



GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Course 8, Solving Doctrinal Differences, Lesson 3

The Problem: In today's religious landscape, the question of Israel's role in prophecy continues to stir deep convictions—and sometimes confusion. Many Christians, especially within dispensationalist traditions, believe that the modern state of Israel holds a central place in God's end-time plan. This belief has gained renewed visibility in recent years, not only through popular prophecy teachers, but also through segments of the broader Christian community who see political support for Israel as deeply connected to biblical promises and spiritual identity. For some, this view is tied to a vision of national renewal and divine favor, often expressed through movements that emphasize America's spiritual heritage and its role in God's purposes.

This perspective traces back to John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), a leader in the Brethren movement, whose teachings laid the foundation for dispensationalism. Darby's influence spread widely through his international lectures, shaping the theology of many evangelical leaders. His modern counterparts—including Hal Lindsey, John Walvoord, and Richard DeHaan—have expanded these ideas, teaching that:

- The establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 marked the beginning of the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.
- The Abrahamic covenant guarantees Israel permanent possession of the land, regardless of spiritual obedience or rejection of Christ.
- Jesus offered an earthly kingdom to the Jews, which they rejected—resulting in a “parenthesis” in prophecy during which the Christian Church plays a temporary role.
- The final seven years of earth's history (Daniel's 70th week) will fulfill Israel's restoration and include a rebuilt temple, covenant with the Antichrist, and intense persecution.
- A literal 144,000 converted Jews will evangelize the world during the tribulation.
- Christ will return to reign from Jerusalem during the millennium, with Israel as the spiritual and political center of the earth.
- The sacrificial system will be reinstated as a memorial of Christ's death.

This entire prophetic scenario hinges on the belief that God's promises to Israel were unconditional and must be fulfilled literally, regardless of Israel's response to the Messiah. But is this what Scripture teaches?

The Questions We Must Ask

- Were the promises of the Abrahamic covenant unconditional—or did they depend on Israel's faithfulness?
- Was the Mosaic covenant a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant—or something distinct?
- Did Jesus offer the Jews an earthly kingdom—or a heavenly one?
- After rejecting Christ, did Israel retain its status as God's chosen nation?
- Is the Christian Church merely a prophetic “parenthesis”—or the fulfillment of God's covenant plan?
- Will national Israel be restored to earthly greatness—or are Jews and Gentiles alike invited into the heavenly kingdom through faith in Christ?

These questions are not just theological—they shape how we understand God's character, His promises, and the nature of His people today.

Objectives:

- I. To examine the conditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant in Scripture

- II. To understand that God's promises of restoration after captivity were also conditional
 - III. To trace how Israel's rejection of Christ led to the loss of national covenant status
 - IV. To affirm that the Christian Church is now spiritual Israel—God's chosen people
 - V. To show that the promises of the Abrahamic covenant are fulfilled in Christ, and extended to all who believe, Jew and Gentile alike
- I. THE PROMISES OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT WERE CONDITIONAL

Some Christians today believe that the promises made to Abraham—especially the promise of land—were unconditional and irrevocable, regardless of Israel's response to God. This view often contrasts the Abrahamic covenant with the Mosaic covenant, suggesting that only the latter was based on obedience.

But Scripture paints a different picture. God's covenant with Abraham was rich with promise, but it was also rooted in *relationship and faithfulness*. The same principles of obedience, trust, and covenant loyalty that applied at Sinai were already present in God's dealings with Abraham. The blessings of land, legacy, and spiritual inheritance were never granted in isolation from the call to walk with God. When Israel turned away from that covenant—whether in the wilderness, in the time of the kings, or in rejecting the Messiah—the consequences were real. The loss of the land and the scattering of the people were not arbitrary punishments, but the result of broken covenant relationship.

Let's turn to Scripture and see how this truth unfolds.

