



South Florida Avenue CHURCH OF CHRIST MESSENGER



1807 S. Florida Ave.,
Lakeland, FL 33803

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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Israel's Place in God's Plan Saved Like the Gentiles (Part 2)

Brian R. Kenyon

The sovereign God chose Israel to be His people, not because they were “more in number,” for they were “the least of all peoples,” but because He loved them and was determined to keep the oath He made to Abraham (Deut. 7:7-8). Israel’s remaining God’s special people was conditioned upon their keeping His commandments (Deut. 28:1-68). They utterly failed and were taken into captivity (2 Kgs. 18:9-12; 25:8-12, 21). Their failure, however, opened the way of salvation to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:1-16). In this final article of this series about Israel’s place in God’s plan, consideration will be given to the engrafting of both Jews and Gentiles into God’s wonderful way of salvation. Whether Jew or Gentile, all are saved only through obedience to the gospel (Rom. 1:16)!

Salvation Compared to Engrafting

Engrafting refers to the process, even known in ancient times, where the cut off branch of one tree is carefully connected to a prepared spot on another, similar tree. The newly grafted branch then becomes part of the other tree. Paul, by Holy Spirit inspiration, compared the rebellious Jews to branches that were cut off from an olive tree, while obedient Gentiles, formerly from a “wild olive tree,” were branches that were grafted into the same tree where the Jews had been removed. As such, they “became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:17). The Gentiles, however, had no room to boast against the other branches. They were also there by the gracious, sovereign choice of God (cf. Rom. 9:6-33). The newly grafted in branches are *not* what sustains the root of the olive tree, but rather *the root* sustains all the branches (cf. Isa. 11:10; 53:10; Jn. 15:; Rev. 5:5; 22:16).

The Jewish “branches” were broken off because of “unbelief,” but the Gentiles stood as being grafted by faith (cf. Rom. 10:20). However, they must not be arrogant about this but simply give God the glory and honor due Him (Rom. 11:19-20 cf. 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17). Just as surely as God did not spare the Jews (“natural branches”), He will not spare the Gentiles if they become haughty (Rom. 11:21 cf. Pr. 16:18). Paul called upon them to “consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom. 11:22). The goodness of God even made provision for the rebellious Jews, “if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom. 11:22). Paul made the point from the more difficult to the simpler: if God could engraft wild olive tree branches, He can certainly engraft the “cultivated olive tree” branches back into the tree from which they were removed (Rom.

11:23-24). Again, this could only happen if they were to repent and “continue in His goodness” (cf. Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; Rom. 11:22).

The Same Offer of Salvation Is Available to All

Israel’s fall brought the opportunity for salvation to the Gentile. Paul revealed this truth as a “mystery,” which refers to truth that was once concealed but has now been revealed through God-breathed Scripture (cf. Eph. 3:1-7). “Blindness in part” showed that Jewish disobedience was not universal (Rom. 11:25), for there remained a “remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). This was so “the fullness of the Gentiles” could have the opportunity of salvation during the entire Christian age (cf. Acts 2:16-21; 22:16; Rom. 10:13; Titus 3:4-7). In this Christian age, sometimes called the “last days” (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; 2 Pet. 3:3), all people, whether Jew or Gentile, will be saved in the same way—through obedience to the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:17)! The word “so,” in “so all Israel will be saved,” is not a declaration that all Israel will be unconditionally saved! If that were the case, then why would Paul declare, “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1)? Why would Paul “wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:1)? Rather, the word translated “so” (from *houtos*, οὗτως) is an adverb, showing “in this way all Israel will be saved” (ESV). The word is not a conclusion indicator, declaring all Israel will be universally saved. What Paul taught was that anyone in Israel who wanted to be saved would have to be saved like everyone else under the new covenant—through the gospel (Rom. 11:26-27). The passage Paul quoted was Isaiah 59:20-21). That “Deliverer” was Christ, who saved us from sin (cf. Lk. 19:10; Heb. 2:14), and that “covenant” was the new testament that took effect upon the death of Jesus on the cross (Heb. 9:14-17 cf. Jer. 31:31-34)!

