

# **ISRAELOLOGY**

Part 1 of 6

by

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of Israel is one of the major points of division in evangelical theology today. This is true both among Arminians and Calvinists. An evangelical theologian's view of Israel will determine whether he is a Covenant Theologian or a Dispensationalist. It will also determine what kind of Covenant Theologian he is: postmillennial, amillennial, or premillennial.

The question of Israel is central for a proper Systematic Theology. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, which contains the first Systematic Theology in Church history, expounds on Israel in the center of his epistle devoting three full chapters (9-11) out of sixteen to this topic. Yet, while there are many Systematic Theologies today that have systematized all areas of biblical truth, none thus far has developed an Israelology as part of their system. These articles will survey what the concerns of an Israelology would be.<sup>1</sup>

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Important terms are used throughout this study that should be defined as part of the introduction.

### **Systematic Theology**

A science which follows a humanly devised scheme or order of doctrinal development and which purports to incorporate into its system all the truth about God and His universe from any and every source.

Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and de-

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed systematized Israelology, see this author's work, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1993). To order, call 714-259-4800.

fending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works.<sup>2</sup>

### **Israelology**

This term refers to a subdivision of Systematic Theology incorporating all theological doctrines concerning the people of Israel.

### **Israel**

As used in this study, the term Israel is viewed theologically as referring to all descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, also known as the Jews, the Jewish people, Israelites, Hebrews, etc.<sup>3</sup> The term is not limited to the present political and national state in the Middle East, which is merely a part of the whole; nor is it limited to those who adhere to the religion of Judaism only.

## **THE PLACE OF ISRAELOLOGY IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

In every work of Systematic Theology, Israelology is found missing as a major division. In all Systematic Theologies, what exists of Israelology will only be partially developed. In Covenant Theology, the development will be minimal. In Dispensationalism, Israelology is only fully developed in its future aspect, not in its past and present aspects.

Logically, Israelology must come just before Ecclesiology [the study the Church] and follow the same development. Both are a people of God but, historically, Israel precedes the Church. As Ecclesiology has been developed in its past, present, and future aspects, so must Israelology be. Only then will Systematic Theology be truly complete.

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 1:5-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:205-206.

## Israel Past

### The Election of Israel

In dealing with the concept of election, a distinction must be made between individual election and national election. The former is soteriological and results in the salvation of that individual. This type of election extends to both Jewish and Gentile individuals and any person who has ever believed, either Jew or Gentile, was the object of God's individual election. However, the concern of Israelology is national election because only Israel is called an elect nation.

Nation election does not guarantee the salvation of every individual within the nation since only individual election can do that. Nor does national election guarantee the physical salvation of every member of the nation. What national election does guarantee is that God's purpose(s) for choosing the nation will be accomplished and that the elect nation will always survive as a distinct entity. It guarantees the physical salvation of the nation and, in the case of Israel, even a national salvation. It is the national election of Israel that is the basis of Israel's status as the Chosen People.

The book of Deuteronomy, more than the other four books of Moses, emphasizes the fact of Israel's election (Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15-16, *et al.* While God chose Israel because of His love, there was purpose and reason to Israel's election:

- First, Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6)
- Second, Israel was to be the recipient of God's revelation and to record it. For this reason, Israel received the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 6:6-9; Romans 3:1-2).
- Third, Israel was to propagate the doctrine of the One God (Isaiah 43:10-12).
- Fourth, Israel was to produce the Messiah (Romans 9:5; Hebrews 2:16-17; 7:13-14).

### The Unconditional Covenants

Closely connected and intertwined with Israel's election are the four unconditional covenants God made with the nation. An unconditional covenant can be defined as a sovereign act of God whereby God unconditionally obligates Himself to bring to pass definite promises, blessings, and conditions for the covenanted people. It is a unilateral covenant. This type of covenant is characterized by the formula *I will* that declares God's determination to do exactly as He promised. The blessings are secured by the grace of God.

