

Does the Promised Land Still Belong to the Jewish People?

Today there are many different opinions regarding critical issues about Israel and the Jewish people, even among believers. Many have questions such as:

1. "Can a religious Jewish person be saved apart from faith in Yeshua?"
2. "Are the Jewish people still the 'chosen people'?"
3. "Does the promised land (Israel) still belong to the Jewish people?"

Such questions tend to create a spiritual ambiguity in the minds of many, which produces an uncertain rather than fervent witness to the Jewish people. As believers, this brings us to a foundational issue: the need for proper discipleship concerning God's promises, plan and purpose for the Jewish people according to His Word.

Let us now look to this plumb line for our faith in order to help clarify the issues raised by these three questions:

1. "Can a religious Jewish person be saved apart from faith in Yeshua?" No. No matter how religious, no one can be forgiven of their sins and accepted by God without personal faith in Yeshua. It was to Jewish men that Yeshua spoke when He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Think of it this way: If there were some other way for Jewish people, or any people, to be saved other than through faith in Yeshua, then God the Father would have been a fool for letting His Son die on a cross! If keeping the Law of Moses could save people, Yeshua would have told people to keep the Law. But instead, Yeshua declared that Jewish people and all people need to trust in

Him: "If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46).

2. "Are the Jewish people still the 'chosen people'?" Yes, according to the Law of Moses (Deut. 7:6; 14:2), the Prophets (Is. 41:8; Amos 3:2), the Writings (Ps. 33:12; 135:4), and the New Covenant (Rom. 9:3-5, 11:1-2). But isn't the body of Messiah called a chosen people as well? Yes, 1 Peter 2:9 declares all believers in Yeshua to be "a chosen generation (or people), a royal priesthood." However, please note that Peter refers to the body of Messiah as "a chosen people," but not as "*the* chosen people." Though Israel is chosen for a specific purpose (see next question), during this time of Israel's national unbelief, they are "sidelined" from being God's instrument of service until they return to God and confess Yeshua as the Messiah (Matt. 23:39; Hosea 5:15).

For the present time, the body of Messiah is the spiritually active instrument of ministry, "a royal priesthood" for service and worship. Though Israel is chosen to be a "witness people" for the Lord (Is. 43:10-12, 44:8), they cannot be an active witness until they first believe in Yeshua as Lord (Rom. 10:14, 15). Israel is chosen as a people for God's purpose, which, in the past, was to bring Messiah into the world (Rom. 9:5), and in the future, to bring about the return of Messiah to planet earth (Matt. 23:39; Zech. 12:10). This will happen when the Jewish people collectively confess their national sin of rejecting Messiah (Is. 53). Though nationally chosen for God's purpose, each individual Jewish person still has to have personal faith in God's salvation on God's terms to be saved. Otherwise they are as lost and unsaved as any pagan (Jer. 9:25, 26).

3. "Does the promised land (Israel) still belong to the Jewish people?" Yes! The present spiritual condition of Israel does not change the promises of God, for even though Israel is nationally unfaithful, He is still faithful. This is Paul's argument in Romans 11:1-2, where he writes, "I say then, God

has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite. ... God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew." Israel returned to the land after the Babylonian exile, but that wasn't to be their last return. In fact, Isaiah prophesies Israel's return to the same land for the second time in Isaiah 11:11-12: "Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people ... from the four corners of the earth." The Jewish people's present return to the land is the fulfillment of this promise in Isaiah.

Now this doesn't mean that everything the present Israeli government does is praiseworthy, but it does mean that Israel is entitled to the land, and that we, as believers, must support them in this. Even though this and their status as the chosen people remains unchanged, each Jewish person can only be saved through personal faith in Messiah. For all people, Jew and Gentile, Israeli and Palestinian, there is no peace apart from the Prince of Peace.

By understanding these critical, sometimes volatile issues, and having biblical answers to address them, believers in Messiah can have a boldness and confidence to share their faith with Jewish people. Outside of God's miraculous, heart-changing power found in the Good News, there is no solution to the present and future problems we see in the Middle East, and the world.

So get involved! Share this with your friends! You can help get the message out. Since God has not forsaken the Jewish people, let us not forsake our responsibility to proclaim Yeshua to Jewish people.

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