

ISRAEL

God's Chosen

Introduction & The Abrahamic Covenant

Israel is perhaps the most hated and the most loved people in human history. Satan and other nations have despised Israel from the moment it was born. Yet God maintains a special and undying love towards His covenant people.

With the breakout of war against Hamas the nation is once again front and center on the world stage. Everywhere the talk is about Israel. Does Israel have a right to defend itself? Or even exist? Is the nation really just oppressive "occupiers?" Is Israel at fault for the conflict? Why does Israel use such unprecedented morality in military engagements? Will there ever be peace in the Middle East?

And the talk of Israel is perhaps even more active within the Church. Does this war mean the Rapture is close at hand? Is the war somehow fulfillment of prophecies? What does 1948 mean? Or, is the Church the new Israel? Are the OT promises to the nation now applied to the NT Church? Has God permanently cast aside the descendents of Abraham? Since they rejected Christ, has God done away with them? How are we to understand the Abrahamic, Mosaic and New covenants as they relate to Israel? What do we do with the words of the prophets promising the nation a glorious future? Where did Israel come from historically? Why were they important to God in the first place? Are they still important to Him? How should Christians view the Jewish people?

Indeed, the current war has brought a lot of attention to the topic of Israel. This new study is going to explore what the Bible tells us about their past, their present, and their future.

At EFC we understand from the Scriptures (and teach) that God's promises to the Jewish people will come true for them in the future. The Church has not replaced Israel and has not supplanted them as the heirs of the national promises. Indeed, it will be the physical descendants of Israel – the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who will repent and be restored at the coming of Christ. Furthermore, they will be exalted in the Millennial Kingdom when Christ rules on the Davidic throne, and then the full blessings promised in the biblical covenants will be realized throughout the world.

ISRAEL'S DIVINE HONOR

Israel was no special people among the nations (Dt 7:7; Ez. 16:1-14). Yet God took them from nothing and made them something (Dt 7:6-8; Ez. 16:1-14). Out of all the nations God set his affection on them for his own purposes and chose them to be his unique covenant people. God called the Israelites "his people" (Lev 26:12); his "firstborn son" (Ex 4:22); his "inheritance" (Dt 4:20; 32:9); his "chosen, holy and treasured possession" (Dt 7:6). The privileged relationship brought honors unique to them alone: they were given the law, the temple worship, the glory of God, the prophets, adoption as sons, and the vessel for worldwide blessing (Rom 9:4-5; 11:17-24). As recipients of God's special love, revelation and promises the Israelites are spiritually "cultivated" people (Rom 11:24). God even said the law he gave them would make the nations look on them with reverence and consider them uniquely wise and near to God (Dt. 4:4-8).

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The origins of the nation of Israel are found in the great man of faith, Abraham. It was with him God made a covenant that would set the course of Redemptive history. The following Scriptures give the

details of God's covenant with Abraham: Genesis 12:2-3, 7; 13:15-17; 15:5-20; 17:4-8; and 22:15-18. The Abrahamic covenant includes:

- Abram's name would be great, a great nation, many nations, all nations blessed through him, his innumerable descendents will possess the land of Canaan forever.
- The Israelites are the single great nation who will take possession of Canaan forever. The land promise is for them alone - not for all nations. All nations will be blessed through Abraham and His seed (Jesus, Galatians 3), but the land is not part of the worldwide blessings. It is for one nation: Israel.
- The Abrahamic covenant passes to Isaac (17:21; 26:3-4)
- After Isaac it passes to Jacob (28:13-15; 35:10-13; 48:3-4).
- Jacob was renamed "Israel," and his descendents are called "Israelites."
- The Israelites had the Abrahamic covenant reaffirmed to them (Ez. 36:28; 37:21-28; 39:25-29).

God promised Abraham he would become a great man with great honor throughout history. He also promised to bring forth many nations from his body, and that through his seed the nations of the world would be blessed. Additionally, God promised to make him into a great nation by giving him descendents as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the shore. Those descendents, through Isaac and then Jacob, would possess the land of Canaan forever, as "an eternal possession."