Before dealing with the four unconditional covenants individually, five things should be noted concerning their nature. First, they are literal covenants and their contents must be interpreted literally as well. Second, the covenants God made with Israel are eternal and are not conditioned by time. Third, it is necessary to re-emphasize that these are unconditional covenants that were not abrogated because of Israel's disobedience. Because these covenants are unconditional and totally dependent upon God for fulfillment, they can be expected to have an ultimate fulfillment. The fourth thing to note is that God made these covenants with a specific people: Israel. Paul brings this to light in Romans 9:4 and Ephesians 2:11-12.

Fifth, while a covenant is made at a specific point of time, not all of the provisions go immediately into effect. At the time a covenant is signed or sealed, three things happen: some do go immediately into effect; some go into effect in the near future; and some go into effect only in the distant or prophetic future. Examples of this will be given in the study of the covenants themselves.

#### The Abrahamic Covenant

Scripture. There are six passages in Genesis that pertain to the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; and, 22:15-18).

The Provisions of the Covenant. In these six passages, the persons involved are God and Abraham. In this covenant, Abraham stood not for all humanity (as was the case with Adam in the Edenic and Adamic covenants and Noah in the Noahic Covenant), but for the

whole Jewish nation. He is the representative head of the Jewish people. A list gleaned from these Genesis passages shows fourteen provisions in this covenant:

- (1) A great nation was to come out of Abraham, namely, the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:1-2, 7; 22:17b).
- (2) He was promised a land specifically, the Land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1, 7; 13:14-15, 17; 15:17-21; 17:8).
- (3) Abraham himself was to be greatly blessed (Genesis 12:2b; 15:6; 22:15-17a).
- (4) Abraham's name would be great (Genesis 12:2c).
- (5) Abraham will be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:2d).
- (6) Those who bless will be blessed (Genesis 12:3a).
- (7) Those who curse will be cursed (Genesis 12:3b).
- (8) In Abraham all will ultimately be blessed, a promise of Gentile blessing (Genesis 12:3c; 22:18).
- (9) Abraham would receive a son through his wife Sarah (Genesis 15:1-4; 17:16-21).
- (10) His descendants would undergo the Egyptian bondage (Genesis 15:13-14).
- (11) Other nations as well as Israel would come forth from Abraham (Genesis 17:3-4, 6; the Arab states are some of these nations).
- (12) His name was to be changed from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5).
- (13) Sarai's name was to be changed to Sarah (Genesis 17:15).

- (14) There was to be a token of the covenant, i.e., circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and so according to the Abrahamic Covenant, circumcision was a sign of Jewishness.

Three aspects of this covenant exist: the land, the seed, and the blessing. The land aspect is developed in the Land Covenant; the seed aspect is covered in the Davidic Covenant; and the blessing aspect is presented in the New Covenant.

The reconfirmations of the covenant. Abraham had eight sons by three different women. The question is: through which sons would the Abrahamic Covenant be confirmed? God revealed that it was to be through Sarah's son, Isaac, only (Genesis 26:2-5, 24). Isaac had two sons and God chose to confirm the covenant with Jacob only (Genesis 28:13-15). After that it was confirmed through all of Jacob's twelve sons who fathered the twelve Tribes of Israel (Genesis 49). Thus, the Abrahamic Covenant provides the biblical definition of Jewishness: a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The continuity of the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant became the basis for the Dispensation of Promise. Because the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, it is still very much in effect though it has remained largely unfulfilled. The ultimate fulfillment will come during the Kingdom Age, or Millennium. The unconditional nature of the covenant is affirmed and reaffirmed a number of times. For example, although it is clear that Israel both in Egypt and in the wilderness was not a righteous nation—since the majority constantly had a tendency to rebel and murmur—yet, God rescued them and brought them into the land based on the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>4</sup>

It was on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant that God finally brought Israel into the Promised Land as God's last words to Moses made clear (Deuteronomy 34:4).

Although Israel in the land had a long history of disobedience and idolatry, and although God frequently disciplined the nation, yet

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<sup>4</sup> See Exodus 2:23-25; 6:2-8; Nehemiah 9:7-8; 1 Chronicles 16:15-19; 2 Chronicles 20:7-8; Psalm 105:7-12.

