

ISRAEL, The People of God

Introduction

A. In this lesson:

1. We are going to talk about the promises that God made to Abraham.
2. We will talk about **how** and **why** the nation of Israel was formed.
3. How they got their land, where it is, and what the situation is today.
4. We will put emphasis on the **spiritual promise** that God said would BLESS ALL NATIONS.
5. We will talk about WHY they were driven from their land and discuss some theories as to why they are back and in control of the most important part of the land God gave them.

B. When we talk about **“Israel, the People of God,”** we are not just talking about the people over there in the land of Palestine.

1. They rejected God by rejecting His word, including Jesus, whom they put to death.
2. We are talking about the **TRUE Israel**—people who **Trust and Obey God (Heb. 5:9)**. *He is the author of eternal salvation...*
3. The true Israel today is composed of the saved in the church, which is the **“Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16)**, and it is also referred to as the *bride of Christ* (Rev. 21:9).
4. A lesson about Israel would not be complete if we didn’t talk about, and put emphasis on, the SPIRITUAL PROMISE—the **“hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20)**.
4. Consider the following key passages as we study **“Israel, the People of God.”**

Acts 28:20 *For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the **hope of Israel** I am bound with this chain.*

Acts 7:37 *This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; **him shall ye hear.***

Acts 13:23 *Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise **raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:***

Rom 9:6 *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. **For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:***

- a. I think what Paul is saying here (Rom. 9:6) is that a *true Israelite* is one who follows Christ.
- b. In other words, you can be a *national Israelite* but **not** be a Christian and among the saved.

BODY

- I. **The story of “Israel, the People of God,”** begins with a **series of** three distinct promises that **God** made to **Abraham**.
 - A. These promises, found in **Genesis 12:1-2**, continued far beyond this patriarch’s lifetime.
 - B. The fulfillment of these promises occupies the rest of the Bible and concerns our hopes for the world to come.
 - C. **God promised:**
 - 1. That he would make a great nation of Abraham's seed;
 - 2. That he would give that nation a land, and
 - 3. That in Abram's seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.
 - a. The **first** promise concerned the **nation of Israel**;

- b. The **second** involved the **land of Canaan**, and the
- c. **Third** was **spiritual, pointing to the coming of Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham through whom all Nations would be blessed**.
- d. A study of these promises and their fulfillment is essential to have an understanding of the scheme of redemption.

D. Promise # 1, the national promise - where God said, *"And I will make of thee a great Nation"* (Gen. 12:2).

"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be" Gen. 15:5).

1. Abraham's son was named **Isaac**, to whom the promise was renewed (Gen. 25).
 - a. Then Isaac and his wife Rebekah had **two** sons, **Jacob** and **Esau**.
 - b. God chose **Jacob** (Israel) through whom the promises should come.
2. Israel had **12 sons**, one of whom was **Joseph**.
 - a. "What at the time seemed a great personal tragedy when Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, proved to be the providential means through which the **National promise** was fulfilled."
 - b. He became a **mighty ruler**, and it was not until **Jacob** and all his house went into Egypt that the great nation was formed.
 - 1) Those **70 souls** were separated in Egypt and multiplied until they truly became a great nation of people to be led out by Moses.
 - 2) It was **430 years** from the time of the **promise** until this nation, newly formed and delivered through the

watchful providence of God, stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai to receive the law from Moses.” Jewell Miller Audio video.

C. Promise # 2, the land promise:

“For all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.” (Gen. 13:15).

1. **Verse 18**, *“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”*

2. This is the land over which **Solomon reigned**.

“And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt” (2 Chron. 9:26).

3. After the nation wandered 40 yrs. in the wilderness, Joshua led them into the promised land.

a. At the end of his life, he made a speech that served as a reminder and a warning:

Josh. 23:14-16 *14 -And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.”*

4. After a period, the people forgot about what God had done for them and about Joshua's warning and turned to other gods.
 - a. They were taken from the land into captivity by the **Babylonians**.
 - b. But they returned, and the lineage of **Judah** was kept intact, and the promise lived on looking toward the seed to bless all nations – JESUS.
 - 1) The formation of the nation and the giving of the land were preparatory to the spiritual promise (**promise # 3**).
 - 2) **Acts 13:23** *Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:*

II. This great story is about a relationship between God and a chosen people.

- A. Those people were chosen to be instrumental in establishing a historical record (for people of all time to read) of how God deals with man and nations.
 1. Like marriage, the relationship had its ups and downs; happy times, sad times; victory, defeat, victory, defeat; but finally, **VICTORY**.
 2. Through this nation (from the lineage of Abraham), God brought up a Savior, Jesus Christ, and it is through Him that the **true Israel** has victory.
- B. God refers to this long and complex relationship as a *marriage* (Jer. 3:8; 14).
 1. God divorced Israel, but if we conclude that it **ended** with **divorce**, we miss the picture, or story, completely.

