

Will American Christians Ultimately Stand By Israel?

Support for Israel and the Jewish people is wavering among many Christians today. This is too bad, because for the first time in recent history, Jewish attitudes towards Christians and the gospel are changing—for the better!

Many Jewish people, including some of my own not-yet-believing family members, now understand that true Christians are the best friends of the Jewish people. One of my family members told me the other day that he was surprised to find out how many Christians support Israel, hate Anti-semitism and love the Jewish people.

This is really good news for Jewish evangelism as my people are beginning to have a more positive view of Jesus and His followers. So, it is critical that we encourage believers in Jesus to stand with Israel—for the right reasons.

For many years, there was strong support for the Jewish people, especially in light of the Holocaust and all the excitement surrounding the formation of the modern state of Israel. But, our younger generation did not live through these events. This is why we need to understand what the Bible has to say about God's plan and purposes for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.

So, take a moment with me now to examine the role of the Jewish people in the plan of God and especially how the Jewish people will play a critical role in the return of Christ and establishment of the Kingdom. For if the Jewish people do not play a role in God's plan, then why would Jewish evangelism be important? After all, there are only 15 million Jewish people in the world.

However, if God's mighty hand still rests upon the Jewish

people, then reaching Israel for the Messiah Jesus takes on a new and strategic spiritual importance.

The Apostle Paul understood the ongoing role of Israel in God's plan of redemption when he penned these words, "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15).

The future of Israel and the Jewish people is bright, but we must understand the very foundation of God's promises to understand why this is true.

The Promise

Let's begin by looking at the key biblical promise which outlines God's plan for the Jewish people found in Genesis 12:1-3, often called the Abrahamic Covenant, as we can only begin to understand God's plan and purposes for the Jewish people by understanding the nature of this covenant.

I divide the passage into two parts:

"Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

God makes a total of eight promises to Abram. In verses 1-2, God told Abram he would be given a land, become a great nation, that he would be personally blessed and his name made great and finally that he would be a blessing to others.

In verse 3 there are three additional promises to the Gentiles. First of all, those who are not physical descendants of Abram will experience God's blessing—for blessing Abram and his children.

Secondly, those who curse the descendants of Abram would themselves be cursed. It is important to note that the Hebrew word used for *curse* in the first instance literally means, “to make light.” The second word, translated curse refers to the usual term for judgment often used in both Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. The play on words should not be missed. Those who devalue or make light of Israel’s role in the plan of God or somehow demean the role of the Jewish people will then actually experience the very same curse God promised to the Jewish people that they would receive for disobedience to the Torah.

Thirdly, God would use the Jewish people to bring blessings to the world.

This elevates the importance of properly understanding what it means for the Jewish people to be chosen by God for His purposes. It is a serious issue for Jewish people who are themselves chosen, but also important for non-Jews as this passage describes the ongoing benefits and repercussions from the way in which Gentiles treat the Jewish people.

An Unconditional Covenant

The covenant is unconditional as there are no time limits or conditions tagged to the promise. It would be easiest within our space constraints to focus on two of the promises:

1. The first promise: A people. God miraculously created a people from the aged loins of Abraham and Sarah. If Israel is anything at its core, it is a people, or community, bound by ethnicity and covenantal purpose.

Fundamentally, to be Jewish is to be part of a people that God created for His holy purposes. We are a community— created by God for Him and for one another. God has promised He would preserve His people until those purposes were fulfilled. The Bible makes it clear the Jewish people have not been destroyed because God will not be diverted from fulfilling His plan for

the chosen people and for the world.

2. The second promise: The land. Clearly, the Jewish people are not the only group of people that has been dispersed from its national boundaries, but the Jewish people may be the only people created as a nation prior to receiving their national boundaries. It is important to understand that God chose Israel before they emerged on the international scene as a nation. In fact, Israel had no prior existence before the Abrahamic Covenant and would have had no existence outside of the direct intervention of the One who created the heavens and the earth, determined the boundaries of nations and holds the hearts of the kings of nations in His powerful hand.

We should not think it odd at all that in the midst of creating the Jewish people as a nation, and all of the unique and special revelation this included, that God would also literally determine the specific boundaries of Israel's national existence in Genesis 15:17-21, and these boundaries have yet to be fulfilled!

And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants

I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites and the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

It is also important to remember this land deed passes from Abraham to his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob, as noted in many passages, but Genesis 35:9-12 is a good summary of God's unfolding plan and promises to the descendants of Abraham.

Then God appeared to Jacob again ,when he came from Paddan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him,"Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel

shall be your name.” So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I will give this land.”

The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

Yet, these promises of nationhood and of a land created for that nation only become spiritually meaningful in light of God’s promise to bless, use and enter into a relationship with the people He created through Abraham and Sarah.

The promised spiritual restoration of the Jewish people is the key that unlocks the fulfillment of God’s promises.

It is God Himself who will one day take responsibility for spiritually re-engaging His *wayward* chosen people. This was promised even before the Jewish people entered the Promised Land for the very first time.

“And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them (Deut. 4:28-31).

In 1983, Ronald Reagan said this of Israel: “Since the foundation of the State of Israel, the United States has stood by her and helped her to pursue security, peace, and economic growth. Our friendship is based on historic moral and strategic ties, as well as our shared dedication to democracy” (Remarks at White House meeting with Jewish leaders).

This end-time repentance and turning of the Jewish people to the Messiah is fundamental to their once again being blessed by God and being used by Him to fulfill the purposes for which Israel was created and chosen.

This end-time turning of the Jewish remnant to Yeshua (Jesus) is further described by the prophet in Zechariah 12:10.

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

At that time, the Jewish people will become the Israel God always intended and receive the fullness of covenantal blessings promised to our forefather Abraham. The Jewish people will then be characterized by *shalom* as they will have peace as a people: peace in the land of promise, peace with the God who made the promises and peace among the nations to whom they were called to shine the light of God’s presence and commands.

President Harry Truman said this of Israel: “I had faith in Israel before it was established, I have faith in it now. I believe it has a glorious future before it—not just another sovereign nation, but as an embodiment of the great ideals of our civilization.” (As quoted by the Jewish Virtual Library)

The Apostle Paul confirms that the Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled one day—future to our present day in fact! He writes, “Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness” (Rom. 11:12).

Conclusion

The church in general, and especially Gentile believers, should understand the significant role non-Jews have in God’s

plan as founded on the Abrahamic promises. Gentiles are participants in the Abrahamic Covenant in that they are spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:6-9). This does not mean that Gentiles become Jews upon receiving Yeshua as this is passed through physical lineage beginning with the patriarchs. However, Gentiles do become the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham by faith as God's blessings have come to "those far off" (Eph. 2:11-13) through the mediation of the Jewish Messiah.

The Abrahamic Covenant implies at least two major responsibilities non-Jewish believers in Jesus have towards the Messianic Jewish community and to the Jewish people in general.

First of all, the Church, knowing God's covenantal faithfulness, must support the Jewish people and pray for the Jewish people.

Secondly, the Church must accept the mandate found in Romans 1:16 and 11:11 and bring the Gospel to the Jew first by making the Jewish people jealous. We cannot allow Jewish evangelism to become the great omission of the Great Commission.

Together then, Messianic Jews and Gentile followers of Yeshua, bound together through the Messiah and the Abrahamic Covenant, must work together as partners with God in progressing towards this great day of covenantal fulfillment.

I pray that we may all recognize the role God has given to the Jewish people today!

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