

The Covenantal Status of Israel and the Church

I. The Abrahamic Covenant

Stated where?

Genesis 12:1-3/13:16/15:5/17:5-6

Made between what parties?

God with Abraham and his “seed.”

Conditional or unconditional?

Conditioned upon Abraham leaving Ur and migrating to Canaan, which he did, eventually.

Promises:

1. God will make Abraham (through his seed) a great nation
2. God will bless Abraham and make his name great
3. God will make Abraham (through his seed) a blessing
4. Those who bless Abraham (and his seed) will be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed.
5. (in later passages) God will make Abraham’s seed numerous “as the sand of the sea” and make him father of many nations.
6. This is an eternal covenant (Genesis 17:7)

Time and manner of fulfillment:

1. Literal fulfillment of those promises that apply to Abraham personally.
2. The principal blessing promised to Abraham was that of justification by faith (Gen.15:6/ Rom.4:1-3, 9-12/ Gal.3:6-9, 14).
3. The promises concerning his numerous seed have an initial fulfillment in the Arab, Edomite, and, especially, the Jewish races. The number swells when the spiritual seed of Abraham (the Church) are added to the natural seed (Galatians 3:29).
4. The Jewish nation having apostasized, however, the promise of Abraham’s seed bringing blessing to the world finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, through the gospel (Gal.3:8, 16).
5. Any residual promises accruing to Abraham’s “seed” belong only to Christ and those who are in Him (Gal.3:9, 29). No part of the inheritance can be claimed by those who are merely Jewish by bloodline but who reject Christ (Gal.4:30-31).

II. The Palestinian Covenant

Stated where?

Genesis 12:7/13:14-17/ 15:18-21/17:8

Made between what parties?

Really an addendum to the Abrahamic Covenant, made by God with Abraham and his “seed.”

Conditional or unconditional?

No conditions stated initially. Conditions later mentioned (see under Sinaitic Covenant).

Promises:

1. The seed of Abraham would inherit all the land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates, the land of ten Canaanite nations, variously called Palestine, Canaan, and (eventually) Israel.
2. This is an eternal possession to Abraham’s “seed”

Time and manner of fulfillment:

1. Initial literal fulfillment to the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob [i.e., ethnic Israel] in days of Joshua (Joshua 21:43, 45/23:14), confirmed in the days of Solomon’s (II Chronicles 9:26).

2. In the Old Testament times, there was no unconditional grant to the land to Israel. The land belonged to God, and the Jews were conditional tenants (Lev.25:23), whose right to retain possession of the land depended on their faithfulness to God (Lev. 18:24-28/Deut.28:15, 21, 63)
3. In the present messianic phase of fulfillment, the Jews having forfeited their claim to the land, according to the conditions stated by Moses, and the promise transfers to the remnant people of the Messiah (the Church—Matt.5:5) and is understood to include the whole world (Rom.4:13) as well as a “heavenly country” (Heb.11:14-16).

III. The Sinaitic Covenant

Stated where?

Exodus 19:5-6

Made between what parties?

God with the mixed-racial group that came out of Egypt with Moses, mostly ethnic Israelites.

Conditional or unconditional?

Conditioned upon Israel’s obedience to God and faithfulness to the covenant (see Jeremiah 18:7-10)

Promises:

1. Israel will be God’s treasured people above other nations, identified as His Kingdom and His intermediary priesthood to the rest of the world.
2. By implication, they will be the “seed” to whom the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (e.g. the possession of the land of Canaan) apply.

Time and manner of fulfillment:

1. At Sinai, Israel was betrothed or married to God. God made them a great nation and gave them the land of Canaan. He blessed them with prosperity and security, when obedient, and with prophetic communications, when disobedient.
2. Israel was faithless to the marriage and played the harlot in worshipping many gods. God, the betrayed husband, gave many severe warnings, including a trial divorce (the Babylonian exile) to try to save the marriage. Israel was very unresponsive to correction, ignoring the prophetic warnings and abusing God’s messengers.
3. Finally, God sent His Son to issue a final call to Israel to repent. Only a small remnant responded favorably, while the rest of the Jews engineered the murder of the Messiah. Before His execution, the Messiah established a new covenant (see below) with the faithful remnant (later called the Church), and announced the rejection of the Old Covenant and its religious institutions.
4. The Sinaitic Covenant not only contained covenantal blessings, but also covenantal curses (Deut.28:45-47). That is, unfaithfulness would result in ongoing exile (Deut.28:48-64), persecution (Deut.28:49-51), and insecurity (Deut. 28:65-67) and bondage (Deut.28:68). These covenantal threats have been fulfilled in the destruction of the Jewish state and religion in 70 AD. The Jews, characteristically ignoring God’s decisions, formulated for themselves a worthless, man-made religion (Talmudism, a.k.a. *Judaism*), so as to continue in their rejection of Christ as if nothing had happened.

