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Israel's Programs

We are studying eschatology and in particular Israel and she progress so far as the Scriptures outline her role and destiny in history. It's very important to recognize the distinctions between Israel and the Church. And we have noted three or four already. One of these is that the nation Israel is a nation, it has a government, it has political rulers, it has borders, it has land, and all these are aspects of a nation. You don't have that in the Church, the Church is composed of people from all nations, red, and yellow, black and white, and while it has leadership it's not political, it doesn't have geographical boundaries, it's an organism of people from every tribe, tongue and nation that believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Second, Israel's program is built on calendar time; there are specific time markers in Israel's history. The most famous time marker is Daniel 9:24-27 where the angel Gabriel explains to Daniel that the nation has been assigned seventy sevens of time in Exile before her final Restoration. That's 490 years. That's a very famous and far reaching prophecy that shows Israel is calendar based. Another far reaching prophecy that is very specific is the millennium. Millennium just means "a thousand years." So here's a calendar idea again. And who are the primary people in the thousand years? It's Israel again. The thousand years is Israel's kingdom. So when you see that reference in Rev 20, seven times we are notified that there will be one thousand years, then who should we be thinking of? Israel. Calendar time, calendar time, calendar time. That's why anytime you see someone saying the millennium is now, usually they spiritualize it, it's not a literal thousand years it's just a long period of time, but there have been those who said the thousand years are literal. For example, Martin Luther, Luther was in a war against the Roman Catholic Church. He saw the Pope as the Antichrist so his interpretation was that the thousand years began with the first Pope, Pope Gregory around

AD600. And if you add one thousand years to AD600 you come to AD1600. Luther lived around the early 1500's, so he saw the millennium as almost over. But the point is what? You've got the Church on calendar time and the Church is not on calendar time. At most the church is people based. That is, we know God has a plan for the church. We know God has certain people destined to be part of the body of Christ, and He calls them out one by one. As He does that the church gets one step closer to completion. But there's no one thousand year type prophecies for the church. There's a clear difference there.

Third, the nation Israel had her enemies and the Church has her enemies. And they are not the same enemies. Where did you ever see the Church called to take up arms and go destroy the Russians or the Chinese or the Saudi Arabians? Yet there have been Christians that did that type of thing. In the Crusades they did that type of thing. Why did they do that? Because they envisioned themselves as OT Israel. They had the Church replacing Israel. So you can't say these distinctions are unimportant. Try telling the Jews that suffered and were killed by the Crusaders in the 1100's that replacement theology was unimportant. Those people died at the hands of people who held that theology. The Church's enemies are not earthly; they're heavenly enemies. Paul couldn't be clearer; we war not against flesh and blood but against princes and principalities of darkness in the heavenlies. Alright, so that's a clear difference and you'll see that each difference has major ramifications, they're not minor things. When these two theologies work out people's lives are affected in radical ways.

Fourth was last week where we picked up on the covenants of Israel and we went through the Abrahamic Covenant which is showing God is sovereign because it's a guarantee that God will fulfill that covenant to the nation Israel. That covenant marks out the destiny of Israel and it will not be thwarted. But also we found the Mosaic Covenant and this shows man's responsibility because that covenant, which we looked at extensively in Lev 26 marks out blessing and cursing - blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. How you get those two covenants together gives you a model of God's sovereignty. How, if God's blessing is conditioned on obedience of the nation will the nation ever reach certain final blessing? I mean, they haven't done too well so far! How then can the blessing be guaranteed but also

conditioned on human obedience? Because obviously God is going to work in their lives so as to make them obedient.

And we traced Israel's progress toward that destiny in four stages. The Origin of the nation, that's the Abrahamic Covenant, the nation is defined by the Covenant and her survival as a nation is guaranteed because of that covenant. No one can ever destroy the Jewish people. Years ago there was a little pamphlet written by Arnold Fruchtenbaum entitled, *How to Destroy the Jews*, which is an intriguing title because Arnold's a Jew. In that pamphlet he points out that Satan has always tried the same two approaches; genetic manipulation, destroy the seed, and military attack, wipe them off the map. Neither approach has ever been successful. In his little book Arnold points out the way to destroy Israel is to send up nuclear warheads to every star, every planet and demolish them. You think why would he say something like that? Because in Jeremiah the Lord says, as long as the stars remain so will My people Israel. So then the only way to destroy the Jews is to destroy all the stars in the universe. So that gives you an idea of the security of Jew's place in history. The Jew can never be destroyed. That's the promise of God; they are the elect nation of God.