He promised the nation would always survive based on the Abrahamic Covenant. On that basis, Moses pleaded with God to spare Israel from His divine wrath (Exodus 32:11-14; see also 2 Kings 13:22-23). While God used the Syrians to punish Israel, Syrian damage could only go so far because of this covenant. Certainly God expected Israel to be obedient, but Israel's obedience did not condition God's fulfillment of His promises.

It was because of this covenant that the Messiah came to bring redemption to Israel (Luke 1:54-55). It was on the basis of this covenant that Jesus taught the fact of the resurrection when confronted by Sadducees who did not believe in it (Matthew 22:23-33). Paul made the same point (Acts 26:6-8).

In Galatians 3:15-18, Paul drew a contrast between the Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants, pointing out that the Mosaic was temporary, while the Abrahamic was eternal. The author of Hebrews derived his assurance of salvation based on this covenant (6:13-20).

Finally, it is because of this covenant that the final restoration will occur, according to Moses (Leviticus 26:40-42). Just as God fulfilled His promises to Israel in the past, He will do so again in the future because of the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Token of the covenant. The token or sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision, to be performed only on males and on the eighth day of birth. Circumcision on the eighth day would distinguish Jewish circumcision from all other circumcisions practiced in that day. It would also serve as a reminder that this covenant was a blood covenant. It served as a sign of their Jewishness. Failure to do so would mean that the father would be "cut off" or executed. For this reason Moses almost died for failing to circumcise his second son and only when the act was done was the life of Moses spared (Exodus 4:24-26).

The timing of the provisions of the covenant. As stated earlier, while a covenant may be signed and sealed at a specific point of time, this does not mean that every provision goes immediately into effect. Three things happen. Some go into effect immediately, such as the changing of Abram's and Sarai's names and circumcision. Some go into effect in the near future, such as the birth of Isaac (25 years) and the

Egyptian sojourn, enslavement, and the Exodus (400 years). Some go into effect in the distant future, such as the possession of all of the Promised Land by the patriarchs and their descendants.

#### The Land (Palestinian) Covenant

For lack of a better name, the second covenant is known as the Palestinian Covenant for it largely concerns the land known for centuries as Palestine. This is now an unfortunate term for two reasons. First, it was a name given to the land by the Roman Emperor Hadrian after the second Jewish revolt under Bar Cochba (A.D. 132-135). His purpose was to erase Jewish remembrance of the land as part of his policy to "de-judaize" the land.

Second, due to the historical events in the Middle East in this century, the name is associated more with Arabs than with Jews. Perhaps a better title would have been "the Land Covenant" since "Palestine" is not a biblical designation anyway.

The content of the Land Covenant is found in Deuteronomy (29:30:20). Although this covenant is within the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy 29:1 clearly shows that the Land Covenant is distinct from the Mosaic Covenant:

*These are the words of the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.*

The covenant was made between God and Israel. Deuteronomy 30:1-10 states eight provisions of the Land Covenant. First, Moses prophetically spoke of Israel's coming disobedience to the Mosaic Law and subsequent scattering over the entire world (Deuteronomy 29:2-30:1). All remaining provisions speak of various facets of Israel's final restoration. Second, Israel will repent (30:2). Third, Messiah will return (30:3). Fourth, Israel will be regathered (30:3-4). Fifth, Israel will possess the Promised Land (30:5). Sixth, Israel will be regenerated (30:6). Seventh, the enemies of Israel will be judged (30:7). Eighth, Israel will receive full blessing, specifically the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (30:8-10).



The special importance of the Land Covenant is that it reaffirmed Israel's title deed to the land. Although she would prove unfaithful and disobedient, the right to the land would never be taken from her. While her enjoyment of the land is conditioned on obedience, ownership of the land is unconditional. Furthermore, it shows that the conditional Mosaic Covenant did not lay aside the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. The Land Covenant amplifies the land aspect and reaffirms the promise of the land to God's people in spite of unbelief.

The Land Covenant received its confirmation centuries later in Ezekiel (16:1-63). In this very important passage concerning God's relationship to Israel, God recounts His love of Israel in her infancy (16:1-7). Israel was chosen by God, became related to Jehovah by marriage, and hence became known as the Wife of Jehovah (16:8-14). Israel, however, played the harlot (16:15-34); therefore, it was necessary to punish Israel by means of dispersion (16:35-52). Yet this dispersion is not final, for there will be a future restoration because of the Land Covenant (16:53-63). The Land Covenant, being an unconditional covenant, is still very much in effect.

