

# God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #12

1 Corinthians 15:22-26  
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As we have noted in past sermons, there are Christian expositors who will look at the same inspired words in Romans 11:26 (“And so all Israel shall be saved”) and yet who will interpret those same words in various ways based upon different eschatological perspectives. I would like to briefly review those major eschatological perspectives in the next three sermons before concluding this series on God's Gracious Covenant With Israel, especially as it relates to how they interpret Romans 11, so as to make clear where the most significant problems lie with those eschatological perspectives (as far as I can identify them). I do not presume infallibility in critiquing other eschatological systems advocated within the Visible Church. However, as a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is incumbent upon me to use the light to the degree which I believe the Spirit of God has graciously granted to me in order to set forth both what is truth and what is error according to the infallible standard of God's Holy Scripture. May God grant to us all illumination of our minds to hear what the Spirit of God says to the Church of Jesus Christ.

## **I. The first interpretive system that I would like to briefly examine as it relates to Romans 11 is that of the Premillennial system.**

A. It should be noted that I am not seeking to break down this interpretive system into further distinctions (such as Pre-tribulation Premillennialism, Mid-tribulation Premillennialism, and Post-tribulation Premillennialism). Such an excursus or detailed examination would take me far beyond the scope of my present goal in Romans 11. And although each of these three eschatological positions within Premillennialism may

be distinguished one from the other, all three of these positions teach that Christ's Second Coming will precede the millennium (which I believe to be contrary to God's Holy Word). I am at this point not so much concerned to point out the theological problems I see with each of these subcategories of Premillennialism as I am to point out the theological and exegetical problems I have with Premillennialism as a whole (and thus with all three of these subsystems of Premillennialism).

B. Premillennialists may further be distinguished by how they view the Book of Revelation as a whole. First, some Premils view nearly all of the prophecies to be fulfilled in the Book of Revelation as yet future to us, and thus they are called Futurists (Futurists may also be called Dispensationalists). This is no doubt the most popular brand of Premillennialism. You will hear it most often on the radio and on your TV, in movies and books (like the Left Behind series). Even within the Dispensational camp of Premillennialism there are further distinctions: Classic Dispensationalists (like Scofield and Chafer), Revised Dispensationalists (like Ryrie and Walvoord), and Progressive Dispensationalists (like Blaising and Bock). Second, some Premils view the prophecies in the Book of Revelation as detailing significant events throughout history (from the time of the Apostle John to the Eternal State), and thus they are called Historicists (in fact most of the Premils before the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not Futurists, but were Historicists). In fact, we who are Postmillennial and yet when it comes to interpreting the Book of Revelation are also Historicists would find much agreement with Premillennial Historicists (at least until one arrives at Revelation chapters 19 and 20). I simply point out these distinctions within the Premillennial camp in order to identify them, not to expound any further upon them. Again my concern at this point is not the various subdivisions within the Premillennial system, but the Premillennial system itself as it erroneously

teaches that the Second Coming of Christ (i.e. Christ's second bodily coming) precedes the millennium rather than following the millennium.

C. Let us then begin by looking once again at **Romans 11:26** and considering what is taught there concerning the coming of Christ.

1. Although the Premillennial system views Romans 11 as teaching the restoration of Israel (with which I agree), it also promotes to a greater or lesser degree many other errors associated with the restoration of Israel including: a rebuilt temple with the revival of various Old Testament ceremonies (even though the New Testament reveals that the temple and the ceremonies associated with it were realized in Christ and in the New Testament Church, Hebrews 9:8; Hebrews 10:1 etc.), the exaltation of Israel over all the other nations of the world (even though the New Testament reveals that there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ, Galatians 3:28), and even a present favored status of Israel as a nation over all nations of the world (even though the New Testament teaches that presently Israel is the enemy of God due to her rejection of Christ and the Gospel of Christ, Romans 11:28).

a. And what especially concerns us as it relates to Romans 11 is that Premillennialism teaches that Jesus Christ will return to earth at the time of His Second Coming (i.e. His bodily coming) **BEFORE** the millennium and will sit upon the throne of David to reign from Jerusalem in a millennium wherein it is acknowledged by the Premillennial system that both sin and death continue even after the Second Coming of Christ, whereas the New Testament teaches that at the Second Coming of Christ sin and death will both be destroyed and abolished, as taught by our text in 1 Corinthians 15:22-26.

