

Which Old Testament Promises Apply to You?

Old Testament promises made to the children of Israel apply to modern-day believers, theologian John Piper says. However, the way the promises are fulfilled may look differently because of Jesus Christ.

Piper says the answer is twofold.

Step 1:

2 Cor.1:20 says, "For all the promises of God in Him are 'Yes,' and in Him 'Amen,' to the glory of God through us." Now, I think that means that in union with Christ, the Messiah, Christians become the heirs of all the promises in the Old Testament. And there are different ways to explain why that is, and one is to realize that in spiritual union with the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ, Christians are the messianic people, the true Israel, the heirs of everything promised to the true Israel.

And Step 2:

The coming of Jesus, the Messiah, into the world, His atoning work on the cross, His resurrection, His reign in heaven and His authoritative teaching—as in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5–7—all of that together alters the way some of the promises and teachings of the Old Testament are to be inherited and applied. In other words, when Step One says we are heirs of all the promises, we have to take into account that those promises may be fulfilled differently today because of the changes that have come into history through the words and the work of Jesus.

For example, in His death for sins, Jesus effectively

replaces the Old Testament priesthood, the Old Testament sacrifices and all of those ceremonial provisions that surrounded that process of sacrifice. It is all over the book of Hebrews, but here are Heb. 10:12 and 14: "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. ... For by one offering He has forever perfected those who are sanctified." That means that some of the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled differently now than they were then.

Through this process, God's Word will not return void. But when Scriptures are taken out of context, such as 2 Chron. 7:14, believers may end up disappointed.

Many believers used the verse as a guiding point for the recent American election. Piper writes:

First, my people ("If my people") –the people are no longer merely the Jewish, ethnic people of God, but the blood-bought people of the Messiah united to Him by faith. And, second, the reference to their land (cleanse their land, "heal their land") does not apply to the land of the church, much less the church in America, referring to the land of America. It doesn't refer to America, because the church bought by the blood of Jesus is a pilgrim people drawn from all the lands, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. The church has no homeland except heaven and eventually the new earth.

Therefore, the application we make of this verse is not that if Christians will repent God will heal America. We have no such promise in the Bible. Rather, if Christians repent, turn from their wicked ways, humble themselves and pray to God, He will do a mighty work in and through the church however He pleases. And I think if Joe takes these two steps and these two illustrations that I have given from Lev. 5 and 2 Chron. 7, he will be well on his way of appropriating the Old Testament for good Christian use.

Do you agree? Sound off! {eoa}