God’s eternal purpose provided Israel a means to be saved despite their constant rejection of Him. Concerning the gospel, the Jews of Paul’s day were enemies (cf. Phil. 3:18), but concerning God’s election, they are still the objects of God’s love and in keeping with His promise to Abraham and the patriarchs (Rom. 11:28). There was nothing the Jews (or anyone else) could do to change that, for “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). Because God is always true to His nature, He could not change about His choice of Abraham’s seed (cf. 2 Tim. 2:13). As God’s mercy worked on the Gentiles, it could again work on the Jews: “For God has committed them all [Jew and Gentile] to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all” (Rom. 11:30-32).

Conclusion

Throughout creation’s history, especially from the time of God’s promise to Abraham, His love, foreknowledge, election, and providence, coupled with human free-will, has been on amazing display (cf. Gal. 4:4)! Today’s “Israel” has no special status in God’s plan. Israel as a nation fulfilled its role in God’s plan (cf. Gal. 3:24-25). Old Testament Israel does not exist today, but salvation is available to everyone through the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14 cf. Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). Members of Christ’s body, the church (Col. 1:18) are the special people of God today, for “as many as walk according to this rule [i.e., the gospel], peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Paul closed this insightful section with a great doxology—“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33-36).

Why Such Hate for Today’s “Israel”?

While today’s “Israel” is not God’s special people, that is no reason to hate that nation’s citizens (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). I’m surprised that church members would post, “I stand with Palestine.” Does that include Hamas? Why would anyone want to stand with people who intentionally and maliciously take innocent human life? Have we forgotten nations are God-authorized to defend themselves (Rom. 13:1-6). Let us neither stand for Palestine nor Israel, but for Christ and the power and precepts of His gospel (Rom. 1:16-17)! ♥ *Brian*

Upcoming Events

December

9 — SFA Holiday Party (in fellowship room?)

16 — Youth group holiday caroling & party

January

5 — Fellowship bonfire @ Brian & Jagie’s

15-18 — FSOP Lectureship

February

23-25 — YES Weekend (Valdosta)

PRAYER LIST

Current: Bobby and Linda Simpson both have Covid, Ron Ford is in the hospital with A fib (no visitors at this time please), Chip Bolding has an infection in his hip and is in the hospital,

Continual: Debbie Bush (struggles); Antoine & Marcella Swain (health); Bill & Carlene Long (health & strength); Ron Ford (health); Bobby Simpson (health); Annett Phillip (health); Janie Wise (health); Jim Turner (health); Margaret Coone (health); Melissa Craft (health); Kathy Nester (health); Ronnie Lynn is recovering from neck surgery.

Shut-ins: Joyce Burbage, Carol Eason, Kenny & Reba French and Barbara Jones

Also continue to pray for those on the extended family and friends list!

Rachel Zapata has asked for prayers for forgiveness and to be right with the Lord. Let's all keep our sister in our prayers!

As John confirmed, "He [Jesus] Must Increase, But I Must Decrease" We were saddened to hear Vince announcing he and his family will be leaving SFA in February to work with the church in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. We appreciate what Vince has done (and continues to do) for the Lord and SFA since 2019, when he began working full-time with SFA. Let us pray for the Daugherty family and the churches of Christ affected.

Ladies: Don't forget that there are classes for ladies each week! On Wednesday there is a class at 10:00 am that meets in the library and on Tuesday evening at 7:00 pm there is a class that meets in the library as well. Please consider attending one of these classes, as they are a great opportunity to learn more about God's word and to get to know our Christian sisters better.

Join Us for Bible Classes!

