

Am I a Dispensationalist?

By Matt Waymeyer

It is not uncommon for someone to ask me whether or not I am a dispensationalist. The question itself causes me to hesitate, for I've always been reluctant to use the term "dispensationalism" to summarize my theological convictions. And yet at the same time, broadly speaking, I *do* fall into the dispensational camp in my view of Israel and the church. For this reason, I thought it might be helpful—both for me and for those asking the question—to put into writing where I stand on this issue.

My reluctance to call myself a dispensationalist is due mainly to several beliefs often associated with the system. For example, dispensationalism is usually defined as a theological construct that divides biblical history into seven dispensations, which are said to be distinct ways that God relates to mankind at different times since the creation. I do not think in these terms, and such a system is not part of my approach to Scripture. In this sense, I am not a dispensationalist.

In addition, it is often said that dispensationalists do not believe in the relevance of the Old Testament—or even the teaching of Christ—for today's church. A few dispensationalists have posited two new covenants—one for Israel and one for the church. It is said that other dispensationalists have taught that the cross was Plan B in the economy of God; that Jews were saved by works in the Old Testament; that Israel is God's earthly people while the church is God's heavenly people; that Paul's gospel is not the same as Jesus' gospel; and that Israel will one day be saved apart from faith in Christ. Others are Arminian or antinomian, or both. Still others have become obsessed with identifying the antichrist, pinpointing the date of the Rapture, and connecting current events with Old Testament prophecy. None of these are part of the dispensationalism that I embrace, and if they are required to be a dispensationalist, I do not qualify.

So what *do* I believe? And why do I say that, broadly speaking, I fall into the dispensational camp? To begin, I reject what is known as "covenant theology." In my view, the church is *not* Israel, it is not the *continuation* of Israel, and it has not *replaced* Israel.¹ I believe that the spiritual entity known as the church began at Pentecost in Acts 2 and is distinct from the nation of Israel. I fail to see all the radical distinctions that many dispensationalists have made between the church and Israel, but I do see a distinction.²

To some, this alone makes me a dispensationalist, and perhaps it does. My dispensationalism, however, has more to do with what I believe about the future of Israel. Put simply, I believe that Israel has a future as a nation in the plan of God in which the Lord will fulfill the covenant promises He made to her in the Old Testament. That, in effect, is the essence of my dispensationalism. Again: *Israel has a future as a nation in the plan of God in which the Lord will fulfill the covenant promises He made to her in the Old Testament.* Let me explain what I mean.

In the book of Genesis, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised (a) to bless Abraham, (b) to make Abraham's name great, (c) to make him a great nation, (d) to grant to him and his descendants the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession,³ (e) and to bless the nations through him (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 15:7-21; 17:1-21). Although some aspects of this covenant have already seen fulfillment, I believe that the ultimate fulfillment of (d)—God's promise to give Israel the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession—is yet

future. This is evident to me, in part, because of the nature of the covenant the Lord made with Abraham.

A covenant is an agreement made between two parties. When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, He indicated that it was a *unilateral* covenant, not a *bilateral* covenant. In a bilateral covenant, both parties participate equally and are equally obligated to keep their side of the agreement, but a unilateral covenant is an agreement in which only one side obligates itself to the benefit of the other side. In the biblical account, the Lord instructed Abraham to bring to Him various animals which He cut in two, and He laid each half opposite the other (Gen 15:9-10). This was in keeping with the custom of the ancient Near East in which both parties of a *bilateral* covenant would ceremonially walk between the pieces, saying, in effect, "If I fail to keep my half of the agreement, may it happen to me what happened to these animals." God's covenant with Abraham, however, was *unilateral*, and so God alone passed between the animals (Gen 15:12-17). In doing so, He made it clear that He alone had obligated Himself to keep His promise. The covenant, in other words, was an irrevocable and eternal promise from God that He would be sure to fulfill.

Does this mean that the Lord placed no conditions whatsoever upon the sons of Israel? No, not at all. After delivering the nation from bondage in Egypt, the Lord established another covenant with Israel—this one through Moses—in which He gave to the nation the various commands recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. This covenant—usually referred to as "the Mosaic Covenant," "the Mosaic Law," or simply "the Law"—would serve a different function than the covenant with Abraham, but the two are not unrelated.

