

Text: Selected Texts

Title: Israel, the Church, and the Purposes of God

Intro: Why this study???

- Many people have asked the question of continuity between modern day Israel and Israel in the Bible—‘Is Israel today the same Israel we find in the Scriptures’???
- Should we support modern Israel and to what extent???
- The recent rise of antisemitism—it is everywhere—not just politics, but in religion, in professional roles, etc.
 - Recently read an article about antisemitism in the medical field—the discrimination and exclusion of Jewish doctors and professionals
- The theological differences in many reformed circles about the identity of the Church—we continue to see ‘replacement theology’ or ‘supersessionism’ (the idea that the church has superseded or replaced Israel as the people of God)—that there’s no longer any significance of ethnic Jews in the future purposes of God.
 - That in Christ, the Church has assumed Israel’s role.
 - Historically, Replacement Theology has often become the ‘seed bed’ for some antisemitism within Christian circles.
- All of these are valid questions to which we must find biblical answers.

As we approach this important topic, we need to search the Scriptures in order to understand the Church’s role in God’s program.

- Israel—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that becomes a nation
- The Church—is the NC community of believing Jews and Gentiles as it exists in this age between the two comings of Christ
 - The Church began (formally) on the Day of Pentecost when the HS was poured out

How do Israel and the Church fit within God’s redemptive program???

Why is the relationship between Israel and the Church important???

- Our plan is to answer these questions from Romans 9,10,11 (we begin next time)

Prop: This morning we want to walk through the Bible and get a biblical perspective of Israel. This is more of a survey than a sermon. This is an examination of key passages and connecting the theological ‘dots’ to get God’s perspective.

1. God’s grace.

- See: Gen 3:7ff—the grace of God intervened and sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden
 - God covered their shame
 - God blessed Eve
 - God sent them out and keeps them from the tree of life (3:22)
- Gen 3:15—the promise that the grace of God is going to deal with man’s sin problem
- Gen 6:5,13—when sin spread and corruption increased greatly, God graciously kept a few (Noah, and his family) so that He could keep His promise
 - God preserved Noah and his generational line—God’s faithfulness
- Gen 11—God graciously confused the language of man to stop their foolish their plan
 - God was setting up for what He was about to do in Genesis 12

2. God's promise. (better known as the Abrahamic Covenant)

- Genesis 12 and God's call to Abram— a sudden word of Promise—12:1-3—"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'"
 - This is a pivotal passage that is often referred to or alluded to throughout the rest of Scripture
 - The stated plan of God was from Abram and his descendants to establish a nation among nations through whom God would bless the entire earth
 - Interesting, because at the time Abram had no children.
 - Notice: '...And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'—God will bless the nation that comes from Abram but they are not a people unto themselves
 - Gen 22:18—says that all the nations will be blessed
 - In other wds, God's plan is to bless all the world through the descendants of Abraham
 - This is God's plan and purpose—to use this ethnic nation to bring blessings to non-Jewish nations
- See: Gen 15:1-14—God promises Abram a son
- Gen 17—God appears to Abram and makes an unconditional covenant with Abram and changes his name to Abraham
 - Read: Gen 17:1-8—
 - God reiterated His promise to Abraham's descendants—Issac and Jacob
 - God is going to bless Abraham and God is going to bless the descendants of Abraham as He promised in Genesis 12—"...and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"
 - God chooses a nation that will be a blessing to the Gentiles (non-Jews).

3. God's purpose. The Israelites are to be God's instrument in reaching the world, a set-apart nation that will attract other nations to God

- By the time you get to Exodus, the Hebrews (the 12 sons of Jacob) are a growing people and they become enslaved in Egypt.
- The Book of Exodus—God graciously delivers the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt—and Israel comes forth as a nation—God gives Israel His Law—Exodus 20—the Mosaic law
 - If Israel obeys the Lord, God will use them to draw other nations and peoples to the Lord
 - Ex 19:5-6—"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."
 - God wants the nations to look upon Israel and be attracted to Israel's God
 - Deut 4:5-6—"See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great

nation is a wise and understanding people.” —as Israel obeys God, they are to be a light to the nations

- As Israel lives a holy life and worships Yahweh, they are God’s witnesses to the surrounding nations
- Throughout the OT, there are mentions of other nations, but the focus of Scripture is upon Israel—the people of God.
- However, through the centuries Israel fails to keep the Mosaic covenant which leads to their dispersion and captivity to other nations.
 - This leads eventually to a divided Kingdom after Saul, David, and Solomon
 - Sometimes you have a good king in Judah, and the people are blessed for a time.
 - All the kings of Israel (the ten tribes to the North) are bad (you can read 1&2 Kings/1&2 Chronicles).
 - Regardless, there is continual sin, and Israel fails to keep the Mosaic covenant and the Ten Commandments (which are the summation of the 613 commands in the Law)
- God promised (Deut 28-29) that if Israel forsook the Lord and began to worship the gods of other nations, the Lord would allow them to be dispersed and held captive by those nations.
- Israel fails to keep the Mosaic Law and are taken captive (the northern kingdom to Assyria in 722BC and the southern kingdom to Babylon in 586BC)

4. God’s prophets. As Israel rebels against God and His Law, God raises up prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, the minor prophets who reiterate the consequences of failing to obey God’s Word.