We went through Lev 26 and said that because they are the elect nation of God there is Discipline and Exile. God promised blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. They rebelled and God disciplined. Discipline is a corollary truth to election, the non-elect are never disciplined, only the elect. Lev 26:14-39 traces the discipline of the elect nation. The discipline was in the realm of economics, it was in the public health arena, it was psychological, it was security; all things that relate to peaceful living in your homeland and God destroyed it. And God outlined an increase in the intensity of the discipline for continued rebellion. It was all laid out centuries in advance. They knew what to do and they didn't do it so the discipline should have been no surprise. The prophets, Amos, Micah, Hosea, they, like prosecuting attorneys brought up charges for violating the Law. You, nation, are having economic hardship because you are violating the law and all you have to do is repent Israel and you can get out of the discipline and start enjoying the blessing. But they rebelled and rebelled and rebelled and so God sent them the ultimate discipline, Exile among the nations. And she remains in Exile today. The purpose of the exile is to get the nation ready for her future destiny

Third, we talked briefly about the judgment of nations. Why judgment of nations? Here's why. Who were the guys that God historically used to discipline Israel? Other nations, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, those are all the nations that God used to bring discipline upon His nation. Now are those nations that attacked Israel going to get away with it? In other words, are they not going to suffer any consequences for that? Of course they will. Gen 12:3, I will curse those who curse you. So they tried to destroy Israel but finally God is going to destroy them. How? Through great judgment. That's why in the prophets you'll read prophecies concerning Babylon, Egypt, Ammon, Moab, all the nations that have tried to destroy Israel are eventually destroyed.

Fourth, we said finally there is going to be blessing for Israel in the Land. That blessing is guaranteed in the Abrahamic Covenant but we said it requires obedience under the Mosaic Covenant. How does this work out? What's the interplay here? The logic is that if the nation Israel can't get blessed unless they are obedient and yet God promises final blessing then it's got to be God who brings about the obedience. And that's the kingdom, that's the millennium we speak of so often.

Today we want to go over to another OT passage, Deut 30. I want to show you these four elements are not just in one place, they're all over the place. And Deut 30 is one of those places. This again is the sovereignty of God over the whole thing. The whole thing involves human responsibility but in Deut 30 superintending all of that is God's sovereign plan for history. Verse 1, look carefully at this verse, let's take this verse apart, observe very carefully the structure here. "So it shall be, "future tense," "when all of these things have come upon you," what are "all of these things?" What have we been talking about in the book of Deuteronomy? It's the blessing and curse upon Israel. "when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you," there's the Exile. They are out among all the nations thinking about their history, thinking about the blessing and the curse. Verse 2, "and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons," what did we say was necessary for final blessing? Obedience, obedience must come first, then verse 3, "then the LORD your God will restore you from

captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.” That’s why we say that verse 3 is not being fulfilled with the modern state of Israel because they’re not in obedience to the Lord; they’re coming to Israel because there’s nowhere else to go. So the modern state of Israel with an ever increasing population is stage setting for the fulfillment of prophecy, but it’s not the fulfillment of prophecy. There’s a difference between setting the stage and fulfilling the prophecy. One presupposes the other but they’re not the same. However it does show you that there is a historical sequence to things, historical necessities. For example, if you read in prophecy that there’s a temple and the antichrist will go in that temple and commit the abomination of desolation, then obviously there has to be a physical temple and for there to be a temple there the Jews have to control the temple mount, which means they have to control the eastern half of Jerusalem. And so while all these preconditions aren’t the subject of prophecy, they are necessary to set the stage for prophecy. In the same way Jews returning to the land today is setting the stage for the future, but it’s really not the final gathering in faith because the verse 3 gathering is occurring when the nation is in obedience. “Then” verse 3, “the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples,” the reason verse 3 is important is critical is if you hold your place and turn to Matt 24.