b. Clearly, both sin and death do occur in the millennium as we see in Isaiah 65:20 (clearly this could not be a reference to the eternal state), and both sin and death are present among the nations after the millennium according to Revelation 20:7-9, which

means sin and death must have been to some degree present during the millennium. Certainly we should expect sin and death to continue to some degree during the millennium (according to the Scripture), but what we cannot expect is that sin and death continue after the Second Coming of Christ (according to 1 Corinthians 15:22-26). Therefore, I submit and hope to demonstrate (by God's grace) that the Premillennial system cannot be true, for at the Second Coming of Christ sin and death will be abolished altogether and all God's people will enter not into a millennium where sin and death continue, but will rather enter into the kingdom of glory (the eternal state) where sin and death have been forever abolished.

2. According to the Premillennial system, the Second Coming of Christ occurs in Romans 11:26, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, **There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer**, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." I spent an entire sermon on this text in the 4<sup>th</sup> sermon in this present series on God's Gracious Covenant With Israel, and so I will not simply reproduce what was stated at that time (if you need to review what was stated, you may listen or read that sermon again at your leisure). However, I will briefly summarize why I do not believe Paul refers in Romans 11:26 to the Second Coming of Christ (i.e. His bodily coming).

a. Clearly, Paul states that Christ, the Deliverer, will come and will save Israel from her sins, but as was noted in that sermon Christ shall come spiritually before the millennium in Romans 11:26 to save Israel, not bodily at His Second Coming (for that bodily Second Coming of Christ comes after the millennium not before the millennium as we shall see). In summary, Christ comes many times in Scripture (spiritually not bodily) both in judgment upon His enemies and in salvation upon His people: **Coming In judgment** (upon **Egypt** in Isaiah 19:1, cf. Isaiah 20:3-4; upon **Jerusalem** in Micah 1:3-5, cf. Micah 1:16 and Micah 4:9-10; and upon the **Church of Sardis** in Revelation 3:3); **Coming**

**in salvation** (to deliver **David** from Saul in Psalm 18:6-10—note the inspired superscription; to deliver **Jerusalem** in Isaiah 31:4-8, cf. Isaiah 37:33-37; to bless those in **Laodicea** who turn from sin to Christ in Revelation 3:20). Here in Romans 11:26, I submit, is another example of Christ coming spiritually to save and bless His people (and when we consider 1 Corinthians 15 in a moment, we will see the necessity for such an interpretation of Christ's spiritual coming here in Romans 11:26).

b. Next, it is noted by way of summary that Christ's coming "out of Zion" most likely refers to His spiritual coming out of His Visible Church in the proclamation of the Gospel to save Israel as a nation rather than His coming out of heaven. Let me note that even if we were to understand Christ's coming here to be out of that heavenly Zion, it would not necessitate that Christ must come bodily, for in the passages cited above, Christ is understood to come down from heaven and yet it is not a bodily coming but rather a spiritual coming that is in view (e.g. Psalm 18:6-10; Isaiah 19:1; Isaiah 31:4; Micah 1:3-5). However, since Paul has already used the term "Zion" just two chapters earlier (Romans 9:33), it seems more likely that both references to "Zion" (in Romans 9:33 and in Romans 11:26) ought to bear the same meaning and interpretation. And just as "Zion" in Romans 9:33 refers to the Church that Christ is building here upon the earth (for Christ is the chief corner stone in this "Zion", His Church, and many stumble over Him through unbelief while many believe upon Him to their salvation), so likewise, Christ comes out of this same "Zion" through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of Gospel ordinances to save Israel from her sin. I will stop there having briefly summarized what I believe Paul is declaring concerning the **SPIRITUAL** coming of Christ before the millennium as taught in Romans 11:26.

D. And now we move on to briefly consider our text from

**1 Corinthians 11:22-26** in order to demonstrate why the coming of Christ in Romans 11:26 cannot be the Second Coming of Christ in body before the millennial restoration of Israel, but must be a spiritual coming of Christ in Gospel blessing before the millennial restoration of Israel.

