

ISRAEL AND THE COVENANTS

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT – WHY IT'S SO SIGNIFICANT Rom 9:4-5 lists remarkable blessings that flow from the covenants made with Israel. Sadly, many Christians do not understand about the on-

going importance of the covenants. They certainly would know about the **New Covenant** but many assume this was made with the Church. Those actively promoting Replacement Theology conclude that all the previous ones made with Israel are now redundant since God has finished with Israel as a result of its rejection of Jesus. However, it's not true and it is vitally important that we understand this.

WE NEED TO APPRECIATE THE REASON FOR COVENANT. In **Gen 3** we see how the fall of man into sin and rebellion plunged all mankind headlong into all kinds of depraved behaviour as they fell away from God. This is no myth but reality. **By Gen 11** we have the total chaos that is spoken of in **Eph 2** where all were without hope in the world. Then we come to this watershed of history in **Gen 12:1-3** where it shows God comes looking for man. God demonstrates His intention to save the world when He makes a covenant with Abraham. He refers to this **Covenant of Decision** in **Gal 3:8** where it is the first proclamation of the gospel through Abraham to the world.

The problem for gentiles is that the **New Covenant was promised to the House of Israel and Judah** according to **Jer 31:31**. There is no mention of a plan of salvation for gentiles here. Gentile hope comes instead through being **grafted into the covenants** along with the rest of our inheritance according to Paul's discourse in **Rom 11:17**. Natural branches have been broken off and we have been grafted into the Covenants and promises made with Israel. Therefore it is essential to appreciate that the Abrahamic Covenant is still relevant, especially for gentiles, because it is the lifeline for them as it reveals God's plan for the world. However, we are not to boast and think that God has finished with Israel. God is well able to graft them back in again and history shows that He has done and is continuing to do so in our day.

The salvation of the world was conceived in the heart of God before Abraham and before time began. "The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" - **Rev 13:8**. It was not an afterthought. It was

God's decision to save the world in the beginning. So **Gal 3:8** is the greatest statement about the redemption of the world. It's all about salvation.

WHAT THEN WAS GOD SAYING TO ABRAHAM? God revealed to Abraham what He was going to do in the whole world, that He would create a people who would be the mediators of this Abrahamic Covenant. That's why they are the Chosen people, with privilege but also with responsibility. God initiated it and also empowered it. It is everlasting and unconditional. The Land He bequeathed to Abrahams descendants FOREVER. **Gen 12:1-3; 12:7; 13:15; 15:5-7, 18; 17:7, 13, 19; 22:17-18**. The condition for staying and enjoying the blessing of being in the Land however was faithfulness. And that is why Israel has spent more time out of the Land than in it.

WHERE IS THE PLAN UNFOLDING? Not in London, Paris or New York but in Israel. This nation, which has been created as an everlasting nation. But the dwelling IN the Land was conditional upon their reconciled relationship with God. Our prayer today, like Paul's in **Rom 10:1**, is to see the people of Israel become a Holy People unto God. Our interest is not like Joshua, who asked the Angel of God when he came into the promised Land "Are you for us or against us" His answer in **Joshua 5:13** was neither. We too are to be motivated not by for and against Israel, but by being for God.

From the Abrahamic covenant come three other covenants added for a purpose.

THE MOSAIC, DAVIDIC AND THE NEW COVENANT. Israel is still on a journey. The right of land ownership is not in

question – it is God’s gift to them. The miracle of Israel is that God has linked the redemption of the world with the experience of Israel. No accident that Jesus was Jewish, born, lived, died and resurrected in the Land called Israel – never Palestine, except erroneously in the Map section of many Bibles.

DOES THE MOSAIC COVENANT STILL HAVE RELEVANCE?

Yes in every way. It tells people they are sinners and why they need to be saved. **It is the Covenant of Instruction.** Paul addresses this in **Gal 3:19** It was “added because of transgressions”. It was a “schoolmaster” to tell us how bad things really are between us and God. We are talking here about the majestic Law/Moral Law/Ten commandments - not the ceremonial Law. The Gospel preached through evangelical preachers like the Wesleys was always preached on the basis of the 10 Commandments. This created the opportunity for people to consider that they stand before a Holy God as sinners who stand in jeopardy of their lives. But thanks be to God for **Gal 3:13-14** which again states that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law. . . that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles.” Without this mercy, we all live under the wrath and judgment of Almighty God.

WHY IS THIS TEACHING SO UNHEARD OF TODAY?