The Word:

1. What did God call His covenant with Abraham? Who else was included in this promise? Genesis 17:7, 13, 19
2. What promise regarding the land was given to Abraham? What land was he truly seeking? Genesis 15:18; 17:8; Hebrews 11:8-10
3. What did Abraham do that led to a temporary loss of covenant blessing? What kind of covenant did this reflect? Galatians 4:22-31
4. What covenant did God offer Abraham's descendants at Sinai? What were the conditions? Exodus 19:4-6; Galatians 3:16-18; 1 Chronicles 16:14-18; compare Psalm 105:8-11
5. Why was the "everlasting covenant" later called the "old covenant"? Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:6-12
6. What would happen to the land if Israel broke the covenant? Deuteronomy 29:9-13, 22-26; 28:15, 33, 38-39, 49-52, 63-67

Explanation: Were the promises to Abraham unconditional? Let's explore what Scripture actually reveals about the nature of God's covenant with Abraham. As we study the passages above, several key truths emerge:

1. *God's covenant with Abraham included conditions.* In *Genesis 17*, God's approach to Abraham makes it clear that the covenant was not automatic or unconditional. It was rooted in relationship and obedience. *"I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee..."* (Genesis 17:1–2). Even after promising the land as an *"everlasting possession"* (v. 8), God added: *"Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee..."* (v. 9). Circumcision was given as an outward sign of this covenant—but what God truly desired was a *circumcised heart* (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6). Paul affirms this in *Romans 2:25–29*, showing that true covenant membership is spiritual, not merely ritual.

Abraham's faith was the foundation of the covenant: *"He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness"* Genesis 15:6. Had Abraham refused to walk in faith or rejected God's command to live obediently, the covenant promises would not have been reaffirmed. Circumcision was not the cause of righteousness—it was the

seal of a relationship already grounded in faith (*Romans 4:11*). Thus, the promise of the land was conditional upon faithfulness, both for Abraham and his descendants.

2. *Abraham's lapse with Hagar disrupted the covenant relationship.* When Abraham had a son by Hagar, he stepped outside God's plan to demonstrate salvation by faith. Paul interprets this as a departure from the covenant of promise (*Galatians 4:22–31*). Only by returning to God's design—trusting in His miraculous provision—could Abraham renew his covenant standing and inherit the promises.
3. *Israel at Sinai was offered the same covenant relationship.* The covenant offered at Sinai was not a new or separate arrangement—it was a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant:
 - God called it "My covenant" (*Exodus 19:5*), the same phrase used repeatedly in *Genesis 17*.
 - The New Testament teaches that the Abrahamic covenant applied to Israel at Sinai. "*And this I say that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect*" *Galatians 3:17*. So the giving of the law at Sinai did not change the terms of the covenant; salvation is by faith.
 - God commanded His covenant "to a thousand generations" (*1 Chronicles 16:15*). This is the covenant "*which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant*" (verses 16-17). Israel was given the same everlasting covenant that was given to Abraham.
4. *Israel failed to respond with genuine faith.* Though the people said, "*All that the Lord hath spoken we will do*" (*Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7*), their hearts were not aligned with their words (*Deuteronomy 5:29*). They broke the covenant by turning to idols and rejecting the heart-centered relationship God desired (*Jeremiah 31:32*). God found fault—not with the covenant itself—but with the people's failure to remain in it (*Hebrews 8:8–9*). This led to the distinction between the "old" covenant (based on works and ritual) and the "new" covenant (based on faith and grace). The new covenant is not a replacement of the Abrahamic covenant—it is its *fulfillment in Christ*.

Note: The ceremonial law is sometimes grouped with the "old covenant" in the New Testament (*Hebrews 7:21–22; 9:1, 11, 15*). This was not because it offered salvation through works, but because it served as a visual aid to faith—necessary due to Israel's spiritual immaturity. It pointed forward to Christ, and was set aside at the Cross.

5. *Israel's inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant was contingent on faithfulness.* Scripture makes it clear that the covenant given to Israel was the same one sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*Deuteronomy 29:9–13*). Faithfulness to this covenant would bring abundant blessings (*Deuteronomy 28:1–14*), but disobedience would result in devastating consequences—including loss of land, national hardship, and scattering among the nations (*Deuteronomy 28:15–68*). The Lord could not have been more explicit: "*It shall come to pass... that the Lord will scatter thee among all people... and among these nations shalt thou find no ease*" *Deuteronomy 28:64–65*. This was not a failure of God's promise—it was the natural outcome of a broken covenant relationship.
6. *What might have been—had Israel remained faithful.* Had Israel remained faithful, she could have become the spiritual center of the world—preserving truth, extending grace, and drawing the nations to worship the true God. Many Old Testament prophecies envisioned this global mission and eternal rest in a renewed land (see *Isaiah 2:2–5; Zechariah 8:22–23; Ezekiel 37; Isaiah 65:17–25*). But because of persistent disobedience, these promises could not be fulfilled to Israel as a nation. The covenant was not revoked—but its fulfillment shifted to those who walk by faith, whether Jew or Gentile.

