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For Grandparents, Parents and Seniors

By Rick Shrader

At the Junctions in the Road

Learning to walk involves many necessary actions: balance, falling, turning, and direction. The Christian walk also involves many actions including turning, eating, talking, learning, and many more. I believe one of the neglected areas of our walk involves the junctions (turnings) in the road. A fork in the road with various options still allows you to go only one way. You have to make a choice, and that choice will change your whole life.

Biblical Examples. Abraham and Lot came to a junction in their lives where Abraham gave Lot a choice of which way to go. Lot's choice of Sodom changed his life and Abraham's. John Mark, in Acts 13, returned home rather than going on with Paul and Barnabas, a choice that changed his life and many others. Paul, in Acts 16 wanted to go to Ephesus and Bithynia but the Holy Spirit sent him on to Troas where he received the Macedonian call, junctions that changed his life and the gospel ministry. We all face similar junctions in our own lives many times.

Unforeseen Junctions. There are many junctions in life's road before we ever realize how important they were. Our parents were making decisions for us (job location, school choices) that changed our lives. The high school (or church!) we attended had a big effect on where we went to college. The college we attended had a big effect on whom we married. The person we married had an effect on the rest of our lives and many others.

Huge Junctions. Some junctions are life-changers. The first and most important is our decision to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. Every Christian would admit that their salvation decision changed their life. In fact, the Bible says it must! The second and third most important decisions go together: marriage and God's will.

True, they don't always go together but they should. In fact, they usually happen around the same time in a person's life. What are you going to do in life? Have you asked God? Whom should you marry? Have you asked God? The wrong decision at either of these junctions will (can, and usually does) ruin the other decision because both decisions are for life. God has a reason for you to be married to a good mate, and He has a will for your lives together.

Ongoing Junctions. Will you and your spouse build a Christian home together? This will affect both of you, your children, your parents, your grandchildren, and everyone with whom they associate. The church you chose to attend, whether you think so or not, will change your life and your family's lives. If the New Testament says anything, it says how important the local church is to a believer's life. Then, for the rest of your life, you will constantly be making personal decisions. Will you have a devotional life? Will you serve in your church? Will you pick up bad habits that destroy your health and testimony and affect your children? Will you work at your marriage?

Re-Thinking Junctions. There are a few junctions that can be reversed—the one, for example, you made a few minutes ago. Stop! Go back to the junction and go the other way. Also, Repent! God forgives sin and restores lives. True, scars and results usually have to be carried the rest of your life, but you can do it with God's help. And, Learn! You may not come to the same junction twice, but you will come to the same kind of junction many times. Experience is the best teacher. Walk with the Lord, but choose wisely.

"Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left." (Isa 30:21)

Perspectives on Israel and the Church, Four Views

Chad Brand, editor

This is one of many “Views” books which give the reader four different views on a subject. This volume (2015) concerns the views on covenant theology and dispensational theology with a newer variation of each.

The Traditional Covenantal View, by Robert L. Raymond, professor of Theology emeritus at Knox Theological Seminary. Covenant Theology has been around since the Reformation. It gets its name from its belief in three “theological” covenants: the covenant of works (with Adam in the garden); the covenant of grace (in effect since the fall of Adam into sin); and the covenant of redemption (made between the Father and the Son in eternity past). They do not deny the biblical covenants but see that God is working out His will by electing those whom the Father previously gave to the Son, and saving them all during the covenant of grace from the fall until the end of the world. This is a basic amillennial view and a “replacement theology” whereby the church (i.e., the elect) replaces Israel as God’s promised people.

The Traditional Dispensational View, by Robert L. Thomas, Professor of New Testament emeritus at The Master’s Seminary. Thomas deals with Israel in the OT and the NT. In the OT Thomas shows that the land promise has never been fulfilled literally to Israel. He says, “A literal approach interprets the words as God intended them and as Abram understood them. No typology. No spiritualizing. No symbolism. No preunderstanding of how the words must fit into a system of theology.” In the NT he shows how “Jesus might have canceled God’s promises to Abraham but did not.” Here Thomas reviews 10 times in the life of Christ where this could have been done if that is what Christ intended. Obviously He did not. Then Thomas reviews 6 ways in which the “Apostles might have canceled God’s promises to Abraham but did not.” After reviewing the biblical covenants showing the literal promises to Israel, Thomas reviews the book of Revelation (about which he is well-known for his large 2-volume commentary) and writes, “The book of Revelation is full of references to God’s faithfulness in fulfilling his promises to national Israel.”

The Progressive Dispensational View, by Robert L. Saucy, distinguished professor of Systematic Theology at Talbot School of Theology. In the early 1990s Saucy of Talbot along with Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock of Dallas Seminary, and many others since, introduced significant changes to traditional dispensationalism. These include hermeneutical and ecclesiastical changes, prophetic and covenantal changes. Saucy includes three in this volume. 1) Israel is still God’s special people with promises of a millennial future. 2) The church participates with Israel in the new covenant as one combined people of God, not as a uniquely separate entity. 3) The kingdom of God exists now in an inaugurated form called “already-not yet.” It is here already in an inaugurated, or spiritual, form but will also come later in a material form. Prominent in Saucy’s presentation is the view that the church is establishing the kingdom by its evangelism to the Gentile world. Saved Jews and Gentiles will eventually inhabit the millennial kingdom as a united people of God. The eternal state is often included as a renewed earth and an eternal earthly kingdom. It should be noted also that the description of “progressive” does not mean culturally contemporary, but rather as a more biblical theological, i.e., progressive revelatory view. The view also necessarily includes much more typical and allegorical hermeneutics than its predecessors.

The Progressive Covenantal View, by Chad O. Brand, speaker and lecturer and Tom Pratt Jr., president of Eagle Rock Ministries. This newer version of covenant theology has emerged in that last 15-20 years. Its voice has mainly come from Stephen J. Wellum, Brent E. Parker, and Peter Gentry of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. It is a more mixed view on eschatology than its forefather, covenant theology, with some a, post, and pre-millennial views. Its primary thesis is that all Old Testament covenants and promises are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. His followers are one people of God who fulfill the promises as a kingdom—some even propose they are the promised “land” (obviously in a spiritual way) of the kingdom. Progressive Covenantalism is constantly developing.

As a traditional dispensationalist, I am concerned with the two “progressive” developments to the historical views of Israel, church, and the kingdom including the complementary hermeneutic, supersessionism, and expanding views of the new covenant.