The purpose of the Mosaic Covenant in the Old Testament was to serve as the means by which the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant would be administered.⁴ If Israel obeyed the Mosaic Law, she would experience Abrahamic blessing (Lev 26:1-13; Deut 28:1-14), but if Israel disobeyed the Law, she would experience curses (Lev 26:14-46; Deut 28:15-68). With regard to the promised land, if Israel was not faithful to keep the Mosaic Covenant, she would be dispersed from the land (Lev 26:32-33; Deut 28:63-64), but if she was faithful to the Mosaic Covenant, her days in the land would be blessed and prolonged (Lev 26:5-6; Deut 28:8).

In this way, God's promise that the nation would possess the land (the Abrahamic Covenant) was certain and eternal, but the occupation of the land and enjoyment of the blessings by any given generation of Jews was conditioned upon obedience to the Law (the Mosaic Covenant).⁵ Put another way, adherence to the Mosaic Covenant would enable a given generation of Israel to experience the blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant, but unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant would postpone the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises until a later time and a later generation.

This leads to a very critical passage in my understanding of Israel and God's plan for her future—Deuteronomy 30:1-10. Moses and the people of Israel are on the plains of Moab, on the verge of taking the land the Lord promised her. He has just warned Israel that if she is not faithful to keep the Mosaic Law, she will be torn from the land she is about to enter and she will be scattered among the nations (Deut 28:63-64). Then, in Deuteronomy 30—prior even to her entrance of the land—the Lord makes it clear that this will indeed happen: Israel *will* be unfaithful to the Mosaic Covenant and will, as a result, be dispersed from the land and scattered among the nations (Deut 30:1; see Deut 31:14-22 and Josh 23:16).

This judgment, however, is not the final word, for in the verses that follow the Lord declares that some time after Israel is dispersed, He will grant to her repentance and a circumcised heart, and she will be restored to the land and experience the blessing originally promised

to her in the Abrahamic Covenant (Deut 30:2-10). Why is this important? Because it sets the stage for God's plan for the nation—Israel will be dispersed from the land, but one day she will be restored to it. And that day is yet future.

To explain why I believe this restoration of Israel to the land is yet future, it might be helpful for me to walk briefly through the remainder of Israel's history as recorded in the Old Testament. In the book of Joshua, immediately following the prophecy of Deuteronomy 30, Joshua leads the people into the land. After his death, however, a generation of Israelites arises that does not know the Lord, and the nation falls into blatant idolatry (Judg 2). This leads to a cycle in the book of Judges in which the Lord raises up twelve judges—one after another—to deliver Israel from the oppression of other nations, only to have Israel return to her idolatry each time (Judg 3-16). After the period of judges, Israel demands to be governed by a king (1 Sam 8), and Saul is appointed to the throne. He reigns for forty years (1 Sam 9-31) and is followed by David, who also reigns for forty years (2 Sam 1-24).

During this reign, the Lord makes a covenant with David that is reminiscent of His covenant with Abraham. Although the two covenants are distinct from one another, the Davidic Covenant looks much like an expansion of the promises the Lord made to Abraham.⁶ In His covenant with David, Yahweh promises (a) to make David's name great, (b) to plant Israel in the land of Canaan and preserve her there in peace and security, (c) to preserve the line of David's descendants, and (d) to establish one of David's descendants as king over His kingdom forever (2 Sam 7:8-16; 1 Chron 17:7-15). Once again we see the promise that the nation of Israel will be given the land of Canaan to enjoy in peace and security. At this point in Israel's history, however—in light of Deuteronomy 30—I am still waiting for her unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant to result in dispersion from the land (which will eventually be followed by her restoration to the land). This dispersion will come soon enough.

After the reign of David, Solomon assumes the throne, and he too reigns for forty years (1 Kings 1-11). At the end of his reign, however, the nation divides into the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom (1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings 1-25). During the divided monarchy, a series of nineteen kings reigns in the Northern Kingdom, and a series of twenty kings reigns in the Southern Kingdom. Most of them are wicked. Idolatry runs rampant among the Jews both North and South. In response, the Lord sends various prophets to warn the nation to repent lest she come under the judgment of God. She refuses and as a result, the Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6), and the Southern Kingdom falls to Babylon in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1-21; Jer 39:1-10) This is exactly what the Lord predicted back in Deuteronomy 30:1 (and Deut 31:14-22)—Israel has broken the Mosaic Covenant, and as a result she is dispersed from the promised land.