Relevance: The promises of the Abrahamic covenant were real, beautiful, and expansive—but they were also *conditional*. Israel could have become the predominant nation on earth, a vessel of truth and love. But the original promises, repeated through Moses, required ongoing faithfulness. This is why Scripture does not teach a future national restoration of Israel to the land of Palestine as a fulfillment of those ancient promises. Instead, the covenant finds its fulfillment in *spiritual Israel*—those who are in Christ, who walk by faith, and who carry forward God's mission to the world.

II. GOD'S PROMISES OF RESTORATION AFTER CAPTIVITY WERE ALSO CONDITIONAL

Many dispensationalist teachers interpret the prophetic promises of Israel's restoration after the Babylonian captivity as unconditional guarantees of national greatness. But Scripture consistently teaches that these promises—like those given to Abraham—were dependent on Israel's response to God.

The Word:

7. Under what conditions did the Lord promise to restore Israel after captivity? Deuteronomy 30:1-10
8. What kind of people did God envision after their return? Ezekiel 36:24-33; 37:21-28
9. Did Israel remain faithful after returning from captivity? What concerned Nehemiah? Nehemiah 13:15-18
10. What kind of covenant would establish Israel as God's people forever? Jeremiah 31:31-36

Explanation: God's promise to restore Israel after captivity was never automatic—it was rooted in repentance and renewed obedience. *"If you return to the Lord... with all your heart and soul... then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and gather you again"* Deuteronomy 30:2–3. God longed for a people who had learned from history—who would walk in His ways, be filled with His Spirit, and live in covenant faithfulness (Ezekiel 36:24–33; 37:23–28). He offered an *everlasting covenant*, but it was contingent on their willingness to let Him transform their hearts.

Sadly, after returning to the land, Israel quickly fell back into disobedience. Nehemiah observed Sabbath-breaking and spiritual compromise, and feared that God's judgment would return (Nehemiah 13:18). His reforms were urgent and heartfelt—but they reveal how fragile the restoration truly was.

Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–36) was not a blank check—it was a renewal of the Abrahamic covenant, requiring the law to be written on the heart. If the people embraced this Spirit-led transformation, they would remain God's people forever (verse 36). But if they refused, the covenant promises could not be fulfilled.

Daniel's prophecy during the Babylonian exile (Daniel 9:24–27) foretold that Israel's national probation would end in A.D. 34, following their rejection of the Messiah. After that, no further national restoration was promised. The covenant would continue—but now through those who receive Christ by faith.

Relevance: The same spiritual principles apply today. God's promises are rich and eternal—but they are always rooted in relationship. If we allow His Spirit to dwell in us, and walk in His ways, He will preserve us for eternity—even amid suffering or hardship. But if we reject Christ and follow worldly paths, we risk the same loss that ancient Israel experienced. God's heart has never changed. He longs to dwell among His people—not just in a land, but in the heart. The question is: *Will we let Him?*

III. HOW ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF CHRIST LED TO THE LOSS OF NATIONAL COVENANT STATUS

After returning from Babylonian captivity, Israel entered a period marked by increasing apostasy, moral decline, and religious formalism. Though restored to the land, the people drifted from the heart of God's covenant—substituting ritual for relationship, and pride for repentance.

The Word:

11. What did Malachi reveal about Israel's post-exilic failure to honor God's covenant? Malachi 1:6; 2:2, 8, 9, 11, 17
12. How did Jesus describe the religious leaders of His day? Mark 7:6-9

13. What decisive act sealed Israel's rejection of their divine calling? John 1:11; 19:15

14. How did Jesus predict the loss of Israel's covenant status? Matthew 21:37-43; 23:37-38

Explanation: Malachi's post-exilic rebuke reveals a nation that had lost its spiritual compass. The priesthood was corrupt, worship was defiled, and covenant fidelity had eroded. By the time of Christ, religion had become a system of legalism and self-promotion. Jesus lamented the leaders' hypocrisy, saying, *"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me"* Mark 7:6. The final blow came when Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah. *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"* John 1:11. *"We have no king but Caesar"* John 19:15. In choosing Caesar over Christ, and in crying, *"His blood be on us and on our children"* (Matthew 27:25), the people invited the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 once again. Jesus declared: *"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bearing its fruits."* — Matthew 21:43 *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"* Matthew 23:38. No further assurance of national reinstatement was given.