IV. The Davidic Covenant

Stated where?

II Samuel 7:11-16

Made between what parties?

God with David and his seed.

Conditional or unconditional?

No conditions stated.

Promises:

1. God would build a Davidic dynasty (house)
2. A son of David would succeed him on his throne
3. This son of David would build a house for God
4. He would enjoy a Father/ Son relationship with God
5. His kingdom would be established forever

Time and manner of fulfillment:

1. Initially, a fulfillment was in Solomon, who succeeded David to the throne and built the temple.
2. After Solomon, kings of David's dynasty ruled in the City of David for twenty generations until the Babylonian exile.
3. The eternal fulfillment is in Christ, who has assumed the throne at the right hand of God, fulfilling all that was promised to David concerning his seed (Acts 2:30-36/13:32-34)

V. The New Covenant

Stated where?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Made between what parties?

God with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah"

Conditional or unconditional?

No conditions stated.

Promises:

1. Law will be written on the heart
2. All shall know God personally
3. Remission and forgetting of sins
4. They shall be God's people

Time and manner of fulfillment:

1. Jesus established this covenant with the faithful remnant (His disciples) in the upper room the night of His betrayal (1 Corinthians 11:25). This covenant is essentially the Abrahamic Covenant reaching its ultimate phase in the Messiah.
2. The institution of the New Covenant rendered the Sinaitic predecessor obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).
3. The New Covenant is everlasting (Hebrews 13:20), ruling out the possibility of any previous covenant reemerging to replace or coexist with it. In other words, the reestablishing of the Jewish temple and associated rituals will never be done within the will of God. Any attempt to do so is tantamount to demonstrative rebellion against the Mediator of the New Covenant (Jesus), and can never be endorsed or supported by Christians.

Biblical Teaching about the Jews and Israel

I. Seen as a politico-national entity, as the earthly embodiment of God's Kingdom among the nations, Israel's role has passed to the church.

- A. Israel's role in this capacity was conditional from the beginning (Ex.19:5-6)
- B. Israel, when disobedient, was declared by God to be "not my people" (Hos.1:10)
- C. They, being unworthy of God's "invitation," have come under judgment, and the invitation has gone out to others (Matt.22:1-10)
- D. The kingdom privilege has been taken from them and given to another "nation" (Matt.21:33-44)
- E. That new holy nation is the Church (I Pet.2:9-10)
- F. The giving of this status to the Church does not issue in a situation wherein God has now two chosen peoples, but all those who are God's people are "one new man" and "one flock" (Eph.2:15/John 10:16)

II. Seen racially, the Jew occupies no different position than does the Gentile

- A. There have always been those genetically descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob whose status was equivalent to that of Gentiles (Rom.9:6-13)
- B. Even in Old Testament times, there were Gentiles who participated in the covenant standing with God (like Ruth), and there were racial Jews who did not (Ps.50:16).
- C. According to John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul, being descended physically from Abraham confers no advantage in terms of relationship with God, which is based entirely upon faith and inner considerations (Matt.3:9/ John 8:39/ Rom.2:28-29/ 9:7-8)
- D. A person could be a racial Jew and, at the same time, a child and synagogue of Satan (John 8:44/Rev.2:9/3:9)
- E. Only a small remnant of those descended from Abraham are saved (Rom.9:27)
- F. There is no distinction between the unbelieving Jew and the unbelieving Gentile (Acts 10:34/ Rom.2:11/ 3:9, 22-23/ 10:12)
- G. Nor is there any distinction between the believing (Christian) Jew and the believing Gentile (Gal.3:28/ Eph.2:14-15/ Col.3:11)

