

## EZEKIEL AND THE COVENANTS

### Introduction

Ezekiel is a prophet among the Jews who have been carried away to Babylon. He is a contemporary of Daniel and it would seem likely they knew each other. In this episode, we will look at selections from Ez. Chapters 33-37, which covers their plight during the Babylonian captivity and God's future plans for Israel in light of His covenants with them.

**Abrahamic Covenant.** That covenant passed to Isaac and then to Jacob and is for national Israel. We believers in JC are, spiritually speaking, Abraham's seed and we should feel that connection with the land of Israel, even though this covenant concerning the physical land is with the physical descendants of Jacob.

**Law Covenant in Deuteronomy.** The dilemma or the tension between the two covenants. Read Deut 20 to see the blessings of keeping the Law are fabulous and the curse for not keeping it is devastating. Cycle of disobedience, social decay, decadence, decline and exile. God is merciful and preserves them in exile. They are chastened and come back to the land. The next episode in Ezekiel we will see the next cycle. Don't think bad of Israel. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Imagine the judgements that would fall on the church is that was not true. Christians have nothing to feel smug about.

Solution? God takes away their sins. God gives them a new heart. Does He do that apart from Jesus Christ by some separate means? No, it is through Messiah Jesus! A savior who atones for their sins. By the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified. They come to faith. Hebrews tells us that the sacrifices in the Law pointed to Christ. It is his sacrifice that saves everyone who is saved, past, present and future.

Remember the distinction between God's blessings on national Israel and his dealings with individuals. All Israel shall be saved, nationally, not every individual.

Ezek. 33 Watchmen. How do we apply this today? The message to Israel is repent, the kingdom of God is at hand. The message to the church is they will still be on earth when AC arises. Much of the church ignores the subject of Christ's return. They either think they go to heaven when they die or when Jesus anytime may secretly appear and whisk them away. Messiah Jesus has work for the church to do on earth during the first 6 seals. Those Christians who do not know about what we are covering will be devastated when they find themselves in the middle of it. FF is telling us to be watchmen... to wake up our brethren. In part, God will use the church to soften up Israel, to provoke our Jewish friends to jealousy and make them aware of what is coming. We live in the awareness of what is coming, not in the fear of what is coming. We yearn for Jesus to come and bring the restoration of all things.

Ezek 34 rebukes the shepherds. We are to love one another. Great cosmic forces and destinies are colliding, but our way is love. Taking up the cross and following him. Think of Jesus statements and parables concerning the lost sheep. Do we love what Messiah Jesus loves? Do

we value Israel's future repentance? Did this shepherding ever happen historically after the Babylonian Captivity? 34:25-28, here is a new covenant of peace that fixes the problem of the covenant of the Law. Then they are brought back into the land never more to screw it up with sin. It is obviously yet future.

Ezek 36 tells of God bringing them back to the land and thriving. This happened to a degree after the Babylonian Captivity, but the inter-testamental period was racked by various invasions and dominations by foreign powers. Rome dominated for about as long as the USA has been a nation. When Israel first became a nation in 1948, it was very tough. Now they have made the desert bloom, construction is booming, they are a leading nation in desalinization (of salt water) technology, alternative energy, software, exporting agricultural produce, military strength. Many Israelis are secular and the nation is not keeping the Law of Moses. 36:22-23, God is fulfilling His promises in their national election. The LORD God will solve the problem of the two covenants. Israel will be cleansed, given a new heart and spirit within, and can thus abide in the land. It is not because they are worthy, but because of God's holy name. So it is God's purpose and grace for there to be national salvation in the future, just like the Gentiles are saved for the glory of His grace, not because they deserve it. That is yet future, but is it happening in part now? Prophecy can work that way. This fullness of blessing of the land and people is in the future, the millennium.

Jer 31:31-37 also speaks of this future, national salvation. It completely refutes Supersessionism, or Replacement Theology. The church has not replaced Israel in the plan of God. These verses clearly say it will be Israel, not symbolically the church. Hebrews explains how everyone's salvation, including Israel's, is by the sacrifice of Christ. The Law did not save them. Without faith it is impossible to please God. It was always about repenting and seeking God's blessing and salvation through faith.

Ezek. 37. The dry bones prophecy is mainly telling us that national Israel is not dry bones. It is a metaphor that God can supernaturally bring back both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah back as one nation. It also has the clear implication of promising future resurrection. 37:21-23 talks about bringing them back from all nations. There is another cycle of exile coming when the AC invades. Then they will be brought back a final time.

Is Israel being back in the land a fulfillment of prophecy? In part, but these prophecies mostly deal with Israel's final blessings in the Millennial Kingdom. However, Israel's existence as a nation is a necessary condition for the future fulfillment of prophecy. Clearly, Israel must be a nation in the time of the temple, the invasion, etc. That's where we are now.

This is all Israel-centered and what does it have to do with the church? Of course it's about Israel as is the whole OT. There was only Israel and some glimpses of how he would bless the Gentiles, the nations, through Abraham. Look at the full redemption promised to Israel! It comes through Messiah, Jesus Christ. Not from their own merit. Gentiles get in on it in the church.

Is the church some greater thing than the covenant promises to Israel or is it mainly that the church receives those promises and more, along with Israel when they repent? Does the church end up as a separate and superior people of God with a greater salvation and greater blessings than national Israel or is it one combined people of God? I'd ask my Gentile friends to get your mind outside your Gentile, New Testament bubble and see how all the scriptures answer this question. I'm still working on figuring that out, and I invite you to pray and set your heart to understanding more about what the OT has to say and to really study Romans 11.

### **Conclusions**

- Abrahamic covenant gave the Land to national Israel forever
- Covenant of the law was a marriage covenant to be faithful in the Land or be afflicted and exiled
- There has been a cycle of exiles for not keeping the law covenant
- Israel is a nation again, but not all keeping the law covenant
- There will be another invasion and exile under antichrist
- The repeated theme in these chapters is that God will bring all the exiles of Israel and Judah back into one blessed nation in peace forever

We see the future salvation and regathering of Israel. First, at the end of this age, antichrist comes and leads a devastating invasion and carries many away into exile. Stay tuned. Next episode we will see Ezekiel's account of that.