Daniel's prophecy of 490 years (Daniel 9:24–27) culminated in A.D. 34 with the stoning of Stephen—marking the end of Israel's probation as a covenant nation. From that point, the Christian Church became the global steward of God's truth. Importantly, Jesus never offered Israel an earthly kingdom. He consistently emphasized the *spiritual nature* of His reign: *"The kingdom of God is within you."* — Luke 17:21 *"My kingdom is not of this world"* John 18:36. When the people tried to crown Him by force, He refused (John 6:15). Had they accepted Him, they would have remained the chosen vessel to proclaim salvation. But His mission was to establish a kingdom of grace—one that would culminate in glory at His return (Matthew 25:34).

Clarifying a Common Misunderstanding

Dispensationalists often distinguish between the "kingdom of heaven" (as an earthly Jewish kingdom) and the "kingdom of God" (as a spiritual reality). But this distinction is not supported by Scripture. As George E. Ladd observes:

"The two expressions seem to be quite interchangeable in the Gospels... In Matthew, Jesus announces the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 4:17), but in Mark, it's the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15)... The parables, the Sermon on the Mount, and the preaching of the disciples all use these terms interchangeably" George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*, pp. 107–108.

Relevance: Israel's rejection of Christ led to the loss of their national covenant status. But the deeper lesson is for us today: *Could we, too, fall into ritualism, pride, or spiritual complacency?* Could we repeat Israel's failure by rejecting Christ—not with words, but with lives that resist His Spirit? The kingdom of God is not inherited by lineage or tradition—it is received by faith, lived in obedience, and expressed through love. Let us not presume upon grace, but respond to it with surrendered hearts.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS NOW SPIRITUAL ISRAEL—GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

This truth is clearly and repeatedly affirmed throughout the New Testament. The covenant promises once given to literal Israel now find their fulfillment in all who are in Christ—regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or background. The Church is not a replacement in the sense of erasure, but a continuation and expansion of God's redemptive plan through a spiritual people.

The Word:

15. Who are now considered Abraham's true descendants and heirs of the promise? Galatians 3:9, 27-29; Romans 9:6-8, 23-26

16. Who does God regard as a true Jew? Romans 2:27-29

17. What does Christ offer to both Jews and Gentiles? 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

18. Who now fulfills God's purpose on earth? 1 Peter 2:9-10

19. How many nations may now be included among God's people? Acts 10:34-35; 11:18

Explanation: Let's briefly explore each passage--

- **Galatians 3:9, 27–29** — Faith in Christ unites believers with Abraham's spiritual lineage. Baptized into Christ, we become heirs of the promise—regardless of ethnic origin.
- **Romans 9:6–8, 23–26** — Isaac's birth symbolized salvation by divine grace, not human effort. The true Israel is made up of those who believe, not merely those born into Jewish heritage. God now calls people from all nations to be His covenant family.
- **Romans 2:27–29** — True Jewish identity is inward and spiritual. Gentiles who walk in obedience through the Spirit are counted among God's faithful, while Jews without spiritual renewal are not.
- **1 Corinthians 1:23–24** — The gospel is universal. Christ crucified is the power of God for salvation to both Jews and Gentiles—no distinction in method or access.
- **1 Peter 2:9–10** — Writing to Gentile believers, Peter declares them to be God's chosen people. The language once reserved for Israel is now applied to the Church: a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession.
- **Acts 10:34–35** — Peter's vision and encounter with Cornelius confirmed that God's grace is for all. Every nation is invited into covenant relationship through Christ.

Relevance: The New Testament offers no indication that the promises to national Israel were unconditional or await literal future fulfillment. Instead, the consistent message is that *the Christian Church—composed of all who believe in Jesus—is now spiritual Israel*, the chosen people of God. This truth is not a rejection of Israel's history, but a fulfillment of its purpose: to be a light to the nations. Now, through Christ, that light shines through a global body of believers, united not by race or geography, but by faith, grace, and the indwelling Spirit.