III. Seen religiously, Judaism is defunct, has been abolished, and is in no respect a valid means of pleasing God.

- A. Jewish religion requires a temple (or tabernacle), an altar of sacrifice, and a racially Levite priesthood (see Leviticus)
- B. Lacking these distinctives, any system calling itself "Judaism" is nothing better than Talmudism—that is, traditions and commandments of men—condemned by Jesus and Paul (Mark 7:7-9/ Col.2:20-22)
- C. Biblical ritual Judaism served a temporary purpose, providing types and shadows of the spiritual realities introduced by Jesus Christ (Col.2:16-17/Heb. 8:5/ 9:9-10)
- D. Once those realities arrived, those tutorial props that comprised ritual Judaism were no longer needed or valid. (Gal.3:23-25 /4:9)
- E. The system never adequately reflected God's highest pleasure (Psalm 40:6/Heb.10:6) and His ultimate disowning of that system was historically demonstrated in the destruction of the system in 70AD (Matt.23:37-39/ 24:1-2).
- F. The rituals of Judaism were aspects of the Sinaitic Covenant, which has been supplanted by a New Covenant, rendering the Old one obsolete (Heb.8:13)
- G. The continuation or restoration of Jewish religious practices is thus outright rejection of God's New Covenant and rebellion against the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ—God must condemn every such effort (I Cor.16:22).

Is There a Prophesied Future for the Nation of Israel?

I. Promises yet to be fulfilled?

Proposition: All promises made by God to the nation of the Israelites fall into one or more of the following categories:

A. Those that have been literally fulfilled and require no additional fulfillment in the future

1. The promise of obtaining the land of the Canaanites (Josh.21:43-45)
2. The re-gathering of dispersed exiles (Deut.30:1-5/Ezek.11:16-18/Ezra 1:1-3; 2:1)

B. Conditional promises which have been forfeited because of disobedience

1. Ongoing possession of the Land of Palestine (Lev.18:24-28/Deut.28:15, 21, 63)
2. The temple of Ezekiel (Ezek.43:10-11)

C. Promises whose fulfillment continue in a spiritual mode through Christ and the Church (Gal.3:16, 29/2 Cor.1:20)

1. Promised Land (Gen. 17:8/Rom.4:13/Heb.4:1-3; 11:9-10, 14, 16/Matt.5:5)
2. Gathering of God's people from all nations (Isa.43:5-7/Ps.107:2-3/Luke 13:29/John 10:16; 11:51-52/Eph.2:12-13)
3. Restoration of acceptable worship among the remnant
 - a. remnant to be gathered—to Jesus (Isa.10:20-22)
 - b. temple terminology (Ezek.40-48/John 2:19-21/Eph.2:20-22/1 Pet.2:5/2 Thes.2:4)
 - c. "Levites" (Jer. 33:18-21/Isa.66:20-21/Heb.7:11-12/1 Pet.2:5, 9/ Rev.5:10)
 - d. sacrifices (Ezek.40:38-39/43:18/Zech.14:21/Heb.10:12-18; 13:15-16)
 - e. changed hearts (Jer.31:31-34/Ezek.36:24-28/2 Cor.3:3)
 - f. the river of life (Ezek.47:1-3/Zech.14:8-9/Joel 3:18/John 7:37-39)

II. Specific predictions?

A. The Seventy Weeks of Daniel (Dan.9:24-27/Matt.24:15, 34)

B. The Olivet Discourse (Matt.24/Mk.13/Luke 21)

C. The Book of Revelation

1. The things written there were predicted to come presently (1:1, 3; 22:6, 10)
2. The 144,000 (14:4/Jas.1:18 [comp. Jas.1:12 & Rev.2:10])

D. Romans 9-11

1. Though the OT promises that Israel will be saved, this does not apply to all racial Israelites (9:6-8, 27)
2. Those who are saved are actually of mixed races (9:23-24)
3. The Olive Tree, which is Israel (Jer.11:6), now lacks some of its former (Jewish) branches, and has come to include foreign (Gentile) branches (11:17).
4. Thus the promise: "Israel shall be saved" (Isa.45:17) is understood to be fulfilled by the partial blinding of Jews who were not of the believing remnant and the saving of the believing Gentiles, who assume their position in the Olive Tree—in this way ("so" or "thus") "all Israel shall be saved" (11:25-26)

Next Question:

Is There a Jewish Race Today to whom God Could Fulfill Such Promises?

