

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 57

The Remnant

"A remnant is the residue of something that is left after the majority of it is taken away. This is true in general parlance, as in, for example, a remnant of a bolt of cloth, as well as in the more theological sense. The Bible often speaks of a remnant in the general sense. Joseph told his brothers in Egypt, "God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth" (Gen. 45:7). Similarly, after reporting that God had given Israel in victory "the whole region of Argob, Og's kingdom of Bashan" (Deut. 3:4), Moses wrote, "Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Repahites" (3:11). Also God promised concerning Judah's idolatry, "I will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal" (Zeph. 1:4).... [T]he concept of a remnant is applied to the survivors of a conquered kingdom.... [A] remnant of the northern Kingdom of Israel is mentioned after its conquest by Assyria (2 Chron. 34:9, 21), and after the conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylon (36:20). Later Ezra spoke of the group that returned to Judah from Babylon with him as a remnant (Ezra 9:8, 13-15).... The idea of a remnant is also applied by the prophets to the Jewish people in a spiritual sense." [John A. Witmer, "Remnant" in *The Theological Wordbook: The 200 Most Important Theological Terms and Their Relevance for Today*, p. 295]. The last concept concerning the Jewish people in a spiritual sense is the concept we need to explore in terms of Eschatology.

Remnant, שְׁאֵרִית, means remainder, remnant, the rest; it is the part of a whole (mass, collection, or series) that remains or continues. There is a synonym, שָׁרָה, carrying the same meaning. There is another word translated remnant, פְּלִיטָה, meaning escape or deliverance; it is the state or condition of not being in captivity and so out of danger and oppression. This word does not seem to be applicable to Eschatology; it is used more to denote surviving dangerous temporal conditions. In the New Testament, the word is used only once in Romans 9:27 where the Greek κατάλειμμα is used meaning a remnant; It is a relatively small part that continues to exist. The *Septuagint* I use is the one published by Hendrickson Publishers, translated by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton and first published in London in 1851 and it uses κατάλειμμα to translate שְׁאֵרִית and שָׁרָה. It is interesting that the Greek word implies only a small portion is the Remnant.

As noted, the word "remnant" is used in a variety of ways in the Bible, but the concept that has eschatological significance refers specifically to those Jews within the nation of Israel, the Israelites, who are believers. "The doctrine of the Remnant of Israel means that there are always some who believe within the Jewish nation as a whole, and all those who believe constitute the Remnant of Israel. Thus there are two Israels: Israel the whole and Israel the Remnant. Ethnically, the two are the same, but spiritually, they are not. The Remnant at any point of history may be large or small, but there is never a time when it is non-existent, except immediately after the Rapture." [Arnold G.

Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, p. 763]. Immediately after the Rapture, there are no believers on planet earth, including the Jewish Remnant of Israel. The Messianic Jews will be removed in the Rapture and out of the number of unbelieving Jews left behind, some will believe and constitute the Remnant of Israel that will enter the Kingdom. Fruchtenbaum says the Remnant may be large or small and that is probably correct, but for the most part the Remnant is rarely large and the Greek word *κατάλειμμα* seems to reflect that concept. I can think of only three times in Israelite history when the Remnant may have been large. The first is when they came out of Egypt as believers, the second is when they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, and the third will be during the Kingdom. In a speculative sense, so many Jews will be living in the Kingdom they may no longer be referred to as a Remnant.

Here are some examples from Scripture explaining the concept of the Remnant in the sense of those faithful Jews who are believers. Isaiah 10:20-22 is ultimately referring to the Remnant that will inherit the Kingdom "in that day," but the immediate context is possibly referring to some of the citizens of the Northern Kingdom returning to the land, but there is no biblical record of that happening. "In that day" is usually a reference to the Day of the Lord and Isaiah used it that way in Isaiah 2:11. Further, Isaiah said they would truly rely on the Lord and that won't happen until the Kingdom; instead, Israel has a sad history of not relying on the Lord. Paul does use this verse to refer to the eschatological Remnant of the future in Romans 9:27. The evidence that Isaiah is referring to the distant future and the return of a Remnant into the land to populate the Kingdom seems to me to be strong.

Isaiah 10:20–22 ²⁰Now in that day the remnant [רְשָׁיִם] of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. ²¹A remnant [רְשָׁיִם] will return, the remnant [רְשָׁיִם] of Jacob, to the mighty God. ²²For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant [רְשָׁיִם] within them will return; A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.