When you come across a passage like this in the NT, here Jesus is prophesying of the future. In Matt 24 if you let your eyes skim down through the verses you can see this is all prophecy of the future tribulation. The question is who is Jesus talking about in this context? The Church or Israel? It’s a critical question to understand Matt 24, particularly if you look at verse 31 because in verse 31 it says, when the Son of Man comes back “He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” A lot of people try to make that verse the rapture of the Church and they say, see, Jesus is coming back after the tribulation to rapture His Church. And they relate that to what Paul was saying about the rapture in Thessalonians. What’s wrong with that? Think about it. Has the Church even come into existence when Jesus is talking about this in Matt 24? The Church hasn’t even come into existence yet. It doesn’t come into existence until Pentecost so He can’t be talking to the Church because the Church doesn’t exist. What He is talking

about is Israel, everything in chapter 23 and 24 is about Israel and so His gathering of the elect from the four winds is the gathering of Israel. And we'd point out there's no resurrection in verse 31 like there is in 1 Thess 4. This is a gathering of people who are alive and who will go into the kingdom in mortal bodies. That's all Jesus is saying. And the background passage He's drawing from, the prophetic framework is Deut 30. That's why it's important to build your eschatology the way we're building it, starting with these OT passages and working out from them. That way when you come to the NT the passages fit in a prior established framework.

Back to Deut 30, this is a marvelous sketch of the prophetic destiny of the nation Israel. He says, verse 4, "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back." How He's going to do this we don't know but apparently somehow supernaturally this is going to happen, whether He has angels shuttling them or what, something is going on because Jesus says He will send forth His angels and they will gather them. Verse 5, "The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers." If you are arguing with someone about whether the Jews own the land or not, what land do you think God is going to bring them back to? What does it say? It defines the real estate boundaries because it says "the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed," do we know the boundaries of what their fathers possessed? Absolutely, the Bible gives all the boundaries. So we know that the land is Israel's. We don't know how the Lord is going to work all this out but the land belongs to the Jews. Why, because they're better than everybody else? Not at all, but because God said so. It's God's plan.

Verse 6, here are the spiritual things. It's not just physical, it's also spiritual because remember we said the blessing won't come unless there is a regenerate heart. "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live." That's the aim of sanctification right there, to love the Lord, to live in loyalty to Him. Verse 7 and watch, because as the Lord is doing this for Israel He's doing something else to all the other nations. "The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you." So along

with God's restoration and blessing of Israel there's a judgment on Israel's enemies. The enemies have to be removed if there's ever going to be peace for Israel. And those two things happen in conjunction with one another.

You have verse 6, a spiritual rebirth in Israel followed by their physical deliverance from their enemies. That's why I've said over and over that the key to world peace is the Jew. The world thinks it's the destruction of the Jew that is the key to world peace but the Bible says the salvation of the Jew is the key. What did Jesus say in Matt 23:39, the context right there before Matt 24 which we just looked at? O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I wanted to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks but you were not willing...you will not see Me again until you say," that is, you Israel say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." I'm not coming back Israel until you welcome Me back, it doesn't have anything to do with the Church, we can say that all day long and He's not going to come back. The Jews have to say that. So they are going to have to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and they are going to have to call on Him to return. All that has to happen for you to get to vv 6-7. Verse 9, "Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand," there's the blessings, those are the blessings that come out of this, "in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers."

That's Deut 30 and you see that's the same structure of Israel's progress as Lev 26, it's the same structure that is repeated by prophet after prophet after prophet; it always concludes with the blessing of Israel in the land.

Now we go to Deut 32 and we're going to spend time on this passage because it has a structure to it that underlies the OT prophets and how they ministered the word of God. This structure was informally known for centuries by Bible scholars, but in the 19th and 20th century there was a group of OT scholars, mostly out of Germany, that started a kind of biblical criticism called "form criticism." What it's interested in is the various literary forms used in the Bible; you know poetry, essay, narrative, that kind of thing. A lot of what they came out with is pure junk. They deconstructed the Bible, but out of it biblical scholars began to realize there was a certain structure to the text and Deut 32 is one of those chapters that figures very centrally in this awareness of structure, of how something is written.

We call Deut 32 a lawsuit format. Scholars call it the *rib*, which means a lawsuit or a case. Let me give you the big idea and then we'll see how it's illustrated. You can't have a lawsuit unless you have law because a lawsuit presupposes a standard by which to judge in favor of one party against another. So here's the deal - God made a treaty with the nation Israel. What's the treaty? The Mosaic Treaty. Those are the laws or standard by which the nation was to live. Now when the nation violated that treaty God would bring a lawsuit against them. How did He do that? Through the prophets. The prophets are God's prosecuting attorneys and they're coming against the nation on behalf of God.

