "is happened" in English, because the "is" is a present tense verb, and we may be tempted to apply it to our present, but like the aorist of the Gentiles came in, the hardening has happened, it is perfect active. The verbs work together here to show clearly in the Greek that this is an accomplished event.

We could translate thus:

Romans 11:25 For I don't desire you to be ignorant, brothers, of this mystery, so that you won't be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles had come in (literally, came in)

We find many translations of this verse, but we find theology of the interpreters has interfered with the tenses of the verbs, but the tenses themselves are unchangeable, and are consistent throughout the manuscripts.

So, what was the point of the judicial hardening? That the Jews/Israelites after the flesh would carry out the sacrifice of Christ, that Salvation might come to all, and that the Gentiles might be grafted in is accomplished. And there is abundant evidence to show that the judicial hardening of God on the Jews was taken away in the time of the New Testament, when it must be taken away if our analysis here is correct.

During Jesus ministry, there were many of Israel who believed on Him, thus not all Israel was hardened at that time (thus Paul says blindness in part, not all were blinded/hardened), but in the end, there were only 120 believers in the upper room leading up to Pentecost. But on the first day of the proclamation of the New Covenant, 3,000 are saved!

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand

souls.

This certainly seems to indicate that some dramatic change had happened! Couldn't this be indicative that the Judicial hardening had gone away with the breaking off of the Nation of Israel? The numbers themselves seem to testify to this fact, later another 5,000 would be added as well (Acts 4:4), and by the end of the book of Acts:

Acts 21:20 YLT and they having heard, were glorifying the Lord. They said also to him, 'Thou seest, brother, how many myriads there are of Jews who have believed, and all are zealous of the law,

Many myriads! Many thousands! Isn't this significant? Doesn't this bear out that the judicial hardening was taken away? After all, the purpose for that hardening was without cause for continuance. Jesus had given Himself as a Sacrifice for many and the Gentiles had been grafted in. And Paul uses completed action and past single-action verbs in Romans 11:26. Why should we argue for present hardening of the Jews by God, when it is clear that if today someone is blind to the Gospel it is not God who does it:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

3) But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Thus any and all Israelites who want to be saved today must come to the Deliverer (the one who releases from bondage, this is not a war-like word, but one who buys a slave, it is used in the sense of redemption in other passages):

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob

This is another passage wherein we find difficulty in our modern translations, though it is plain in the old words. It is expressing not something which follows chronologically from the former verse.¹ Rather, it expresses a sustained thought. Fleshly Israel's judicial hardening is a past fact, God is not hardening them today to the Gospel, there is only one way that they will be saved, it isn't by pleading with God to finish saving Gentiles or to remove their blindness early, those things have happened, there is only one hope for them: In this way will all Israel be saved, just as it is written, etc. This does not mean, and cannot mean according to its construction, that every Fleshly Israelite will be saved, but how all of Israel can be saved with the predominant focus being that they are not waiting for another kind of salvation or hope.

Rather: All Israel will be saved in this way just as it is written: A deliverer shall come out of Zion, etc. (Various English translations support this fact of the Greek construction)²

Diodore: What does it mean to say that “all Israel will be saved?” Just as we say that the whole world and all the nations are being saved because everywhere and among all nations there are those who are coming to faith, so also “all Israel will be saved” does not mean that every one of them will be but that either those who were understood by Elijah or those who are scattered all over the world will one day come to faith.³

It is plain from Scripture that Jesus has already come as a deliverer in Zion (see Romans 7:24; 2 Corinthians 1:10; Colossians 1:13).

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

When He comes again it will not be to deliver, but with flaming fire to take vengeance on the ungodly. That is, He comes as a Judge

1 This chronological understanding of the passage has its source in the Catholic Vulgate.

2 Some interpreters regard all these events as future. To them one must reply: Then this prophecy must still take place, and Christ will come again to set them free. If they have been blinded temporarily by God and not by themselves, what will become of those who are now perishing as unbelievers? Pelagius's Commentary on Romans.

3 Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

- 7) And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
- 8) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
- 9) Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;
- 10) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

The great topic of Romans 11 is whether God has forever damned fleshly Israelites. The answer is that He has not. He promised to provide Salvation through the Abrahamic (not Sanai) Covenant. Moreover, He did this, even for fleshly Israel, if only they will turn to Him, He will save them. God shows no partiality whether positive or negative, Salvation is offered freely to all, and God calls all men everywhere to repent. God said He would remove iniquity from Jacob, even the whole world, and He did that at the cross. Thus,

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

This speaks nothing of the Old Covenant, which was done away with, but here in this precise context, it speaks of the New Covenant that we are under! If fleshly Israel turns from their wickedness, God will save them today. This is not a promise for tomorrow.

The Judicial hardening is done, it is not waiting for some future, eschatological removal. In fact, fleshly Israelite's individual blindness to the Gospel is promised to be removed in Scripture today, as they turn in belief, repenting of their wrong ideas (changing their mind):

2 Corinthians 3:14-16

- 14) But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the

same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16) Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

How is the veil taken away? By turning to the Lord, not some future coming in of Gentiles. How much Scripture does it take to finally come to the right conclusion?

The fleshly nation would have, and did have, much issue determining this issue. They claimed that their national, conditional covenant made them sons of God and thus saved. This, however, is nowhere a promise of that Covenant, and Jesus warns of this, rather than the Children of God, who are the true Children of Promise, that children of the Israelite kingdom are not saved:

Matthew 8:11-12

11) And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

12) But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The law was given to convict, to draw, to educate those folks of their need for a Savior (Galatians 3:24), THE Savior, Jesus Christ, who Moses himself believed in (Hebrews 11:24-26). The National Covenant was the Law Covenant, and it was only temporary (Galatians 3:19), thus the physical, fleshly nation of Israel was only temporary and would be sent away, as was Ishmael (Galatians 4:28-31) after the time of the seed of Promise. Even Abraham had faith in this future promise, had faith in Jesus Christ,

John 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

The point here is not that Abraham saw it presently, though he certainly was alive. But that Abraham SAW it--he saw the day of Christ historically and was glad. And he rejoiced seeing it! Abraham understood the promise of the Christ (The Seed) and all that was bound up in it! It was this faith which saved Abraham, faith in Christ. Jesus is making the point, “look this Covenant of Promise was given and fulfilled in Me! Abraham, your alleged father believed this!” with the implication that they should believe it as well.