

ISRAEL: Yesterday, Today, and Forever (The Abrahamic Covenant Ratified)

Prior to the Jews living in the land of Canaan, the Canaanites lived there. Today there are no surviving Canaanites to claim the land of Israel. The oldest claim to the land therefore belongs to surviving Israel. But the key point is that God gave the land to the Israelites by COVENANT, as seen in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Dispensationalism makes a distinction between God's program for Israel and His program for the Church. Zionism is the belief that the land of Israel rightfully belongs to the Jewish people as ordained by God.

The LAND of Israel has been called "the most important piece of real estate on earth". It is called "God's geographical center", "the geographical platform on which the story of the Bible is staged", "the focal point of the universe", "the center of God's dealings with the nations", "the spiritual navel of the world", "the epicenter of human history", and "ground zero for the end times". It is ALL of these things!

The Abrahamic Covenant Ratified in Genesis 15

In Gen. 12:1-3, the basic Abrahamic Covenant is STATED. In Genesis 15, the covenant was RATIFIED and affirmed to be UNILATERAL and UNCONDITIONAL.

Genesis 15:5-6 (NKJV)

5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 And he **believed** in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 15:6 is a reiteration of Abraham's saving faith. Note that it is JUST BELIEF in the LORD that is accounted to Abraham for righteousness. Neither circumcision, nor any religious ritual or rite had anything to do with it. This is a foundational verse on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In the Bible, Abraham is the premiere example of saving faith (cf. Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6, Ja. 2:23, Heb. 11:8-10, 17-19).

The Seed of Abraham

Four senses of “the seed of Abraham”:

1. Biological Jews who descend from Abraham (cf. Rom. 9-11).
2. The Messiah Who is the UNIQUE seed of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:16).
3. The righteous remnant of Israel (cf. Isa. 41:8, Rom. 9:6).
4. Spiritually, it can refer both to believing Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom. 4:9-12, 16, Gal. 3:7, 29).

- It is CONTEXT that determines which sense is in view!

Genesis 15:13-14 (NKJV)

13 Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them **four hundred years**.

14 “And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

Here is a very clear prophecy regarding the time when Abram’s descendants would be in Egypt for 400 years. This was fulfilled to the letter.

Genesis 15:17-18 (NKJV)

17 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.

18 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—

This smoking pot and the burning torch represented the presence of God. The two items moved through the “aisle” formed by the animal pieces. This passing between the pieces was the ratification of the covenant. The parties to the covenant would walk together between the bloody pieces signifying, “If I don’t keep my part, may this happen to me” (cf. Jer. 34:18).

A covenant was a sacred binding commitment which one was responsible to keep before God on pain of death for violation. The word “**made**” in Gen. 15:18 literally means “*to cut*”. To “make” a covenant was literally to “cut” a covenant. The picture here is that if God does not keep this

covenant, the unthinkable will happen – God will die! But God cannot die! Therefore, He MUST keep His unconditional promises to Abraham.

It is very SIGNIFICANT that Abram DID NOT walk through the midst of the bloody animal body parts with God. He was in a trance-like state and did NOTHING. God alone (in symbol, since God is Spirit) passed between these blood body parts. God is making the covenant unilaterally. God alone is binding only Himself to this covenant.

Abram has no responsibilities within this covenant. In other words, it is an UNCONDITIONAL grace covenant. God is binding Himself to do this!

Abraham did not make this covenant with God. The covenant is God's, not Abraham's; and God is the One Who has all the obligations to fulfill it. In spite of Abraham's lapses and those of his descendants, yet they cannot nullify this covenant, because it is God's covenant and not theirs.

The land belongs to Israel by covenant! So says God!