1. Paul's purpose in writing concerning the future bodily resurrection of believers in 1 Corinthians 15 was due to the fact that some in Corinth were heretically teaching that there is no future bodily resurrection of the dead to be realized by believers (1 Corinthians 15:12). It would appear that these false teachers either taught a kind of dualism (the spirit of man is good because it is immaterial, the body of man is evil because it is material) which to such heretical dualists could only mean that there is a spiritual resurrection, but no bodily resurrection. Or it may be that these false teachers promoted a form of preterism teaching that the bodily resurrection of believers had already been fulfilled by those who were raised from the dead at the time of Christ's resurrection. In either case, what was denied by these false teachers was a future bodily resurrection of believers.

2. Paul attacks this heresy by demonstrating the inseparable union between Christ and all His people. Just as Christ was raised from the dead bodily never to undergo death again, so all His people (without exception) for whom He died and for whom He was raised from the dead will all be raised from the dead bodily never to undergo death again (1 Corinthians 15:13).

3. Paul demonstrates that without the bodily resurrection of Christ, there is no salvation, for if Christ remained in the grave, it could only mean that His satisfaction for the sin of His elect was insufficient to redeem them and that His suffering did not atone for their sins and they are lost and damned forever, as we all shall be if Christ is not raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

4. However, the glorious truth that Christ was raised bodily from the grave never to die again means that God the Father did receive

His satisfaction as payment in full for the sins of all His people, and all His people shall be saved and raised bodily from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). Christ is, in fact, the “firstfruits of them that sleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). In this context, “firstfruits” refers to that first gathering of harvest that guaranteed that the rest of the harvest would likewise follow (like a down-payment or a certain pledge that a greater harvest is certain to follow). Christ’s bodily resurrection, dear ones, is the down-payment of our own certain bodily resurrection.

5. But the question arises, Who among believers are to be raised at this future bodily resurrection prophesied here by Paul to occur in the future? Is this a bodily resurrection of only New Testament saints who live before the millennium (as taught by some Premillennialists)? Or is it a bodily resurrection of only Old Testament saints and New Testament saints who live before the millennium (as taught by other Premillennialists)? Or is it a bodily resurrection of all Christ’s people who have ever lived since Adam (throughout the Old Testament age and the New Testament age **INCLUDING** the millennium) until the end of time when Christ returns bodily at His Second Coming? By God’s grace, I hope to demonstrate that at the time of this future bodily resurrection, death is at once and forever destroyed and abolished for ALL of Christ’s elect (without exception). And if this is the case, then Christ cannot return bodily at His Second Coming **BEFORE** the millennium nor can the millennium **FOLLOW** Christ’s bodily return at His Second Coming (for sin and death both occur in the millennium, according to passages like Isaiah 65:20; Zechariah 14:17; Revelation 20:7-9—although this rebellion is said to occur after the millennium, it implies that there was sin and death in the millennium).

6. As we consider who among believers are raised at that future resurrection of the saints when Christ returns bodily at His Second Coming, let us note that all are raised bodily from the dead who are said to be “in Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:22). I would submit that Paul’s

statement, “in Christ shall all be made alive”, is not used in any limited way at all, but is a reference to all of God’s elect from Adam to the last soul saved on the face of this earth. For the way that Paul sets up his argument for the final abolition of death at the time of the future bodily resurrection is by way of two covenantal truths (in 1 Corinthians 15:22): (1) IN ADAM all die physically; (2) IN CHRIST all are made alive physically. In the Covenant of Works made with Adam in the Garden of Eden, Adam, as the covenant and federal head for all his posterity by ordinary generation, sinned and with him all his posterity by ordinary generation sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression (Romans 5:12), and since the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23), Paul declares that “in Adam all die” physically (1 Corinthians 15:22). This is the judgment that duly rests upon all of us (without exception) who are “in Adam”, our covenantal and federal head. But God in His rich mercy and grace, established the Covenant of Grace to save all His elect and to redeem them from the curse of physical death (and of course to redeem them from the cause of physical death, namely sin and all its consequences, including spiritual death and eternal death as well as physical death) by way of “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45) or “the second man” (1 Corinthians 15:47), the Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and men according to 1 Timothy 2:5 (whether in the Old Testament age, or whether in the New Testament age, including the millennium). Thus, ALL those “in Christ” shall be made alive at the future bodily resurrection even as Christ their covenantal and federal Head was made alive in His bodily resurrection. What is true of the covenantal head (whether of Adam or of Christ) is true of the covenantal seed. Thus, it should be clear that when Paul speaks of those “in Christ”, he can only mean all of God’s elect (without exception). You might want to compare the contrasts that Paul makes between Adam as our federal and covenantal head and the consequences of his sin and disobedience for ALL his seed and between Christ as our federal and covenantal Head and