- You see both major and minor prophets that rise up and warn the nation of God’s wrath and judgment if they do not repent.
- ‘You have sinned against Me...I’ve been gracious and patient with you...you have worshipped idols and gods of human invention...’
- Some worshipped Baal—some sacrificed to idols...even giving their children to be burned
- The prophets give predictions of judgment, and in and alongside of those predictions they also predict that there will come a day when there will be a kingdom and a restoration of Israel.
- See: Isa 2:2-4—there is a coming day when Jerusalem will be restored, and all the promised blessings will be fulfilled
 - 2:4—there will be genuine harmony between nations
 - If you read Isaiah, there is much prophecy about God’s wrath and judgment, but there is also the prediction that God will restore the people of Israel and will restore the city of Jerusalem
- See: Isa 19:16,18,19—‘In that day...’—refers to future kingdom conditions
 - Read: 19:19-21
 - 19:23-24—Israel will become a blessing to the rest of the world as God intended her to be
 - Notice: Egypt will still be Egypt, and Israel will still be Israel (not the Church)—there’s no sense of these things being fulfilled only spiritually in the hearts of God’s people but literally and physically
 - There will be peace between ethnic Israel and the Gentile nations

- Notice: 19:25—‘Egypt My people’—‘My people’ almost always refers to ethnic Israel (Isa 10:24, 29:23, 43:6-7, 45:11, 60:21...)—and here, in the restored Kingdom, Egypt (a Gentile nation) shares in the common blessing of Israel
- The Gentile nations are not becoming Israel or a ‘spiritual Israel’ but sharing alongside the people of God Israel.

5. God’s covenant.

God makes multiple covenants with multiple people: Noah, Abraham, Moses, David

- The New Covenant—See: Jer 31:31-37—
 - God emphasizes the certainty with which Israel can expect God to fulfill the New Covenant
- See: Ezek 36:22-36—
- God promises a restoration of His people, land, blessing (both material and spiritual blessing)

6. God’s offer.

The NT: Jesus comes as Israel’s Messiah and offers Himself as the Promised One from Abraham

- Matt 1:1ff—Jesus is the promised One from the ‘son of Abraham’ in the line of David
- Matt 3:2—John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- See: Matt 10:5-7—“These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”
 - Interesting, that the Twelve must go first to the ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’
 - The disciples will go to the Gentiles—by the time you get to Matt 28, the disciples are commanded to go into all the world
- Throughout the NT Gospels, Jesus is doing ‘Messiah-like’ things (God-like things) like healing the sick, creating food, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, stilling the storm, and forgiving sin—things only God can do—proving that He is the long-awaited Messiah
- You would think that Israel would flock to Jesus in faith and belief—He is their Messiah

How did the Jews respond to Jesus’ miracles and His offer of the Kingdom???

- See: Matt 11:16-24—the people as a whole do not repent (there are some/a remnant that repent and believe)
 - They don’t want the kingdom Jesus offers
- The cities of Israel are getting firsthand evidence of Jesus’ miracles—Matt 12:22-24—they accuse Jesus of performing miracles by the power of Satan/demons
- Israel rejects Jesus as Messiah

7. God’s judgment. Jesus predicts judgment for Israel

- See: Matt 13:1-3—Jesus begins teaching in parables—13:10—Jesus explains why
- From this point, Jesus predicts judgment for Israel (Matt 23) and begins to focus upon the cross (Matt 16)
- There will be national consequences for Israel not believing.

- See: Matt 23:37-39—"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' "—Notice: there are not only spiritual consequences individually, but there are consequences nationally—ones that affect the entire nation
- 'Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!'—'house'—refers to the Temple in Jerusalem—in 70AD this judgment was fulfilled and the Temple was destroyed by the Romans
- Jesus' public ministry was over. He withdrew from national Israel until a time yet future when they will recognize Jesus as Messiah.
- Jesus made a commitment and a promise to the patriarchs of Israel that cannot be broken.
 - 'For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'—'until you say'—this judgment will not last forever
 - Jesus will ascend into heaven and there will be consequences upon the earth for Israel but these judgments cannot go on forever
- See: Luke 19:41-44—"When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."—this was fulfilled literally by the Romans in AD70
 - Why did this happen??? Because they missed their time of visitation
- How long will God's judgment last??? See: Luke 21:20-24—"...until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"—that is the period of time from Israel's captivity in 586BC until they are restored in Rev 20:1-6.
 - Gentiles will dominate and threaten Israel until they are restored
- Matt 19:28—"And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration [the renewal of the earth] when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—when Jesus comes again, the earth will be renewed and He will sit on His throne and the Apostles will be judging a restored and renewed ethnic, national Israel

8. God's timing. On the day of Christ's ascension

- See: Acts 1:3—"To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God."—a forty day seminary class
- Acts 1:6-8—"So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'"

9. God's affirmation.

- See: Rom 11:1—"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."
- Rom 11:18—"do not be arrogant toward the branches [unbelieving Israel]; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you."—the Gentiles have not somehow taken the place of Israel
- Rom 11:25-28—"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;"—because God made a promise to the patriarchs, He is going to rule upon the earth and Israel will be restored
- This is in line with Zech 12:10—"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."
- Ethnic Israel cannot be rejected because of what God promised the 'fathers' [the patriarchs]

There is a coming reign of Messiah, and all elect, ethnic Israel will be restored and blessed in God's Kingdom

- Isa 27:6—"In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, And they will fill the whole world with fruit."

Q—Has the Church replaced ethnic Israel??? No. That's not possible.

Q—Does God have a future for Israel??? Absolutely.

Q—Is God sovereign over His Church and over His people Israel??? Yes.

Notice: the Apostle Paul reflects on these things and erupts into praise and adoration:

- Rom 11:33-36—"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."