And they would go back and cite the violations of the Mosaic treaty and warn them of the cursings that were going to come. So their goal was to convict the nation of sin. The bottom line was the nation had to be convinced they had violated the treaty and that the only way to avoid the discipline was to repent, get right with God. That's basically the big picture of these *rib* proceedings and so now let's go in and I'll show you the structure of this and then we're going to some of these prosecuting attorneys and you'll see that they are coming back to Deut 32, they are consciously imposing this lawsuit format against the nation.

Deut. 32:1, "Give ear, oh, heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb." Clearly this is not narrative, this is a poetic structure. Verse 3, "For I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God!" It's Moses speaking this. But in verse 1 we have a little interpretation problem. Look carefully at verse 1 and notice to whom Moses is speaking. Now because this is poetry it's easy to kiss this off as just kind of poetic idiom, well, that's just the flowery language of the poet. Well, Moses could do flowery language, but there's more seriousness to this than just poetry. He's calling something to witness. He's saying to the heavens and to the earth, we want you to act as witnesses. Probably what he's talking about is there are angelic observers to this process, and they're acting as witnesses to the behavior of the nation Israel. Moses starts this, he says, "Give ear, oh, heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth." So Moses is now addressing the angelic observers of history and it's an amazing moment, a human addressing angelic witnesses.

And now he gives them what is called the Song of Moses, it's like a national anthem except its got predictions of future history... our national anthem has just past history, but Israel's national anthem gives future as well as past history. He goes on, notice the difference between verse 4 and 5. What do you notice about the difference? In verse 4 who is he talking about? The Lord, "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He." So right up front in the national anthem we have the nature of God. Verse 5, "They" talking about the people, "They have acted corruptly toward Him, they are not His children, because of their defect; but are a perverse and crooked generation." So there you have the corrupt nature of man. So it's God vs man. God against man in the lawsuit. God is perfect, man is a dirty rotten sinner. Verse 6, "Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you." He's going back to their history, why have you done this to the One who did so much for you? And he recounts their history, remember, remember, remember. Verse 8 is one of the most interesting verses in the Bible, he's talking about the origin of the nations after the Flood and look what he says, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel." That's the sons of Jacob and how many were there that went down into Egypt? Seventy. And if you go back to Gen 10 the Table of Nations and you trace the list of nations guess how many nations are listed in that table. Seventy. Why? Critics of the Bible try to write this off because they're so brilliant. No, this is telling us that in God's knowledge of how many would go down to Egypt, seventy, from that event future to this prior event He looked at that number seventy down there and decided back here I'll set the number of nations at that number of seventy to correspond.

In other words, here's Moses, 1400's BC, he's writing the Book of Deuteronomy, and he comes to Deuteronomy 32:8 and he says do you know why there are seventy basic nations? Do you know why after the Flood God divided the human race into seventy nations? Because He was going to send seventy sons of Israel down to Egypt five hundred years later. Do you see how history is all interconnected? If we could get outside of history and see all of these connections from a bird's eye view we'd probably be stunned. Right here we get a peak at one of these connections but I bet there are millions of these

connections and nobody but God has ever seen them. And God slips one in through Moses, hey, the number of nations was determined by the number of people that went down to Egypt. That's not by chance, that's by design. So in this note a whole window into history is opened up to realize, hey, history is not just marbles, there are all sorts of intimate connections in history and if we just had eyes to see we'd be amazed at every turn. But what do we do with history? Poo-poo it, it's boring. It's not boring when you see these things are going on all around you. Verse 9, "For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance," and it goes on and on.

Verse 13, here's a depiction of Israel rising to prosperity, notice the spirituality of it, verse 12, "The LORD alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him. 13He made him ride on the high places of the earth, And he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock." Look at the prosperity. When does this look forward to in Israel's history? The rise and reign of King David, the Golden Era of Solomon. All that production and prosperity because of what? Because they obeyed the Lord.