This, however, is not the end of the story. During the period of time leading up to and following the fall of Israel, the Lord spoke through the prophets of a "New Covenant" that He would one day establish with His chosen people. In the New Covenant, Yahweh promised to the nation of Israel (a) the spiritual transformation of a new heart, (b) the forgiveness of their sins, (c) the gathering of the people to the divinely renewed and prosperous land of Canaan, and (d) the establishment of a relationship in which He will be their God and they will be His people (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-38).

In other words, just as the Lord indicated back in Deuteronomy 30, the divine judgment upon Israel for her apostasy and unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant will some day give way to a restoration of the nation in fulfillment of the covenants of promise—the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.⁷ In addition to these formal covenants, as I read the Old Testament prophets, I find that they contain numerous

predictions of a final restoration of nation Israel.⁸ And these, I believe, are yet to be fulfilled.

Now here's where the rub comes. In the view of covenant theology, these promises of Israel's restoration find their fulfillment in the returns from exile in Ezra and Nehemiah, in the present salvation of the church, or in the eternal state, or in some combination of these three. On the other hand, covenant theology denies that these promises find their fulfillment in an eschatological salvation and restoration of the nation of Israel. This is where I differ from covenant theology and am more "dispensational" in my thinking.

In response to the claims of covenant theology, there are two primary reasons that I am expecting an eschatological salvation and restoration of the nation of Israel in fulfillment of the Old Testament covenants of promise. First, having considered the promises of restoration in their original Old Testament contexts, I am convinced that there is no way that these promises have already been fulfilled. They were not fulfilled in the returns to the land from exile under Zerubbabel (536 B.C.), Ezra (557 B.C.), or Nehemiah (445 B.C.),⁹ and they cannot be rightly understood as finding their fulfillment in the present salvation of the church and/or the eternal state.¹⁰ To put it simply, the Lord simply has not yet done what He has promised to do in these Old Testament passages, and for this reason I await the day when He will.¹¹

Second, I believe that the New Testament also teaches an eschatological restoration and salvation of the nation of Israel in fulfillment of God's covenant promises. At this point, I should note that I don't believe it to be necessary that promises be repeated in the New Testament for them to remain valid—if the Lord has made a promise in the Old Testament, and He has yet to fulfill that promise, one can expect that He will still do so regardless of whether or not it is repeated in the New Testament. In my reading, however, I find that the New Testament picture to be consistent with how I have interpreted the Old Testament.

The key passage in this regard is Romans 11. In this chapter, the Apostle Paul addresses the question of whether or not God has permanently rejected His chosen people, the nation Israel. Not only has she broken the Mosaic Covenant and therefore been dispersed among the nations, but now she has also rejected and killed the Messiah, God's very own Son. Is there any hope for her as a nation in the plan of God? Paul's answer in Romans 11 is yes.

According to Romans 11, Israel has indeed stumbled as a nation, but not so as to fall into irretrievable spiritual ruin (v. 11). Her present unbelief and hardening, Paul says, will one day be reversed when her "transgression" and "failure" give way to her "fulfillment" (v. 12), her "rejection" by God gives way to her "acceptance" by Him (v. 15), and she is grafted in again to the covenant blessings of God (vv. 23-24). The point of Romans 11, then, is that the present hardening of Israel is merely *partial* (vv. 1-10) and it is merely *temporary* (vv. 11-32). And when that hardening is removed at the end of the present age (v. 25), the nation of Israel will be saved (v. 26). Romans 11 very clearly predicts the eschatological salvation of the nation of Israel.¹²

The question remains, however, of whether the eschatological salvation of Israel in Romans 11:26 constitutes the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenants of promise. That it does can be seen in how Paul explains this salvation in the verses that follow. To support his assertion that all Israel will be saved, in verses 26b-27 the apostle cites the Old Testament promises found in Isaiah 59:20-21, Isaiah 27:9 (and possibly Jeremiah 31:31-34). In other words, the nation of Israel will be saved at the end of the present age because God will be faithful to fulfill the promises He made in the Old Testament. Lest his point remain unclear, Paul uses the next two verses—Romans 11:28-29—to describe Israel as simultaneously

enemies of God because of her rejection of the gospel and yet *beloved* by God because of His faithfulness to the covenant promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will one day remove the partial hardening and save the nation of Israel, Paul says, because His promises to the patriarchs of Israel are “irrevocable.” Furthermore, and quite notably, back in verse 27 Paul refers to this salvation—this forgiveness of the sins of Israel at the end of the present age—as the fulfillment of God’s “covenant.” This covenant is the New Covenant spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-38, and various other Old Testament passages.