In Unger's commentary on these verses, he wrote, "The time of the remnant's return will be in that day, the Day of the Lord (2:10-22), after Israel's *final* enemies have been destroyed at the second advent. Although that prophecy had a historical fulfillment in the destruction of the Assyrian, it envisions a similar invasion of Palestine by 'the king of the north' (Dan. 11:40) in the end time whom the Assyrian typifies." [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 1172].

Zechariah 8:6-7, 11-12 refers to Remnant restoration into the land and life in the Kingdom.

Zechariah 8:6–7, 11-12 ⁶"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant [רְשָׁיִם] of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?'

declares the LORD of hosts. ⁷“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west... ¹¹‘But now I will not treat the remnant [שְׁאֲרֵית] of this people as in the former days,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ¹²‘For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant[שְׁאֲרֵית] of this people to inherit all these things.

Romans 9:27 ²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT [κατάλειμμα] THAT WILL BE SAVED; [Quoting from Isaiah 10:22]. In this verse, the Septuagint translates שְׁאֲרֵית in Isaiah 10:22 with κατάλειμμα.

“Paul wishes to establish the additional point that God’s mercy to Israel takes the form of mercy to a greatly reduced segment of the whole nation. In other words, Paul is expressing what we might call ‘remnant theology’ as it relates to Israel’s present and future.... The Isaiah passage (Isa 10:20-27) is fundamentally eschatological and points towards the end times calamities which are to fall on the entire world (namely, the Great Tribulation). From these calamities only a remnant of Israel will ‘be delivered’ and survive to enter the kingdom.... It is important to note that Paul has selected here a prophetic utterance about Israel’s future deliverance (or, salvation) from temporal divine wrath.... Isaiah ... foresaw the wrath that Israel would undergo and knew that her survival would be realized only be a small remnant of the whole nation. As Paul will shortly say, ‘also at the present time there is a remnant according to His choice by grace’ (11:5).” [Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, pp. 283-284].

Replacement theologians assume, based on Romans 9:24 where Paul speaks of Gentile salvation that Gentile salvation is also in verse 27, but it is not. God is saying that He is rich in mercy and He has extended salvation to Gentiles. Israel’s failure is to the benefit of the world. None of this precludes Paul from returning to dealing with Israel in verse 27 which is exactly what He did. Israel means Israel; it does not mean Gentiles or the church.

When reading the prophets addressing the doctrine of a remnant, it must be determined whether or not the subject is a return to the land from exile as a result of the judgment of God at the hands of Assyria and Babylon, in which case the concept of a remnant is general in nature, or whether it is addressing the subject of a believing segment of Israelites throughout history and whether or not it is addressing those who are the eschatological Remnant that will inherit the Kingdom. The word may be used in a general sense across a variety of uses. Context must determine meaning.

Replacement theologians cannot understand biblical truth concerning an eschatological Remnant of Israel that will inherit the covenanted Kingdom. They must claim the Remnant of Israel is absorbed into the church and the church becomes the New Israel. For example, when they see the word “Israel” in Romans 9:27, they read “church.” If they don’t, their theological system is destroyed, but by maintaining their

theology, they have destroyed the truth of God's Word concerning Israel and its part in God's plan for history. It is very strange and puzzling to me that these theologians are more interested in preserving their theology than they are in proclaiming the plain truth of the written Word.

Here is an example of replacement Theological thought on the subject. "The New Testament writers make it clear that the New Covenant was designed to supersede the Old Covenant under which Israel lived for some 1500 years. They leave no room for their readers to question the fact that it was not official contemporary Jewry who were the earthly party to the New Covenant, but rather the faithful Remnant in Jewry who recognized in Jesus their long promised Messiah. This faithful minority became the nucleus of the new theocracy. The *true* Israel and the *true* Judah are now within the Christian church. We can express the same truth in different words and say that, according to the promise in Isaiah 62:2; 65:15, the true covenanted community—the faithful Remnant of the church of the Old Covenant—received, like its progenitor, Jacob, a new name. the Remnant of Israel becomes the *Christian* church.... In this passage [Eph. 2:11-20] Paul recognizes the continuity of the Remnant with the Christian church, together with its claim to be the rightful heir to all the ancient covenant privileges and the promises. The Gentile converts became citizens in this continuing covenanted community. To it now belong all the blessings which citizenship in the covenanted community imparts." [Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant*, pp. 120-121].

