

# The Promises to Israel

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In this article, which was originally written as a letter to a man who held modern evangelical Christian views regarding Israel and prophecy, I go over some of the promises to Israel, and what they mean in the light of the Gospel.

**L**ET us consider first, one of the strongest promises to the nation of Israel, as found in the writings of Jeremiah:

## 1. The Promise in Jeremiah 31:35-37

### Jeremiah 31

<sup>35</sup> Thus says the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is His name:

<sup>36</sup> If those ordinances depart from before me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever.

<sup>37</sup> Thus says the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord.

This seems to be an unconditional promise to the lineal descendants of Abraham. But the conditions for the fulfillment of this promise are stated earlier in the chapter:

<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

<sup>32</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them

out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord:

<sup>33</sup> But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>34</sup> ...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

To a people in whose hearts His law is written, the favor of God is assured. They are one with Him. But the Jews had separated themselves from God, and it was in this condition that they were when Jesus came, which condition led them to be in bondage to a heathen nation. Because God had shown them such great favor in the past, they excused their sins, and flattered themselves that they were better than other men.

If God would give His special blessings to a people that were in such a condition, they would only become more proud and self-satisfied. Whereas in actual fact, because of the light and privileges they had, which the heathen did not have, they were even worse off. This is why John the Baptist and Jesus both gave stern warnings and rebukes to the Jews, especially to their leaders.

John declared that God could raise from the stones children of Abraham:

**Matthew 3**

<sup>9</sup> And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Abraham was called out from a heathen people and land, and in like manner God could call others. John declared that:

**Matthew 3**

<sup>10</sup> Every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

It is not by their name, heritage, profession, or history that a

people are judged acceptable to God: but by their character and life.

The popular view that there are unconditional promises made to people springs from a lack of appreciation of the nature and purpose of the law of God. God's law is the foundation of His government, as is seen by its placement inside the ark of the covenant in the temple, underneath the mercy seat. This ark was the throne of the presence of the Lord. By placing the law inside it, God was declaring that His government is built upon His law.

Furthermore, the law is not merely a code by which He rules over others, it is the actual expression of His own character. The law is holy, just, good and perfect (*Romans* 7:12; *Psalms* 19:7); and God is also the same. He asks us to keep His law because He keeps it.

### **Leviticus 11**

<sup>44</sup> Be holy, for I am holy.

God's children have His law written in their hearts. Therefore, God will never make a promise that supersedes His law, or sets it aside. Some people suppose that the gospel is a way around the law, a kind of "back door" whereby sinners can sneak into heaven. But it is not so. The law demanded the death of the sinner, and not even the Son of God could escape its penalty when he stood in the place of the sinner.

The gospel offers us deliverance from the condemnation of our past sins, because another One died in our place. But if it stopped there, it would still leave us with an evil nature, doomed to continue in sin, and therefore continue in condemnation. So the gospel also offers us a new life, in place of the old. This requires us to relinquish our old sin-polluted heart, in order to be fully free from condemnation. This is *our* death. Two deaths are required for deliverance: the death of the Lamb (Christ) and the death of our "old man." This is clearly taught both in the Passover (a Lamb was sacrificed, and the

firstborn of Egypt died before the people were free); and in the New Testament:

**Romans 6**

<sup>3</sup> Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?

<sup>4</sup> Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection:

<sup>6</sup> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him [two deaths], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

<sup>7</sup> For he that is dead is freed from sin.

After these two works, another work of sanctification or growing into the Lord is required. This is called,

**Hosea 6**

<sup>3</sup> ...following on to know the Lord,

—or:

**2 Peter 3**

<sup>18</sup> Growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord.

All of this is necessary in order to pass the requirements of the law of God, and therefore qualify as children of God, and true children of Abraham (not just children of the flesh, as Ishmael was; but children of the spirit, as Isaac was).

It is vain to wait for God to work a miracle to “make us believe” when the appreciation of the gifts and light He has already given are despised and refused. This is the condition that the physical descendants of Abraham find themselves in today. Their fathers rejected the truth, and they are raised in that rejection. Only a turning back to the truth can save them. This will be accomplished to those few among them who are hungry and thirsting for righteousness, by the preaching of the true gospel. Then they will be grafted back into the tree,

which is Christ's family.