At this point, then, the picture comes into focus. The New Covenant, in which the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant find their ultimate fulfillment, will be fulfilled when God saves the nation of Israel at the end of the present age. This eschatological salvation will include the fulfillment of the various elements of the covenant promises: the Lord will forgive the sins of Israel and give her a new heart; He will restore her to the Promised Land where she will dwell in peace and walk in obedience; and the Davidic King, Christ Himself, will reign over His kingdom, for He will be their God and they shall be His people. This, of course, brings me full circle to the definition of the dispensationalism that I embrace: *Israel has a future as a nation in the plan of God in which the Lord will fulfill the covenant promises He made to her in the Old Testament.*

For some, perhaps, this raises a question: If Israel is saved and restored to the land at the end of the present age, how does that leave any time for her to live in the land? The answer to that question is found in Revelation 20.¹³ At the end of Revelation 19, we see the Second Coming of Christ, which is then followed by the events described in chapter 20. Revelation 20:1-6 sets forth a thousand-year period during which Satan will be bound in the abyss (vv. 1-3) and Christ will reign over the earth (vv. 4-6). During this thousand-year period—often referred to as the millennial reign of Christ—Israel will dwell securely in the land and enjoy the covenant blessings promised her years ago as her King rules in justice and righteousness (Jer 23:5-8). When the thousand years are completed, Christ will bring final judgment to Satan and the nations (Rev 20:7-15), and this judgment will give way to the eternal state (Rev 21-22).

As Jesus said, the kingdom of God was taken away from Israel because of her unbelief and rejection of Messiah (Matt 21:43), and during the present age she does exist in a state of partial hardening (Rom 11:25). But one day, when that hardening is removed, she will turn to Christ and be saved (Rom 11:26), the kingdom will be restored to her (Acts 1:6-7), and she will enjoy the covenant blessings of a God who is faithful to keep His promises. And that is the essence of my dispensationalism.

¹ According to one covenant theologian, the church “has taken the place of Israel, and national Israel is nothing other than the empty shell from which the pearl has been removed and which has lost its function in the history of redemption.” Another asserts that “national Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the New Covenant.”

² In addition, I do not see exegetical support for covenant theology’s teaching on the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace.

³ This promise of the land is referred to throughout Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy—Genesis 12:1, 7; 13:15, 17; 15:7, 18; 17:8; 22:17; 24:7; 26:3-5; 28:13, 15; 35:12; 46:3-4; 48:4; 50:24; Exodus 3:8, 17; 6:6-9; 23:23-33; 34:24; Deuteronomy 1:8, 36; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:13; 8:1; 9:5; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 19:8; 26:3, 15; 28:11; 30:20; 31:7; and 34:4.

⁴ In my understanding, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant are all eternal covenants, the “covenants of promise” Paul refers to in Ephesians 2:12. In contrast, the Mosaic Covenant is neither eternal nor characterized by promise. Furthermore, the Mosaic Covenant—also known as “the *Old* Covenant”—would eventually be replaced by the *New* Covenant.

⁵ Kaiser, “The Promised Land,” 307.

⁶ Walt Kaiser refers to it as the “Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant” or the “Abrahamic-Davidic promise.”

⁷ In seeking to illustrate the unity of the covenants of promise—the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant—I like to describe them as three strands of the same rope. To be more precise, however, it seems to me that the Davidic Covenant is a further development of the Abrahamic Covenant, repeating and expanding some of its features, and that both covenants ultimately find their fulfillment in the New Covenant.

⁸ These include Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-16; 14:1-2; 27:1-13; 35:1, 10; 43:5-6; 49:8-13; 59:15b-21; 62:4-7; 66:10-20; Jeremiah 3:11-20; 12:14-17; 16:10-18; 23:1-8; 24:5-7; 30:1-3, 10-11; 31:2-14; 32:36-44; Ezekiel 11:14-20; 20:33-44; 28:25-26; 34:11-16, 23-31; 36:16-36; 37:1-28; 39:21-29; Hosea 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 14:4-7; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Obadiah 17, 21; Micah 4:6-7; 7:14-20; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 8:7-8; 10:6-12; and 14:11.