the consequences of his righteousness and obedience for ALL His seed in Romans 5:12-21. As far as the curse of sin and death extends to all who are “in Adam” (throughout the Old Testament age and New Testament Age, including the millennium), exactly that far does the blessing of the bodily resurrection extend to all who are “in Christ” (throughout the Old Testament age and New Testament Age, including the millennium). Furthermore, when we hear Paul state in Ephesians 1:4 (“According as he [God the Father—GLP] hath chosen us in him [Christ the covenantal Mediator—GLP] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”), we cannot limit those chosen “in Christ” to some of God’s elect, for all of God’s elect throughout history (from beginning to end were chosen “in Christ” as their Covenant Mediator who secured righteousness, forgiveness, resurrection, and everlasting life for them). Thus, those whom Paul has in view when he states that all “in Christ” shall be made alive physically at the resurrection of the dead are ALL God’s elect, not some of God’s elect. This being the case, the millennium cannot follow the resurrection of the dead at Christ’s Second Coming. Any other explanation of what it means to be “in Christ” must explain how any saint that is NOT “in Christ” can be saved and raised from the dead to eternal life. There is only salvation “in Christ” (whether in the Old Testament age, or in the New Testament age, including the millennium). Outside of Christ, there is only damnation.

7. Paul continues his argument for the abolition and destruction of death when all of Christ’s elect are raised from the dead by noting (in 1 Corinthians 15:23) that there is an order to the resurrection: first, Christ, the firstfruits, and second, they that are Christ’s [this is the same group that was previously said to be “in Christ”—GLP] at his coming [i.e. at His Second Coming—GLP]. Here Paul declares that the resurrection of all of Christ’s elect will occur at the Second Coming (a single event). When will the resurrection of ALL of Christ’s elect (without exception) occur? At the Second Coming of Christ.

8. What then occurs at the Second Coming of Christ? “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24).

a. Premils will argue at this point that there is a thousand year period of time that elapses between verse 23 and verse 24. They argue that just as there is already two thousand years between the resurrection of Christ (the firstfruits) and the resurrection of those “in Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:23), so there is one thousand years (the millennium) between verse 23 and verse 24. For they say, if the adverb “afterward” (ἐπειτα) may allow for two thousand years, then the adverb “then” (εἶτα) may allow for one thousand years (the millennium).

b. However, it must be noted that there are only two events (two resurrections) stated by Paul that are a part of this prophesied “order” for “every” man’s resurrection: (1) Christ, the firstfruits; (2) Afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. There is NOT a third event or a third resurrection prophesied that is a part of this “order” for “every” man’s resurrection. ALL THE ELECT are raised at Christ’s Second Coming. Then at Christ’s Second Coming comes the end of redemptive history (“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” 1 Corinthians 15:24). The adverb “afterward” (ἐπειτα) is used in verse 23 (“afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming”) in order to give the chronological sequence of two resurrections: the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of ALL whom Christ is to save throughout redemptive history (from Adam to the last soul saved). Yes, there has already been two thousand years between those two resurrections. However, verse 24 does not continue to give the “order” of “every man” man who is to be raised from the dead—that order has already been given in verse 23. Verse 24 does not begin with the same adverb, “afterward” (ἐπειτα), which was used in verse 23 as if