Only believing Jews constitute the Remnant and only Jews make up the Remnant of Israel. Gentile believers are not part of it. The Remnant is not detached from the nation of Israel; they are a separate entity within the nation. As believers in this age, they are also part of the church, but the Remnant and the church must not be confused one with the other. The doctrine of the Remnant informs us there is always a number of Jewish people who are believers; God is never without a Jewish Remnant. It is the Remnant of Israel that will finally realize all the Kingdom promises made to the nation through the covenants.

The doctrine of the Remnant was introduced through the prophet Elijah. After the confrontation between Baal and his prophets with Yahweh and His prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel, Jezebel sought to kill Elijah so he fled and ended up in a cave on Mount Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God. There, God met with the prophet and revealed the existence of 7,000 faithful Jews who had not worshiped Baal.

1 Kings 19:18 ¹⁸"Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

The doctrine of the Remnant was a very important concept in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah even named one of his sons to reflect the doctrine. His name was Shear-jashub which means "a remnant shall return."

Isaiah 7:3 ³Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub [שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב] (she'ar yasuv)], at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field,

This name reflects the truth that in the context of the time Isaiah was a prophet, even though the nations of Israel and Judah would suffer God's judgment, a remnant would be restored to the land. This truth also has ramifications far into the future from the time of Isaiah.

“It is Isaiah the prophet who put the remnant concept into theological terms. It is mostly found in the unit comprising chapters 7-12 and called “the Book of Immanuel” since, in the Hebrew text, that name is found three times (7:14; 8:8, 10). Building on the contrast of the noise and the quiet, Isaiah (8:5-8) points out that the non-remnant tends to put its trust in that which is noisy (the Assyrian Army), but the remnant has a quiet confidence in the God of Israel and the One to come, Immanuel. Ultimately the noise will destroy the non-remnant which puts its faith in the noise, but Immanuel will save the believing (8:9-11). Immanuel thus becomes the point of division between the remnant and the non-remnant. For the remnant, Immanuel will prove to be a sanctuary, but for the non-remnant Immanuel will prove to be a Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of Offense (8:14-15). The remnant places its trust in the law and the prophets (8:16) and, therefore, waits upon the Lord (8:17). So important was the doctrine of the remnant to Isaiah that he named one of his sons *Shear Yashuv* which means “a remnant shall return” (7:3). With that naming, Isaiah was looking forward to the future final salvation of the Remnant of Israel (10:20-23). Until then, it is God who will protect the remnant and guarantee its survival (46:3-4).” [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 604].

Isaiah 11:11 is a promise to restore the believing Remnant back into the land of Israel from their dispersion around the world that will take place during the Tribulation in order to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom when the Tribulation is complete. This chapter compares this final regathering of Israel to the Exodus from Egypt that first brought them into the land, and it begins with a prediction of the Messiah, the Kingdom, and His rule in the Kingdom.

Isaiah 11:10–11, 16 ¹⁰Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. ¹¹Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant [שְׁאָר] of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea.... ¹⁶And there will be a highway from Assyria For the remnant [שְׁאָר] of His people who will be left, Just as there was for Israel In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.

God has promised to protect the Remnant and see to it that they survive no matter what Israel faces throughout history.

Isaiah 46:3–4 ³“Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant [תְּשַׁרְיִית] of the house of Israel, You who have been borne by Me from birth And have been carried from the womb; ⁴Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you.

Ezekiel expressed the concept of the Remnant of Israel as it pertains to the dispersion of the Israelites around the world. He was predicting a believing Remnant that will develop out of the judgment of the diaspora. We know the majority of the Jewish people who have been scattered among the nations have refused to come to faith, but there has always been a believing Remnant. In context, Ezekiel has been writing about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, but the reference to “nations” reveals this prophecy is looking much further into the future.

Ezekiel 6:8–10 ⁸“However, I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries. ⁹“Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations. ¹⁰“Then they will know that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them.”

“God's severity is tempered by His grace. His eternal, covenant-keeping faithfulness and mercy are extended to a godly nucleus in the nation. That godly nucleus (Rom. 11:1-25) has always existed in Israel, even in her darkest hours (11:1-5), and guarantees the perpetuation of Israel even through the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:5-7), the darkest night of all (Dan. 12:1), and her eventual establishment in Kingdom blessing.” [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 1503].

As Unger noted, God has promised to save those we know as the Remnant of Israel out of the Great Tribulation. These Scriptures, among many others, completely disprove Replacement Theology. The Jews saved during the Tribulation are not members of the church, the Body of Christ, as replacement theologians maintain. The Church is not present during the Tribulation. The Church was complete the moment of the Rapture and no one will be added to it after that moment in time.