2. The story is not about a **physical** relationship, like that of a man and woman, but more of a **spiritual** one--and one that **has not ended**.

- a. Christ told Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world*".
- b. He explained, "*If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*" (John 18:36).
- c. And so, it is apparent that Jesus never had intentions of setting up a kingdom like that of his father, David, that involved **physical** or carnal warfare.
- d. His new spiritual kingdom fulfilled prophecy (Isaiah 2:1-4; Jer. 31:31).

C. It is commonly, or often, said that "**Israel is no longer God's chosen people.**"

1. But that is not exactly true, because the relationship has merely changed over to a *spiritual* one.
2. The **church** is now the "*bride of Christ*" (See Romans 7:1, 4; Rev. 21:9) and is referred to as the "**Israel of God**" (Gal. 6:16), and so the TRUE Israel, who are the people of God, are Christians added to the church by the Lord as they obey the gospel and are saved (Acts 2:36-48; 1 Cor. 12:13).

III. Our concern now is more with the people of God in the land that God gave them (ancient Israel).

A. That land is located alongside the Mediterranean Sea to the East.

1. It is a very small state or country, about the size of New Jersey, and the population is only about **8.5 million**.

2. A substantial amount of the land is **desert** (“wilderness”) and is virtually uninhabited.

B. **Israel** is bordered by **Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon**—all Muslim nations composed of people who, historically, hate Israel and would like to see them all dead.

1. Their total combined population is over **100 million**.
2. There are **1.7 million Palestinians** in the **Gaza Strip** and **2.5 million** in the **West Bank** (statistics before the war).
 - a. **These Palestinians** think they should have control of the land, and there are about **5 million** of them.
3. There are **1.6 million Israeli Arabs**
 - a. These are Israelis, but their cultural and linguistic heritage or ethnic identity is Arab.
 - b. Many identify as Palestinian and commonly self-designate themselves as Palestinian citizens of Israel. (**Wikipedia**)
 - 1) All these numbers represent people living between the **Jordan River** and the **Mediterranean**.
 - 2) Then you have **Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia** nearby that have a combined population of about **150 million**.
3. And so, **Israelis** are surrounded and vastly outnumbered by Muslims who want to kill them.
 - a. The fact that Israel is back in their land (the best part of what God originally gave them) and is strong is almost unbelievable.
 - b. More than once, they were taken from their land in punishment for turning from God.
 - 1) But God never gave up on them, and they kept coming back.

- 2) They are there today, and they are strong.
- 3) They enjoy some peace and security because of their strength—their enemies fear them, and for good reason.

C. There is a lot of misunderstanding among Christians as to what God intends for the land and the nation of Israel.

1. Many think Christ is going to return to earth, rebuild the temple, set up a kingdom, and rule and reign in Palestine.

- a. First, the **kingdom** and the **church** (the saved, Acts 2:47) are the same thing, and there are other descriptive names as well.
- b. Second, the kingdom obviously exists now, according to Paul, who said, Christ *“hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Col 1:13).
- c. Third, Jeremiah took a potter’s vessel and threw it on the floor (breaking it into numerous pieces) and said to the people, *“Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again:”* (Jer. 19:11b).
 - 1) God has allowed Israel to come back and to be in control of some of the land they once possessed, but the idea that they will one day be as they once were is not going to happen.
 - 2) The *“hope of Israel”* is in Christ, but the *nation* rejected him.
 - 3) The true Israel is the church, SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, composed of the Jews that are saved, as well as Gentiles.

- i. Paul wrote, *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Cor. 12:13).
- ii. The Jews do not even have a priesthood anymore, or a temple, nor is it even possible because there is no Levitical lineage.
- iii. Even Christ cannot reign as priest on earth.

Jer. 22:30 *Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.*

2. The only holy remains the Israelites have are a part of the outside wall of the Second Temple called “The Western **Wall**” or “**The Wailing Wall**”, and an enclosed area that joins it.

3. In view of the teaching above, one might wonder WHY God has brought Jews back into the land and made them strong.

Here are some possibilities:

- a. Perhaps it is because she is God’s ex-wife, and He still loves her.
- b. Maybe it is to hold the Muslims in check.
- c. Possibly God wants the Israelites to control the land so that the antiquities will be protected and that archeological excavations will continue, which confirms the Bible as being inspired by God.

Conclusion

- A. The Jews not only rejected Christ but also crucified him.
- B. The Romans were in power and carried out the sentence of death, but they did not want to do it.

1. Time and again, Pilate pronounced Jesus as being innocent of any wrongdoing and sought to release Him, but the Jewish leaders were determined to put Him to death.

John 19:6-7 *“When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”*

2. Jesus is indeed the Son of God, but many Jewish leaders refused to hear and accept the evidence.
 - a. They were guilty of murdering Jesus.
 - b. Yet He will forgive any man, no matter what he has done, who will turn to Him and trust and obey (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9; Rom. 6:1-4; 17, 18).