Cradle Roll (behind tech booth) Upper Elementary (Room 17)

Sundays: Nikki (Bible basics) Sundays: Tonya A(EHT)
Wednesdays: Jagie (Bible basics) Wednesdays: Becky S(EHT)

2-3 Year-Old (Room 18) Teenage (Room 19)

Sundays: Annd Clair Ross (EHT) Sundays: Terrance D JR. (EHT)
Wednesdays: Rene' Bingle(EHT) Wednesdays: Vince (Romans)

Lower Elementary (Room 7) Adult (Auditorium)

Sundays: Olivia Smith(EHT) Sundays: SFA men (Divided Kingdom)
Wednesdays: Michelle P(EHT) Wednesday: Brian (Revelation)

First Principles Class (Fellowship Room, any aged adults)

Wednesdays: Rick

Scheduled to Serve in December	
Designated Elder	Brian Kenyon
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	
Announcements	Bobby Sheumaker
Song Leader / Prayer	Kyle Faneuf
Devotional / Invitation	Woody K
Closing Prayer	Steve Tydings
Sunday, December 10, 2023	
10:30 am Sermon	Rick Kenyon
Wait on the Lord (Isaiah 40:28-31)	
6:00 pm Sermon	Brian Kenyon
In the World but Not of the World (John 17:14-16)	
Those to Serve 10:30 am	
Greeters	Brenda/Darlene
Song/Pray before class	Tucker Sweeney
Announcements (both)	Bobby Sheumaker
Song Leader (both)	Stacey Paulin
Prayer / Bible reading	Tyler Anderson
Lord's Table (both)	Andre Medley
Closing Prayer	Jeff Bingle
Open/Close Building	Jason Hendrix
Attendance Cards	Cam'ron/Caelen
Sound Booth (both)	Jason Hendrix
Those to Serve 6:00 pm	
Greeters	Nona/ Janis
Announcements	Bobby Sheumaker
Song Leader	Stacey Paulin
Prayer / Bible reading	Mike Van Allen
Closing Prayer	Roberson L.
Wednesday, December 13, 2023	
Announcements	Brian Kenyon
Song Leader / Prayer	David Williams
Devotional / Invitation	Terrance Dindy
Closing Prayer	Jimmy Sweeney
How We Are Giving	
November 19	\$7,065.00
November 26	\$4,518.25
December 3	\$10,600.58
Contribution Average	\$7,100.93
Weekly Budget	\$7,410.00

If you cannot serve as scheduled, please notify Stacey or the office. Even if you arrange your replacement, please notify Stacey or the office. Thanks!

Joy To The World

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let Earth receive her King.”
 These are the first couple lines from a popular Christmas carol. More than 2,000 years ago, a king was born to save mankind from their sins. What a joyous time that was! When Christ was born, an angel appeared to shepherds in Luke 2:8-11, “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

A more joyous occasion is observed every first day of the week/ Sunday when Christians take the Lord’s supper. Christ was crucified for the sins of the world and then resurrected the first day of the week. Once again, an angel who makes the announcement! Matthew 28:5-6a “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that He is risen from the dead.”

HOLIDAY PARTY- DECEMBER 9 AT 5:30 PM

Wear your most festive holiday attire, and bring a white elephant gift for a gift exchange!

There is a sign up sheet on the office door for the food. Come join the fun!

*****Location To Be Determined*****

Christian Apologetics

I remember boys knowing all the names of the popular dinosaurs before they were making full sentences. Why are kids so fascinated by dinosaurs? While the answer to that question may never be fully known, one thing we can know is that dinosaurs walked the earth with humans. From ancient cultures around the world we find artifacts and historical records of humans interacting with dinosaurs. The Bible even describes a couple in the book of Job. In the 40th and 41st chapters two animals are named, the Behemoth and Leviathan. Behemoth was a grass eater who was big and powerful; "his bones are like beams of bronze" and a tail "like a cedar" (40:17). No land animal living today would match the description. But, some dinosaurs had long tails like a cedar. Leviathan is described as great and terrifying. "any hope of overcoming him is false," and, one is overwhelmed at the sight of him (41:10). He is described as having a hard scaly outer coat and "terrible teeth all around" (v. 14-16). Later it says that no weapon that approaches him can avail. "On earth there is nothing like him" (v. 33). While the dinosaurs were great to behold, let us behold the Maker of the dinosaurs, and everything else in our universe.

"All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

John 1:3

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Return Service Requested

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

Hebrews 7:25



If you prefer to receive the bulletin via email, contact us.