It is the same for Catholics. They descended from those apostles to whom Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the faithful (*Matthew* 16:18). Catholics claim this as an unconditional promise proving that they are and always will be the true church of God. But it is a false claim, for the Rock that the gates of hell would not prevail over is Jesus Christ, and only those who cling to Him are safe. The Catholic church left Jesus Christ and joined themselves to false gods and to the power of the state, therefore the gates of hell have already prevailed against them, and will continue to do so.

Every movement, church, or nation that God has called, has its day of opportunity to do His work. When they pass that time, the work is given to others. This is plainly stated in many scriptures:

**Matthew 21**

<sup>43</sup> The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

**Matthew 7**

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

**Revelation 18**

<sup>2</sup> Babylon the great is fallen,...

<sup>4</sup> ...Come out of her my people.

**Revelation 2**

<sup>5</sup> I will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent.

**Revelation 3**

<sup>16</sup> So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth.

## 2. The Land That Was Promised

In Moses' song of victory (*Exodus* 15), it is stated:

### **Exodus 15**

<sup>17</sup> You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

But the Lord's throne is in heaven (*Psalms* 11:4). The true sanctuary, the real dwelling-place of God,

### **Hebrews 8**

<sup>2</sup> ...which the Lord pitched, and not man,

–is in heaven. This is in harmony with the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and which led them to count themselves strangers on this earth, and to look for a heavenly country, and...

### **Hebrews 11**

<sup>10</sup> ...for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Since God promised the land to Abraham and his seed, but Abraham is now dead, it is clear that the promise could only be fulfilled by the resurrection of Abraham. Therefore, it was God's intention to take them right on into heaven, and thus fulfil His promise to Abraham. This is the same inheritance which is promised to Christians in the gospel:

### **Luke 22**

<sup>29</sup> And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me;

<sup>30</sup> That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

### **Matthew 8**

<sup>11</sup> And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>12</sup> But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### **Revelation 21**

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

<sup>2</sup> And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

<sup>7</sup> He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

## **3. God's Purpose For Israel**

Compare *Exodus 6:7* with the new covenant promise. In *Exodus 6*, God declares His purpose for the Israelites:

### **Exodus 6**

<sup>7</sup> And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, which brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

After the recital of the law, and the promise of the Israelites to obey, God declared:

### **Deuteronomy 5**

<sup>28</sup> I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto you: they have well said all that they have spoken.

<sup>29</sup> O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Their promise to obey the Lord was broken very quickly. But it was never God's purpose that they should try to obey His law with their old, uncircumcised hearts. It was their inability to see their true spiritual condition that led them to make promises that they could not keep. They did not have the faith of Abraham, who learned that...

#### **Romans 4**

<sup>21</sup> What God promises, He is able to perform.

Later on in history, God re-iterated His purpose for His people:

#### **Jeremiah 31**

<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

<sup>32</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the Lord:

<sup>33</sup> But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Everyone recognizes this as a gospel promise (see *Hebrews* 8:10), yet it was always available to Israel (since it was simply the same as the promise made to Abraham), and at least some of them grasped it. The purpose is the same as that spoken in *Exodus* 6:7. There is therefore no difference between God's purpose for the church, and God's purpose for Israel.

When God spoke to Pharaoh, He said:

#### **Exodus 9**

<sup>16</sup> In very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

The declaring of God's name throughout all the earth is the



gospel. It is magnifying God's character and law, and His power to save, which is just the work that Jesus did while on earth. In *Revelation* 18, the last message given to the world is outlined. It starts with the following words:

### **Revelation 18**

<sup>1</sup> And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

Here again is the power of God, and the whole earth sees it and is lightened with the glory. The glory of God is His character. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God replied:

### **Exodus 33**

<sup>19</sup> I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

Therefore, the whole intention of God's purpose in choosing Israel, and the whole intention of God's purpose in choosing the church, was to lighten the earth with the knowledge of His character. This work would arouse the increasing opposition of Satan and his angels, and would lead to a conflict in which the character of God and that of Satan are clearly contrasted.

This took place in the life of Jesus, culminating in the demonstration on the cross, at which Satan was unmasked...at least to the heavenly agencies, and to those among men who were near that event. But the same test needs to be brought to the whole world. When that is done, the work will finish.

God's character is darkened by Satan's lies, and this misrepresentation leads people to fear God and disobey Him. The revelation of His true character, through the church on earth, is therefore the means by which this rebellion is brought to an end. This work, the conflict, final battle, and results, are outlined in the prophecies of *Revelation* 13 and onward.