⁹ There are several reasons why I do not believe that the promises of Israel’s restoration were fulfilled in the returns to the land under Zerubbabel, Ezra, or Nehemiah. First, several of these restoration passages speak of a restoration in which the ten tribes of the north are reunited with the two tribes of the south (Isa 11:12; Jer 3:18; 23:5-8; 31:27; Ezek 37:15-23; Hosea 1:11; Zech. 10:6), and this did not happen under the three previous returns from exile (Kaiser, “Evidence from Jeremiah,” 105-07; *idem.*, “The Land of Israel,” 216; Jelinek, “The Dispersion and Restoration,” 242). In addition, many of the exiled Jews refused to return to the land or had to be persuaded to do so when the time came (Jelinek, “The Dispersion and Restoration,” 242)—a far cry from what is anticipated in the promises of restoration. Second, several of these passages speak of the spiritual renewal and wholehearted and consistent obedience of the nation (Deut 30:1-10; Jer 3:17; 24:7; 32:36-44; Ezek 11:14-20; 36:24-38), and this cannot be reconciled with the sinful state of the nation at the time of the previous returns (Kaiser, “Evidence from Jeremiah,” 105-07; Rooker, “Evidence from Ezekiel,” 127). As Rooker notes, the books of Nehemiah and Malachi, in particular, point out the many sins of the Israelite community after the return from exile, including intermarriage, non-prescribed offerings, withholding tithes and offerings, immoral priests, and negligence. From the perspective of the postexilic community, then, the fulfillment of the spiritual transformation described by Ezekiel and the other prophets lay in the future (Rooker, “Evidence from Ezekiel,” 127). Third, according to some of these texts, the restoration of Israel will be so astounding that it will overshadow in significance the exodus out of Egypt and make it seem small in comparison (Jer 16:14-15;

23:5-8), and such was clearly not the case with the previous returns (see Kaiser, "Evidence from Jeremiah," 108; idem., "The Land of Israel," 224). Fourth, "there are anticipations of future elements of a national restoration present in books as late as Zechariah, which clearly indicate that, although many in Israel did return to the land, there is still a sense in which Israel awaited a wholistic national regathering" (cf. Zechariah 10:6-12) (Jelinek, "The Dispersion and Restoration," 242; cf. Kaiser, "The Land of Israel," 213; Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 223). In other words, "if the postexilic returns to the land fulfilled this promised restoration predicted by the prophets, why then did Zechariah continue to announce a still future return (10:8-12) in words that were peppered with the phrases and formulas of such prophecies as Isaiah 11:11 and Jeremiah 50:19?" (Kaiser, "The Promised Land," 309). Fifth, according to Zechariah 10:8, at the time of the promised return to the land the Jews will be as numerous as they were prior to the exile, but "the population of the post-exilic period was shockingly small" (Kaiser, "The Land of Israel," 215). Sixth, according to Jeremiah 30:10-11, Yahweh will destroy the nations to which He has scattered the Jews at the time that He restores the nation of Israel, but this did not happen in the previous returns. Seventh, this promised return to the land is presented as an integral part of the New Covenant (Ezek 36:24-36; Isa 59:15b-21), which could not have been inaugurated prior to Christ. Eighth, according to Ezekiel 36:16-38, God's purpose for the promised return is the vindication of His name among the nations, and this purpose was not met in the previous returns.

¹⁰ The view that understands these promises to be fulfilled in the eternal state fails to account for the biblical data. As Jelinek writes, "It will not do to refer the fulfillment of many of these prophecies to the eternal state when all people already know God, for passages such as Isaiah 2:2-4 and 51:4 teach that the nations will assemble in Zion to learn the Word of God and His ways. A particular people, whether national Israel or the church, could not serve the mediating function of bringing societal deliverance and salvation to other peoples in the eternal state where such a task is unneeded" (Jelinek, "The Dispersion and Restoration," 242). This view also fails to take into account that one of God's purpose in Israel's restoration is that His name be vindicated among the nations (Ezek 36:16-38). How is the holiness of God's name vindicated among the nations when believers die and go to heaven? The view that understands Ezekiel 36:16-38 to be fulfilled in the eternal state simply does not do justice to the text as it reads in its own context.