"In 1970 the Israeli Knesset adopted legislation defining a Jew as one born of a Jewish mother or a convert." (*Funk & Wagnall's New Encyclopedia*, 1979, vol.14, p.214)

If a Jewish woman marries a Gentile man (lets say a proselyte), then her children will be regarded as Jews, though they have only 50% Jewish blood. If one of her daughters marries a man of Gentile stock, then the children of this union will also be

regarded as “Jewish,” though their bloodline is only 25% Jewish, etc. If this process were to continue through successive generations, then the great, great grandchildren of the original woman would still be considered racially “Jewish,” though their bloodline would be only 6.25% Jewish and 93.75% Gentile. Three more generations of the same would produce “Jewish” children who were less than 1% racially Jewish.

Has such mixture of Jewish blood occurred in history? We know of Jews who married Gentiles in Scripture—e.g. Joseph, Moses and Solomon all married Gentile women. Salmon (a Jew) married Rahab (a Canaanite); Boaz (a Jew) married Ruth (a Moabitess); Bathsheba (probably a Jewess) married Uriah (a Hittite); Esther (a Jewess) married Xerxes (a Persian); Timothy’s mother Eunice (a Jewess) married a Gentile man (Timothy’s father).

The Jewish Encyclopedia (vol.6, pp.610-611) says: “Nevertheless the Israelites during the pre-exilic period did intermarry with the Gentiles....the offspring of intermarriages with the Idumeans and Egyptians were to be admitted to the congregation of the Lord...marriage with converted Gentiles was no longer regarded as intermarriage.”

The same authority states that, in 1900, 9.3% of Jewish marriages were racially mixed with Gentiles. From 1921-1925, about 42% of Germany’s Jews married Gentiles. Jews in every part of the world bear the physical characteristics of the Gentiles in the same lands, suggesting a high degree of racial mixing.

“Perhaps as much as a third of the Jews in Italy were not descendants of Abraham...but the descendants of Romulus and Remus, inasmuch as their ancestors were former pagans who had converted to Judaism as far back as 100 A.D. The story was much the same in France and Germany.” (Max I. Dimont, in *Jews, God and History*, p.213)

In America, where the Jewish population today exceeds that of Israel, one-third of American Jewish marriages are racially-mixed, according to *Time Magazine*, in 1975.

Dr. Camille Honig, a Jewish authority, having studied Jewish types and communities on five continents, declared, “it is sheer nonsense....as well as unscientific to speak of a Jewish race.”

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1973, vol.12, p.1054, states:

“The findings of physical anthropology show that, contrary to the popular view, there is no Jewish race.”

Of the nearly 4,000,000 Jews in Israel, “approximately 47% were Israeli-born, but their immediate forebears came from more than one-hundred different countries and spoke eighty-five different languages or major dialects. The two major groupings are European or Western (“Ashkenazi”) Jews, who make up about 31 per cent of the Jewish population, and Asian or North African (“Sephardic”) Jews, who make up about 28 per cent.” (*Funk & Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia*, 1979, vol.14, p.10)

The Ashkenazim “are the Jews whose ancestors lived in German lands. The name derives from Ashk’naz, the traditional Hebrew name for Germany. During and after the Middle Ages, Ashkenazim Jews spread all over Europe (except the Mediterranean countries). From there they migrated overseas, retaining their Yiddish language.” (*Encyclopedia Americana*)

The following information is a summary of the contents of an article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1973, vol.13, pp.328-330:

From the 6th century onward, an empire of people known as Khazars formed part of the western Turkic empire. They were attacked in 1016 by a coalition of the Russians and the Byzantine emperor, and their territories were thereafter made subject to Byzantium. In 740, the Khazar ruler, and probably the greater part of the ruling class, converted to Judaism.

The *Encyclopedia Americana* (vol.16, p.391) says that the Khazars—

“Were a people, probably of Finnic stock, who lived around the Caspian Sea and in the spurs of the Caucasus mountains from about 190 A.D. to 1100....Many of them adopted the Jewish faith from Jews who fled persecution at Constantinople during the 700’s. The Jews of modern Russia may have an admixture of Khazar blood.”

Funk & Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia, 1971, vol.14, p.386 says:

“At the height of their power, in the 9th century, the Khazars controlled Russia west of the Dnieper R. and north to the middle course of the Volga R....In the 7th century their Khakan, or sovereign, embraced Judaism...and a large part of the population was converted thereafter. Khazar power came to an end when, after a series of wars, they were overcome and assimilated by the Russians.”