It has been the teaching of history but over the last 100 years it has been either lost or undermined. The Gut has been taken out of the Bible. Jesus said “It is Written”. But people today do not know what is written because they do not read His word.

HAS THE DAVIDIC COVENANT ALSO FINISHED?

It too has been added in order to fulfil the Abrahamic Covenant. Why? Because God is not just going to restore us to the position in Adam but take us through a wholesale upgrade in our experience. We are not just saved to survive – we are saved to triumph in Him and with Him.

The Davidic Covenant is **the Covenant of triumph.** Gods plan for us is for us to become like Him **1 John 3:2; Rev 3:20.** Our destiny is to reign with Him. Salvation leads to being discipled which leads to reigning with Him. **Acts 15** reminded the NT Church that in seeing the fallen Tabernacle of David restored it was to remind them of the whole process of restoration and transformation that takes place in Christ.

During the time that David was despised and rejected by Saul and Israel, he collected all sorts of malcontents and disaffected people who followed him. In time they were transformed into “David’s mighty men.” **1 Sam 22** Eventually, they all reigned with David in Jerusalem.

TODAY, WE ARE SEEING GOD UNFOLDING A PLAN IN ISRAEL.

We are witnessing a spiritual conflict of huge proportion. Israel is not a perfect society and in many ways it is a broken society. But this process of affliction will culminate in the physical return of Jesus at the climax of world history. All eyes will be on this Land whether people understand it or not. Why? - Because Jesus is coming to visit His people as David’s Son. David’s exile from Jerusalem in favour of Absalom, his natural - more attractive son is recorded in 2 Sam, 900 years later, Jesus too would suffer

rejection and exit from Jerusalem by the elders of Israel. David calls to the elders of Judah in **2 Sam 19:11-12** "Why are you the last to bring back the King?" It will be the leaders of Israel who will be the last to recognise Him as Messiah. **Luke 1:31-33** refers to Jesus being given the throne of his father David where He will REIGN over the house of David, forever.

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM CONTINUED through Isaac and Jacob. It was to be a dynastic Covenant. Son and grandson represented an additional aspect of the Covenant. In Isaac it showed that the covenant included SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT. God would Himself provide a substitute sacrifice for sin. In Jacob, we see TRANSFORMATION and change to be part of the plan. The Abrahamic Covenant has not been annulled, or reconstructed, or replaced. It contains the whole DNA of the Bible.

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE TO ALL THIS?

It is astonishing that many see nothing relevant in Israel's history. It is true, many took no notice of the first return of 50,000 to the Land. Yet it ensured that Jesus' birth could take place in Bethlehem of Judea in Israel. Replacement Theology disconnects Israel's reality and the national destiny of this people from God's purposes for the whole world. By allegorising the scriptures, the meaning is changed to whatever anyone wants them to mean. This allegorical method attacks the very character of God, for in abolishing the continuance of the Abrahamic Covenant, it means that God will not fulfil His purposes to bring the gospel to the whole world. **Hebrews 6:13-20** is now totally redundant because God has changed His mind; cannot be trusted and the world

has no hope. Replacement Theology attacks the very character of God. If it is at all true, then we are all in trouble. **However**, because God has honoured His word to Abraham, then I can be assured He will honour His word to me.

CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN SUBVERTED by this theology for years. And it is not just "an academic view" - it is Anti-Semitism. Martin Luther said some strange and awful things against the Jews. We don't write him off completely for that. He was a man of his times and we need to be thankful for what truth he did contend for. But the reality of the matter is this. There is a demonic plot against Israel and the world. Why? Because Satan hates Israel, He hates the idea of the world being saved and He hates the fact that Jesus is returning to this Land, to the city of Jerusalem where He is going to rule the world in righteousness and truth. Truly, there is a spiritual battle going on for the blessing of the world.

WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS DO? Israel is back in the Land because of the Promise to Abraham, not prophecy. Prophecy only validates the timing of its arrival. Jews and Gentiles are saved by grace though faith in Jesus but Israel is the vehicle of world redemption. "Salvation is of the Jews" was the message Jesus gave the Samaritan woman. **John 4:22** And Israel's return is no accident rather the greatest act of faithfulness of the God of History. **Christians are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.** This is a redemptive peace not a political one. The spiritual recovery will lead eventually to a complete spiritual recovery nationally. We thank God for signs of a greater willingness to examine who Jesus is, freed from attachments to western

theology. The prophet Zechariah says Israel will be saved in a day. God will pour on them a spirit of supplication **Zech chs 12 - 14**. Israel's journey will end in blessing for the whole world.

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