

Discover an Often Neglected Key to Understanding Israel's Land Promise

These days, many are uncertain as to how to interpret Israel's land promise in light of the New Covenant. Many are unsure of how to respond to the denial of many Christians that promise still exists.

Sadly, no lack of controversy surrounds the subject. Many important principles of Scripture interpretation come into play. One often neglected key can help.

First, a quick bit of background needs to be set. Scholars generally agree that the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible. The Scriptures themselves teach us how to understand new and inspired revelation in light of earlier text.

The five books of Moses, known as the Pentateuch or Torah, serve as the foundational holy text. The Hebrew prophets and other writers built squarely on that foundation. Their newer writings amplified and applied God's Word, taking it to the next level of redemption history. Sometimes they described new covenants—like those God made through Abraham, Moses and David. Jeremiah described a profoundly new covenant in which God's Word would be engraved in human hearts.

Since the New Covenant is not the first of God's several covenants, how did the ancient writers of Scripture interpret newer covenants in light of earlier ones?

When new revelation was given to biblical authors, they never re-interpreted the pre-existing Word of God to accommodate their new revelation. Rather, new revelation was accepted as divine truth based on what had been previously acknowledged to be true

To qualify as holy canon, no new text could refute or replace the foundational meaning of earlier text. A critical test for judging the divine inspiration of any proposed new writing was its consistency with prior writings. If the proposed passage or scroll or covenant contradicted God's pre-established Word, it disqualified as Holy Scripture. In fact, any new covenant would be primarily interpreted in light of older covenants, never the other way around.

Yeshua and the New Covenant's Jewish authors would have been strongly influenced by this sacred principle. Therefore, when they give fresh meaning to an Old Covenant passage or principle, they build on or amplify, not abolish, the original contextual meaning of that passage or principle. (How many times have you read Scripture only to hear God speak deeper, fresh personal meaning to you each time?) Thus, the Messiah said He came to fulfill, not do away with, the Torah. He is not the terminator, but the perfection, completion and goal of all Hebrew Scripture.

By this principle, God's unconditional land promise to Abraham in Genesis 15, inherited by the Jewish people, still applies to them. Those promises have been amplified by the Mosaic covenant (law) and the prophets. By the New Covenant, they may also apply, on another level, to the metaphorical land of Christian hearts. Meanwhile, some Gentiles may also be called to live in Israel, just as some Gentile have always lived in the Promised Land.

Because the New Covenant was written in light of the Old, confusion results if we reverse that order and interpret the Old Covenant primarily in light of the New. Such an approach amounts to reading the Bible backwards. It almost guarantees the Scriptures will not be rightly understood.

Few of us would read a book by starting two-thirds into it, finish it and then pick up on page one. As an author, I wouldn't be too happy if that's how my writings were read! In

this sober hour of history, God wants us to “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Don’t you?

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