V. THE PROMISES OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT ARE FULFILLED TO CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS, BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES

The New Testament consistently teaches that the covenant God made with Abraham is still active—but now fulfilled in *all who believe in Christ*, regardless of nationality. This covenant is not limited to a single ethnic group or geographic region. It is a covenant of grace, written on the heart, and extended to every believer.

The Word:

20. What covenant does Christ offer to all people today? Hebrews 8:6–12; Jeremiah 31:31–33; Deuteronomy 6:4–6; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:23–25

21. What spiritual experience is assured to all who believe? Romans 10:9-13

22. How does Paul affirm that individual Jews can still be saved? Romans 11:1–2, 5, 7, 14, 20, 23, 25–26

23. Where are the saved during the millennium—on earth or in heaven? Revelation 7:9–10, 13–15; 11:19; 15:5; 20:4; compare 1 Corinthians 6:2–3

Explanation: The heart of the new covenant is beautifully summarized in *Hebrews 8:10*: “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.” This echoes *Jeremiah 31:33* and *Deuteronomy 6:4–6*, showing that God's desire has always been for a *heart-based relationship*.

Abraham's experience of righteousness by faith (*Genesis 15:6*) is the model for all believers. Paul confirms that this same righteousness is imputed to us when we believe (*Romans 4:23–25*). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is Christ's presence in the heart—this is the essence of covenant life (*Romans 8:9–10*).

In *Romans 10*, Paul affirms that salvation is available to all: *"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek... whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* Though Israel lost its national covenant status, individual Jews can still be saved—on the same basis as Gentiles: by faith in Christ. *Romans 11* makes this clear:

- A faithful remnant of Jewish believers remains (*verses 5, 7*).
- Unbelieving branches are broken off, but can be grafted back in through faith (*verses 17–23*).
- "All Israel" refers not to the literal nation, but to the full number of believing Jews and Gentiles united in Christ (*verses 25–26*).

During the millennium, the redeemed are not reigning from earthly Jerusalem but are in heaven:

"Before the throne of God... serving Him day and night in His temple" *Revelation 7:15*. The temple is in heaven (*Revelation 11:19; 15:5*), and only after the millennium does the New Jerusalem descend to earth (*Revelation 21:2*).

Relevance: The idea that national Israel will be restored to fulfill Old Testament promises during the millennium is not supported by Scripture. Because of their rejection of Christ, Israel forfeited its role as the chosen nation. The covenant promises have now been entrusted to Christ's Church, composed of believers from every nation.

The land promise is not limited to Palestine—it expands to the heavenly Canaan during the millennium and culminates in the earth made new. *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* *Matthew 5:5*. Whatever your background—Jew or Gentile, near or far—salvation is offered to you through Christ. The promises made to Abraham are fulfilled in you when you believe.

Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin? Will you trust Him to fulfill in your life the eternal promises made to all who walk by faith?

The covenant is open. The invitation is personal. *Now is the time to say yes.*

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. The promise of the land to Abraham was unconditional.
 - b. The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are not the same.
 - c. The nation Israel today exists as a fulfillment of prophecy regarding restoration of the Jews to the promised land.
 - d. Today, both Jews and Gentiles stand on equal ground before God.
2. Reflection: Today, Jews and Gentiles alike stand on equal footing before God. Salvation is offered to all through faith in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. Yet we recognize that many within the Jewish tradition have been faithfully devoted to God, sincerely practicing their faith and living by Judeo-Christian values, even while remaining unconvinced about Jesus. Scripture affirms that righteousness comes by faith in Christ, but it also reveals God's enduring love for the Jewish people and His desire that none should perish. The door of grace remains open, and the Spirit continues to work gently and persistently in every heart—inviting all, including those steeped in religious tradition, into the fullness of covenant relationship through Christ.
 - Acts 17:27: God is not far from any one of us; He desires that all seek Him and find Him.
 - Romans 2:14–16: Paul acknowledges that even Gentiles who do not have the law may act according to its principles, showing that God's Spirit is at work in conscience and conduct.