Jeremiah 30:3, 7, 10 ³‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.’ The LORD says, ‘I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.’... ⁷‘Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.... ¹⁰‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar And your offspring from the land

of their captivity. And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, And no one will make him afraid.

Daniel 12:1 ¹“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued [the Remnant of Israel].

Here is what the commentary on Daniel 12:1 looks like from the pen of a Replacement Theologian named John Calvin. Not only does he replace Israel with the church, but he puts the church in the Tribulation. Notice also how much of his theology is formed around the unbiblical doctrine of election as Augustine defined it. He also inserts the unbiblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in this verse and he hints at regeneration which then allows a person to believe and be saved. He claims Michael is the defender of the church rather than the protector of Israel; that's because he puts the church back into the Old Testament and replaces Israel with it. For such a famous, revered theologian whose work is hallowed by so many people, his lack of exegesis and his imposition of Augustinian false doctrine into his work renders his commentary completely untrustworthy. The thinking and the theology he presents destroys the biblical concept of the Messianic Kingdom as the Bible identifies it through the covenants. There is nothing in this commentary on Daniel 12:1 that is biblical.

At length he adds, *At that time thy people shall be preserved*. By this expression the angel points out to us the great importance of the protection of Michael. He promises certain salvation to his elect people, as if he had said, although the Church should be exposed to the greatest dangers, yet with respect to God himself, it should always be safe and victorious in all contests, because Michael should be superior to every enemy. The angel then, in thus exhorting the faithful to bear their cross, shews how free they should be from all doubt as to the event, and the absolute certainty of their victory. Although at first sight this prophecy might inspire us with fear and dismay, yet this comfort ought to be sufficient for us: “We shall be conquerors amidst fire and sword, and amidst many deaths we are sure of life.” As perfect safety is here set before us, we ought to feel secure, and to enter with alacrity into every engagement. We are in truth obliged to fight, but Christ has conquered for us, as he says himself, Trust in me, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33.) But the angel restricts what he had said generally by way of correction. Many professed to belong to the people of God, and every one naturally sprung from the stock of Israel boasted of being the offspring of divine seed. As all wished promiscuously to belong to God's people, the angel restricts his expression by a limiting phrase, *all people, says he, who were found written in the book*. This clause does not mean all Israel after “the flesh,” (Rom. 9:6–8,) but such as God esteems to be real Israelites according to gratuitous election alone. He here distinguishes between the carnal and spiritual children of Abraham, between the outward Church and that inward and true community which the Almighty approves. Upon what then does the difference depend between those who boast of being Abraham's children, while they are rejected by God, and those who are really and truly his sons? On the mere grace

and favour of God. He declares his election when he regenerates his elect by his Holy Spirit, and thus inscribes them with a certain mark, while they prove the reality of this sonship by the whole course of their lives, and confirm their own adoption. Meanwhile we are compelled to go to the fountain at once; God alone by his gratuitous election distinguishes the outward Church, which has nothing but the title, from the true Church, which can never either perish or fall away. Thus we observe in how many passages of Scripture hypocrites are rejected in the midst of their swelling pride, as they have nothing in common with the sons of God but the external symbols of profession. [John Calvin and Thomas Myers, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, pp. 2:371–372].

The New Testament deals with the concept of the Remnant through Paul in Romans 9-11 and Peter in 1 Peter 2: 1-10. Paul referred to the Remnant as the Israel of God in Galatians 6:16.

Galatians 6:16 ¹⁶And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

When the word "Israel" is used in the New Testament, it always refers to Jews and/or the nation of Israel; it never means the church even though Replacement theologians build their case that Israel now means the church largely on this verse. When Paul refers to the "Israel of God" or to "all Israel," he is referring to the Remnant.

"If we see the message of Galatians as a defense not only of justification by faith alone, but also of Paul's ministry of salvation to Gentiles as Gentiles, it becomes extremely unlikely that Paul would conclude his argument by calling Gentiles 'the Israel of God.' It is much more probable, in view of his strong condemnation of the Judaizers who sought to enslave the Gentile converts, that Paul sought to recognize also the validity of a true Israel [the Remnant of Israel].... [W]hether the reference is to Jews in the church who were presently walking according to Paul's rule or to the 'all Israel' destined for eschatological salvation (Ro 11:26), it is more in line with the apostle's language, his overall theology, and the message of Galatians to view 'Israel of God' as a reference to Jewish people.... For Paul, the historic Israel, although partially and temporarily hardened, yet had a future and therefore could not be superseded by a new people of God..." [Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology*, p. 201]. Paul is validating the existence of a true Israel, the Remnant.

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