

Week 9: Covenant Theology and the Church

A. Introduction

1. God made many promises to the nation of Israel

- Some of those promises were fulfilled in Israel's history
- Others were still awaiting fulfillment at some point in the future
- At the time of the New Testament, Israel was still waiting for the fulfillment of the promises regarding a restored kingdom in connection to the New Covenant
- The New Testament teaches that those promises are fulfilled in the church through Christ

2. How can promises made to Israel find their fulfillment in the Church?

- Jeremiah 31:31 - The New Covenant is for "Judah" and Israel
- 1 Corinthians 11:25 - Written to a primarily Gentile church, yet they participate in the New Covenant
- 2 Corinthians 3:2-6 - Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, yet he is a minister of the New Covenant

3. Did God change His mind?

B. The Unity of God's Eternal Plan

God has only ever had one plan of salvation: to bless the whole world through the Jewish Christ. This plan was revealed in part in the Old Testament, but it was not revealed in full until the New Testament. This is why Paul refers to it as a "mystery" (i.e. something previously revealed in part, now revealed in full). That mystery is the inclusion of all the nations as the people of God through Jesus Christ.

- The One Plan of God: Ephesians 1:9-10
- The Mystery of Christ: Colossians 1:25-28; Ephesians 3:1-10

C. Israel Received the Covenants of Promise

1. Israel is the Natural Offspring of Abraham

- Romans 11:1 - Israel is "God's people"
- Romans 4:1 - Abraham is their "forefather according to the flesh"
- 2 Corinthians 11:22 - To be a "Hebrew" or "Israelite" is to be an "offspring of Abraham"

2. The covenants of the Old Testament were given specifically to Israel

- Acts 3:25-26 - The Jews are the "sons of the Covenant"
- Romans 9:3-5 - The "covenants" belong to Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh"
- Ephesians 2:12 - The "covenants of promise" belong to Israel

3. The purpose of those covenants was to promise and produce the Jewish Messiah

- Israel was never designed to be an end in itself, but to bring blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:3)
- They would do this by bringing forth the Jewish Messiah (Romans 9:5)
- The purpose of the covenants was to reveal the free righteousness of Christ for all believers (Rom 10:4)

D. Global Blessing through Faith in Christ Was Always Israel's Intended End

Romans 4:11-12

- Abraham was justified through faith prior to receiving circumcision
- Circumcision was given as a confirmation of the promise, not as the basis for it
- This was to show that he is the father of those who "believe" even if they aren't circumcised
- Therefore, Abraham has dual offspring: "all who believe" as well as "the circumcised" (See Romans 9:8)

Galatians 3:16-17

- Jesus is the promised "seed" of Abraham
- This promise guaranteed blessing to the nations freely through the Messiah
- The Law that came in later could not undo that promise, but was subservient to it (Gal 3:19-22)

Galatians 3:12

- But all who believe are the true "sons of Abraham"
- This letter is written to a largely Gentile church

Galatians 4:21-31

- Jews who regard the Old Covenant as an end in itself oppose the true end of the Old Covenant
- Those who receive the blessings of the New Covenant by faith are the true children of promise

Main Point: Israel's purpose from the beginning was to reveal and produce the Jewish Messiah who would freely bless the nations through faith (Jews and Gentiles who believe). Generally speaking, the Jews in the days of Jesus and the Apostles failed to accept that their nation and covenant were subservient to this greater purpose (2 Corinthians 3:14-16; John 1:11).

E. The Transition from Israel to the Church

Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, is the Cornerstone of a New Building

- Inclusion in this building (i.e. God's House) depends on one's relationship to the Cornerstone
- Many Jews reject the cornerstone and are excluded
- Many Gentiles receive the cornerstone and are added
 - Psalm 118:22-23
 - Ephesians 2:19-22
 - 1 Peter 2:4-10

Through union with the Jewish Messiah all believers are now the true Israel of God:

- John 1:12-13
- Galatians 3:26-28
- Romans 2:28-29
- Philippians 3:3
- Romans 11:16-24
- Galatians 6:16

God's Promises Find their Fulfillment in the Church

- The church is the true Israel because of union with the Jewish Messiah
- Therefore, it is not unfaithful of God to fulfill to the church the promises made to Israel
- God has not broken any of His promises to Israel or merely replaced Israel with the church. Instead, He has fulfilled His promises to them fully in and through Jesus Christ
 - Jesus is the True Israel (Matt 2:15; Matt 4:1, 11; John 15:1ff; cf. Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15:1-8)
 - All of God's promises to Israel are "Yes and Amen" in Him (2 Corinthians 1:19-20)