what is stated in verse 24 is also part of the chronological “order” of resurrections Paul is identifying. To the contrary, verse 24 begins with a different adverb, “then” (εἶτα): “Then (εἶτα) cometh the end”. Why does verse 24 begin with a different adverb? Because what is stated in verse 24 is not a third resurrection that elapses after a thousand year interval between verses 23 and 24, but is rather part and parcel of what happens at the time of Christ’s Second Coming when all the elect of Christ are raised from the dead. If Paul had wanted to continue the chronological sequence and order of resurrections into verse 24, he would most likely have used the same adverb, “afterward” (ἔπειτα) to introduce what is said in verse 24 (for example, “afterward” cometh the end). But Paul does not do so. In fact, nowhere in Scripture will the adverb “then” (εἶτα) allow for one thousand years to intervene (as is proposed by Premils). Consider all of the uses of this same adverb (εἶτα) in the New Testament and note that any intervening time is relatively brief and not long or extended (and certainly not scores of years, hundreds of years, or a thousand years): Mark 4:17,28; Mark 8:25; Luke 8:12; John 13:5; John 19:27; John 20:27; 1 Corinthians 15:5,7,24; 1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 12:9; James 1:15. This adverb will not bear one thousand years upon its shoulder as we see from its use in the rest of the New Testament. What is described in verse 24 is the end of human remptive history at Christ’s Second Coming when two events shall be fully realized: (1) “when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God” [i.e. the kingdom of grace—GLP]; (2) “when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” Thus, in delivering the kingdom of grace to the God the Father, Christ completes the salvation of all His elect whom He covenanted to save throughout history. None will be saved after the Second Coming of Christ. And thus in putting down all rule, authority, and power, Christ will subdue all (not some) of His enemies (spiritual and physical), the last enemy being death itself which shall be forever abolished and destroyed at His Second Coming when all Christ’s elect are

raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 cf. Psalm 110:1 and Acts 2:30-36). Psalm 110:1 states that Christ will remain at God's right hand until ALL His enemies have been subdued. Paul gives further explanation as to what it means that Christ will remain at God's right hand UNTIL all His enemies have been subdued under His feet, namely, UNTIL death, His last enemy, is forever subdued under His feet at His Second Coming and at the resurrection of all His elect. At Christ's Second Coming comes "the end". None will die any longer, and none will be raised from the dead after the Second Coming of Christ (during the millennium). All will be accomplished at Christ's Second Coming. Thus, there can be no millennium (that includes sin or death in it) after the Second Coming. And furthermore, the resurrection of all of Christ's elect in fact occurs on "the last day" (John 6:37-40). There is no thousand year period after "last day." The "last day" brings redemptive history upon earth to a close.

9. I must finally tie this all together by reading and briefly commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:50-56. Here we see that at the time of the Second Coming of Christ, death and its cause, sin, shall be swallowed up forever in victory and forever abolished. This will occur at the "last trump" (1 Corinthians 15:52) on the "last day". What kingdom is in view in 1 Corinthians 15:50? The kingdom of glory, the eternal state. Christ delivers the kingdom of grace to God the Father at the Second Coming because all the elect have been saved (1 Corinthians 15:24), and all these will inherit the kingdom of glory or the eternal state. And what will inaugurate entrance into that eternal kingdom of glory? The Second Coming of Christ when all the dead of Christ's elect shall be raised from the dead, and when all the living of Christ's elect shall be changed and transformed into their glorified bodies and be caught up to be with the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:50-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). This is the end of human history and the beginning of eternal glory for all of Christ's elect. At Christ's Second Coming death will forever be swallowed up in victory

and the cause of death (namely, sin) will be forever abolished (1 Corinthians 15:54).

10. Thus, dear ones, I submit that 1 Corinthians 15 will not allow for a millennium and a restoration of Israel after the Second Coming of Christ, nor will 1 Corinthians 15 allow for anyone to be saved after the Second Coming of Christ, nor will 1 Corinthians 15 allow for anyone to sin or to die or to be raised from the dead after the Second Coming of Christ. Thus, I submit, the Premillennial system cannot be sustained according to God's holy Word.

11. The glorious hope of the resurrection demonstrates that Christ not only redeemed our souls, but also redeemed our bodies through His atonement upon the cross. In that sense, we may certainly declare that there is healing of the body and material blessings secured by the atonement of Christ. For if the greatest bodily blessing is secured by the atonement of Christ, namely, the resurrection of these vile bodies, then certainly the material and bodily needs that we have in this life are likewise secured by the atonement of Christ (as the Lord wisely apportions to us what we need from day to day). Dear ones, the greatest blessings we receive from Christ's redemptive work of love for are certainly all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (forgiveness of all sin, the imputed righteousness of Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification etc.), but let us not downplay the fact that "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19), and that we are to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11), and that the Lord has promised, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). All these promises for our bodily needs are likewise secured by Christ's atonement and are a guarantee that Christ will one day graciously turn these corruptible bodies into incorruptible bodies by His almighty power. Dear ones, everything we need for this life and the life to come is found in our

covenantal and federal Head, Jesus Christ. Let us, therefore, come boldly and confidently to the throne of grace, “that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

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