The weapons of warfare on God's side are truth and love. The weapons on Satan's side are error, lies, rewards, bribes,

pressure, fines, persecution, tortures, and finally death. We should be exceedingly wary of any religious teaching that claims to be Christian but promotes the use of force to further God's cause. When the disciples thought to do this, by suggesting that fire be called down on a Samaritan village that would not receive them, Jesus declared,

#### **Luke 9**

<sup>55</sup> You know not what spirit you are of.

<sup>56</sup> For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

### **4. The Real Standard of God's Blessing**

God's people are not to be identified by their earthly prizes and accomplishments; by how great their IQ is; or by worldly wealth and attainments. None of these are the true measure of God's blessing. Jesus would not have won any Nobel Prizes in His day; in fact He was counted as an enemy of religion and the state. If we were to judge how blessed Jesus was, by how many prizes He won from earthly authorities, how would we rate Him? Most of the other prophets mentioned in the Bible were despised and persecuted. How many Nobel Prizes would they have won?

When so-called christian Europe was plunged into the Dark Ages, the Islamic countries were growing and prospering in the knowledge of arts, sciences, and medicine. Would we dare apply this kind of rule at that time? Then where would God's blessings have been manifest?

But these arguments are fleshly, and promote pride in the flesh. This should be enough to alarm us for Paul warned about this:

#### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [not many Nobel Prize winners] are called:

<sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to con-

found the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

<sup>28</sup> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

<sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in His presence.

The signs we must look for which show God's blessings are advancement in truth and holiness in life.

### **1 Peter 3**

<sup>18</sup> But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Do the people currently called Jews have these signs? If not, then they lack God's spiritual blessings, which are the only blessings that will endure beyond this mortal life. We might also remember that it was Cain's descendants who distinguished themselves in earthly pursuits:

### **Genesis 4**

<sup>19</sup> And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

<sup>20</sup> And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.

<sup>21</sup> And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

<sup>22</sup> And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Likewise in the New Testament times, it was the Greeks and Romans who pursued wisdom, architectural brilliance, and other earthly pursuits. The New Testament Christians were, for the most part, a poor despised people of little renown. But they possessed God's spiritual blessings: forgiveness and cleansing from sin, and the new life of Christ in their souls. If people in the world were not so blinded by sin, they would trade all their worldly wealth and possessions for this gift of eternal life.

## 5. The Cause of Bigotry

It is claimed by some Bible expositors that to deny the continuation of God's promise to the physical descendants of the Jews is what leads to acts of prejudice and wars of genocide against them. I've already mentioned the statements that Jesus and John the Baptist made regarding the Jewish people. Both of them made it clear that the continuation of the Jews as a nation under God depended on their reception of truth, and bringing forth the fruits of a Christlike character.

Neither Jesus nor John had any prejudice or genocidal plans against the Jews. They were free from bigotry and prejudice and building of walls based upon earthly distinctions. Jesus tore down the walls of tradition that were built up to exclude the Gentiles and Samaritans, in order to show that any people who met God's conditions (of repentance and faith), could also become His children, and partakers in His promises.

What really leads to bigotry, prejudice, and eventually persecution, is pride of the flesh. When I think that my flesh is greater than yours, then it naturally follows that I will despise you, and be prejudiced against you. This was very evident in Hitler's views of an "Arian nation" and his consideration of the Jews (and the Russians) as "inferior races."

Therefore, if we would now think that the current nation of physical Israel had a greater flesh than the Islamic nations (because of their greater worldly accomplishments), then inevitably we will build walls of bigotry and prejudice against Moslems, and that will lead to conflicts and wars.

Christ's kingdom is...

### **John 18**

<sup>36</sup> ...not of this world else His servants would fight.

In this day, if we find ourselves fighting (or wanting to fight) with the carnal weapons of war to establish a Christian nation (or a Jewish state), then we have gone astray from the gospel

and are building another papacy (an imaginary kingdom of God on this world). Jesus broke down the walls of prejudice against the Gentiles and Samaritans. I don't believe He would approve of walls of prejudice against Moslems if He were here on earth today.

Sin is the real enemy, not another nation or religion. This is a distraction and will cause us to waste our time fighting the wrong enemy.