But verse 15, here begins the discipline and exile. "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked— You are grown fat, thick, and sleek— Then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation. 16They made Him jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger." So here we go, there's the spiritual decline. Drop all the way down to verse 26, "I said, I will cleave them in pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men." Watch verses 26-27; they are a poetic revelation of the anger of God at the sin of His people. Look at this, verse 26, God is expressing Himself. He says I would have cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from among men, verse 27, "Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy, lest their adversaries should misjudge, lest they should say, 'our hand is triumphant, and the LORD has not done all this.'" Verse 27 shows you that God is concerned with His reputation and what I mean by that is His glory. People get all weird about the glory of God. There's nothing weird about it. God is concerned with His reputation; He wants to make His name known through all the earth. And that means when He says I am going to do something then He is going to do it. And he wants the credit for that and He's not going to share the credit with anybody else. So here He's angry with Israel. He's so angry He wants to destroy them but He says, lest Israel's

enemies should misjudge and dismiss YHWH as if He hadn't done all this, God says, wait a minute, My glory is at stake here, I judged Israel by you nations and I'm not going to share any of my glory with you.

Verse 28, "For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. 29Would that they were wise, that they understood this, That they would discern their future." Pointing out that God would send them prophets but they wouldn't listen to them, and He's upset about it, but He's not going to destroy them.

Verse 34 and here He comes to the nations, "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them. 36For the LORD will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants; when He sees that their strength is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free. 37And He will say, 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? 38Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their libation....'" By this time the nation is out of idolatry, they're not worshipping idols anymore. Verse 39, "See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. 40Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, as I live forever. 41If I sharpen My flashing sword, and my hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, and I will repay those who hate Me. 42I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired leaders of the enemy. 43Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land and His people." There's the glorious end of history when God restores Israel to the place of blessing and it's all captured in their national anthem. It's right here and they've lived 75% of their anthem. 75% of it is already fulfilled. So what do you think is going to happen to the remaining 25%?

Now I told you that this is more than a prophecy, it's the basis of the prophets bringing lawsuits against the nation for their sins. So now I'm going to take you to two or three OT prophecies that show this. First turn to Isaiah 1, one of the big prophets, wrote more information than the twelve Minor Prophets combined, a powerful prophet in his day. And I said, watch for the

rib proceedings. This lawsuit is embedded in the thought forms of Isaiah. Verse 2, who does the prophet Isaiah call upon? Exactly the same one that Moses called upon. See, this wasn't just poetic idiom back in Deut 32 because when Isaiah goes to bring lawsuit against the nation he cites it, Isaiah 1:2, "Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; for the LORD speak: Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted against Me. 3An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand. 4Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly!"

Then in verse 7 Isaiah begins to describe the discipline that's come upon them, all the way down to verse 23. He says in verse 7, "Your land is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire, Your fields—strangers are devouring them in your presence; It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers. Do you remember last week, Lev 26 warned against all those things? Those disciplines are directly out of Lev 26. It's no surprise. Verse 16, the solution to their problems, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, 17Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow." Let's get with the program here. Verse 18 is that famous verse that is so misquoted in Christian circles, it's not about the autonomous use of human reason, it's about the Scriptural use of human reason. "Come now, and let us reason together," what basis do you think the Lord is saying let's reason on? On the basis of Scripture. Why must you insist on reasoning only on the basis of Scripture? In order to arrive at a meaningful conviction. The prophet is saying, come, let's think about this together, here's the word of God, it says God's going to discipline you, now look at history, your history is evidence that God is disciplining you, so make a change here, stop doing the same thing over and over because it's not getting you anywhere. And if they do, verse 26. "Then I will restore your judges as at first, And your counselors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city." Zion will be restored.

What I'm trying to show you here is that there's a structure in the OT. These prophets weren't just yelling at people, they were consciously doing something. They were appealing to the witnesses, the heavens and the earth that saw all this sin going on. And then they appealed to the cursing section of the Sinaitic Covenant; if you look at these cursings they all fit Lev 26;

nothing new here. Then they would come to the end and they would say there's hope because God is going to redeem this nation. God never throws Israel away. You want to watch that because there are Christian theologians by the carload that are saying God's done with Israel. God is not done with Israel. Do you see any sign that God's done with Israel here in these texts? Not at all!

We'd go on but let's stop here, there are other prophets that invoke this same formula reaching back to Deut 32. So now we have Lev 26, Deut 28 is parallel to Lev 26, Deut 30 and Deut 32, four passages that mark out the historical progress of Israel toward its destiny and as we go forward and get into the Church you'll see it's not the same destiny. So next week we'll finish up with Israel so we can get into the Church.

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