

Session 10

The Covenants of God with Israel

A. Introduction

1. According to theological realities in the Bible, the nation of Israel will be restored. Therefore, we need to be fully acquainted with what the Bible says about her.
2. Israel exists because God exists — God is prepared to honour His Word and promises to Israel. Such promises were made to Israel in the form of covenants (*refer to Session 4 for more details*).

“He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant.” (Ps. 105:8)

3. As Gentile believers, it is important to understand and be familiar and acquainted with the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants because:
 - a. They give understanding to the events that Israel has gone through in the past, the present-day Middle East conflict, and God’s purpose and ways of restoring her in the days to come.
 - b. They keep us from embracing “replacement theology”, knowing that God remembers and will keep His covenants.
 - c. They reveal God’s heart for the redemption of nations and people groups through Israel.

B. The Abrahamic Covenant

1. The Abrahamic Covenant is mentioned more than once in the book of Genesis (Gen. 12:1–3; 13:4–5; 15:18):
 - a. The Covenant was initiated by God;
 - b. The Covenant is one-sided — God declared its terms and benefits;
 - c. The Covenant is unconditional and everlasting.
2. There are three aspects to the Abrahamic Covenant — the land promised to Abraham; the promise of many descendants (including the Seed); and the promise of being a blessing to the nations.
 - a. The Land (Gen. 12:1)

“Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you...’” (Gen. 12:1)

- i. The Covenant clearly defines certain territories that God will give to Israel as an everlasting possession.
 - ii. The land spans the boundaries from the Nile River and the Red Sea in the west and south to the Euphrates River in the east (Gen. 15:18–21; Ex. 23:31).
- b. The Descendants (Gen. 12:2)
- “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great...”* (Gen. 12:2)
- i. The second aspect points to God’s promise to make Abraham a great nation with many descendants.
 - ii. The Covenant promises Israel a permanent existence as a nation. It guarantees the preservation of the nation of Israel (Jer. 31:35–37).
 - iii. The Covenant also pointed to the Promised Seed, Jesus, who would be born through Israel.
 - iv. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised King David that through his family line, the ultimate King would come and establish His throne over the nations forever.
- c. A Blessing to the Nations (Gen. 12:2–3)
- “And you shall be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* (Gen. 12:2–3)
- i. Thirdly, God promised to bless Abraham and his descendants. Through them, they would also be the vessel to bless the families of the earth.
 - ii. This also points to Israel’s call as the vehicle for the Gospel of the Kingdom to go to the ends of the earth.
3. The ultimate fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant will be when Jesus returns to deliver and restore His people at His Second Coming.
- a. She will also possess and inherit the fullness of the Promised Land when Jesus returns (Ezek. 20:33–37, 40–42; Rev. 21).
 - b. As Israel is restored, she will step into the fullness of her call to be a blessing to the nations.
4. Hence, the enemy’s strategy is to work against what God has covenanted with Abraham. He seeks to prevent the Jewish people from possessing the land through invasions and persecutions, seeks to destroy the Jewish people and the Promised Seed, and hinders the advancement of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

5. However, this covenant will not cease to exist because God will never cease to exist, and by His grace, He has always preserved a remnant of Israel that is loyal to Him.
 - a. The credibility, integrity, and revelation of God as a true and faithful God will become suspect if the Abrahamic Covenant fails.
 - b. Israel is a signpost of God for the nations. God intends to draw the attention of the world to two things (Heb. 6:13–20):
 - i. His Word — God is TRUE
God is proclaiming to the nations that the Bible — His Word — is true, relevant and up to date and that its prophecies are still being fulfilled today with absolute accuracy.
 - ii. His Covenant — God is FAITHFUL
God is proving Himself to be a God who keeps His covenants. He is faithful and will never break the covenant that He made 4000 years ago with Abraham and his descendants. Furthermore, in His faithfulness, He will cause it to come to pass.

C. The Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19 – 24)

1. The Abrahamic Covenant gave the everlasting right of ownership of the land to Israel.
2. However, Israel's obedience to the commands and statutes of God as required by the Mosaic Covenant ensures the privilege of living in the land that is rightfully theirs (Deut. 30:1–6).
 - a. Disobedience would not mean the loss of ownership but rather the loss of the privilege of inhabiting the land.
 - b. The Mosaic Covenant is important because it affirms Israel's everlasting right to the land even if, because of her disobedience and unrighteousness, she is exiled from it (Ezek. 37:21–25).
 - c. The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31 is God's provision for His people to live out the requirement of the Mosaic Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6–16).
3. Prophet Isaiah clearly spoke of Israel's two dispersions from and returns to the Promised Land (Isa. 11:11–12).
 - a. Israel has been judged by God and exiled twice in her history (586 BC and AD 70). However, she has also returned to the same plot of land twice.
 - b. After close to 2000 years of exile, Israel finally returned to her land again in 1948 and this second return will be her final and her last before the return of Jesus. God's giving Israel the right to the land is final and everlasting!

D. Fulfilment of the Covenants versus Morality and Righteousness

1. It is important to recognise that the return of Israel to the Promised Land in the 20th Century has brought hardship and suffering to the Arab people living there.
2. This begs the question: “Would God keep His covenants in such a way that He allows hardship and suffering?”
3. The reality is that there will not be a satisfactory answer because of the mystery of God’s Sovereign Election of Israel and because God’s ways are not our ways.
4. These 6 principles can be applied when approaching this issue:
 - a. In Israel’s restoration, we must recognise the Divine faithfulness to a Covenant made 4000 years ago with Abraham. This Covenant is eternal and irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).
 - b. In the act of restoration, we must also discern the righteous judgements of God upon those nations that have walked in wicked ways during their occupation of the land (Gen. 15:13–14; Prov. 14:34).
 - c. We have to recognise the mystery of election — as the Sovereign God, He has sovereignly elected Israel as His chosen vessel. He has the right to exalt kings and nations and bring them down as He sees fit (Dan. 2:20–21; Rom. 9:14– 21).
 - d. As God’s people, we must not seek to further God’s judgement in any way, whether by actively seeking to expel Arabs from Israel, by being supportive of such endeavours if they occur, or by maintaining support for Israel that completely ignores Israel’s sin and unrighteousness before God.
 - i. We are not to be so supportive of Israel’s restoration that we ignore injustice and sin.
 - ii. We must not be silent concerning the suffering of Arab people.
 - e. The restoration of Israel does not mean that God loves Jewish people and hates Arabs. We must guard against such thoughts and attitudes. Rather, Gentile believers need to embrace the reality that God honours His Covenants and at the same time loves all men everywhere.
 - f. We have to be aware of the true facts of the conflict between Israel and the Arab nations.
 - i. Israel has never been an aggressor in all the five wars that she has fought with the Arab nations since her return to the land. All the wars were out of self-defence.
 - ii. Much of the suffering of Arab people in Israel’s immediate vicinity has been caused by oppression from other Arab people groups and Arab propaganda.

E. Conclusion

Introductory Series on Understanding Israel
Session 10: The Covenants of God with Israel

1. In this hour of increasing complexity in the Middle East and the rise of global antisemitism, God's people must be acquainted with and develop an understanding of God's covenants with Israel.
2. At the end of the day, God wants us to encounter His zeal and faithfulness towards Israel and through Israel.
3. This will give us His Biblical perspective and keep us faithful in standing with God's heart for her especially at the place of prayer, in full alignment and agreement with Him.