The deeper question, of course, is a hermeneutical one. The hermeneutic of covenant theology calls for reading the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, which is said to reinterpret the Old Testament. This reinterpretation of the Old Testament—in which Israel receiving the land becomes the church receiving salvation and the heavenly land of the eternal state—consists of a meaning that is foreign to the Old Testament context and completely different than could be gleaned from the Old Testament alone. To me, this is problematic, for I find it very difficult to accept a hermeneutical approach that insists that the original readers of the Old Testament were left in the dark regarding the true meaning of God's promises. In my understanding of the nature of Scripture, God's intent was to reveal truth in His Word, not conceal it. I have a difficult time adopting a view that, says, in effect, that much of the Old Testament was intended to be a riddle (even to righteous and devout Jews—see Luke 2:25 and Luke 2:38), the solution to which would not be forthcoming until hundreds of years later.

In the words of Jelinek: "What is revealed at first in Scripture (or precedes in God's revelation) is not contradicted by what follows in Scripture. What OT authors wrote had a comprehensible meaning for their contemporary audiences and has a revelatory significance in its own right. What these audiences understood depended on both the prophetic message itself and the previously revealed prophetic messages from God. It is a problematic hermeneutic that must either resignify the OT message or see some aspect of an OT theme

reiterated in the NT before it can lend legitimacy or permanency to its relevance. Language that says one thing concerning authorial intention but actually means something else is some form of allegory....A historically sensitive study reveals that the NT develops OT teaching as divine history progresses, but the teaching of the OT is not lost in the process. Promises that are made to Israel, therefore, must be fulfilled by God (Jelinek, "The Dispersion and Restoration," 232).

To take this a step further—and I tread lightly here—it seems to me that in the view of covenant theology, God did not merely leave the original Old Testament readers in the dark by hiding the meaning of His promises in an allegory; it seems that He actually *misled* them to believe He was promising A when He was actually promising B. An additional problem is introduced when the nation of Israel is no longer considered the recipient of these promises. If God promises A to Israel and gives B to the church, this, to me, does not seem like faithfulness to the promise.

When I read the promise of restoration to the land in Jeremiah 16:14-15, I don't stop and wonder which "land" the Lord is referring to in this passage, for He tells me in verse 15: "I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers." To say that this land is actually heavenly "land" for the church and that the Lord never will restore Israel to the land that was granted to her forefathers is to say that He won't do what this verse says He would do.

In response to the kind of argumentation I've set forth here, one covenantalist asks the question, "If God promises someone \$5 and gives him \$5,000 instead, does that mean He is unfaithful?" The problem with this analogy, however, is that it breaks down at just the critical point. In this scenario, even though God gives an unexpected blessing of an additional \$4,995, this does not negate the fact that He is faithful to give the \$5 He originally promised. Put another way, if God promises to give A to person #1, and He gives A to person #1 as promised, and then, as an added bonus, also gives B, C, and D to person #1 as well, has He been faithful to keep His original promise? Yes, of course. He promised A and He delivered A. On the other hand, if He promises to give A to person #1 but gives B to person #2 instead, that is something entirely different. As Jelinek writes, God can do more than He has promised, but He will not do less (Jelinek, "The Dispersion and Restoration," 232). To promise an earthly land to Israel and to fail to deliver this land is to do less.

¹¹ In the words of Feinberg, "If an OT prophecy or promise is made unconditionally to a given people and is still unfulfilled to them even in the NT era, then the prophecy must still be fulfilled to them....Progress of revelation cannot cancel unconditional promises" (Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 76).

¹² I am well aware that some interpret the salvation of "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 as either the salvation of the church throughout the present age or the salvation of the believing remnant of Jews throughout the present age. Although I won't address the arguments for these views here, I am thoroughly convinced that neither of these interpretations is plausible (see my "The Identity of 'All Israel' in Romans 11:26," Th.M. thesis, The Master's Seminary, 2003). Romans 11:26 very clearly predicts the salvation of the nation of Israel at the end of the present age.

¹³ For a discussion of the various interpretive issues in Revelation 20, see Matt Waymeyer, *Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate* (The Woodlands, Tex.: Kress Christian Publications, 2004).