#### The Davidic Covenant

Two passages of Scripture set forth the teaching on the Davidic Covenant, and though they sound almost the same, there are variations in the points they make. The first passage, 2 Samuel 7:11b-17, emphasizes Solomon. The second, 1 Chronicles 17:10b-15, emphasizes the Messiah. This covenant was made between God and David, and David stands as the representative head of the Davidic House or Dynasty.

Careful study of both biblical accounts brings out the seven main provisions of the Davidic Covenant. First, David is promised an eternal house or dynasty (2 Samuel 7:11b, 16; 1 Chronicles 17:10b). Nothing could ever destroy the House of David—it will always be in existence. It is a promise that David will always have physical descendants.

Second, one of David's own sons, specifically Solomon, was to be established on the throne after David (2 Samuel 7:12). Third, Solomon would build the Temple (2 Samuel 7:13a). Although David had greatly desired to build God's Temple, his hands had shed much blood

and he was guilty of one count of murder. Thus, he was forbidden to build the Temple, and the job would rest with his son, Solomon.

Fourth, the Throne of David and Solomon's kingdom was to be established forever (2 Samuel 7:13b, 16). It was not Solomon himself whom God promised to establish forever, but rather the throne upon which he would sit. The throne emphasizes the right to rule, the authority of the king.

Fifth, Solomon would be disciplined for disobedience, but God would not remove His lovingkindness from him (2 Samuel 7:14-15). Earlier God did remove His lovingkindness from King Saul because of disobedience. However, the promise is made that although Solomon may disobey and require God's discipline, God's lovingkindness will never depart from him. Because the covenant was unconditional, regardless of Solomon's disobedience and God's chastisement of Solomon, the covenant remained intact and fulfillment is sure. This was true, although the sin of Solomon (idolatry) was a far worse sin than the sin of Saul (improper sacrifice).

That is the nature of an unconditional covenant. For that very reason, the kingdom was not divided in Solomon's lifetime, although it was his sin that caused the division (1 Kings 11:11-12). Furthermore, the Davidic Covenant kept God from tearing away all the tribes from the House of David (1 Kings 11:13).

Sixth, Messiah will come from the Seed of David (1 Chronicles 17:11). In the 1 Chronicles passage, God is not speaking of one of David's own sons to be established upon the throne forever, but the seed of one of his sons coming many years later. Furthermore, in this passage it is the Person Himself who is established upon David's throne forever and not merely the throne. Seventh, the Messiah's throne, house, and kingdom will be established forever (1 Chron. 17:12-14). The emphasis in the 2 Samuel passage is on Solomon, but in the 1 Chronicles passage it is on the Messiah. That is why this passage does not mention the possibility of sin as the 2 Samuel passage does, for in the case of the Messiah no sin would be possible. The Messiah, as well as His throne, house, and kingdom, are to be established forever.

To summarize, the Davidic Covenant promised four eternal things: an eternal house or dynasty, an eternal throne, an eternal kingdom, and an eternal descendent. The eternity of the house, throne, and kingdom are guaranteed because the Seed of David culminated in a person Who is Himself eternal: the Messiah, the God-Man.

The unique importance of the Davidic Covenant is that it amplifies the seed aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. According to the Abrahamic Covenant, the Messiah was to be of the Seed of Abraham. This only meant that He was to be a Jew and could be of any of the twelve tribes. Later, in the time of Jacob, the messianic seed aspect was limited to a member of the Tribe of Judah only (Genesis 49:10). Now the seed aspect is further narrowed to one family within the Tribe of Judah, the family of David.

It will be narrowed further in Jeremiah (22:24-30) where it is decreed that while the Messiah was to be of the Seed of David, it was to be apart from Jeconiah.

In a number of other passages, the Davidic Covenant receives further confirmation.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the Davidic Covenant, being an unconditional covenant, is still very much in effect.

#### The New Covenant

The content of the New Covenant is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This covenant is made between God and Israel, and it receives further confirmation in other passages, including Isaiah 55:3; 59:21; 61:8-9; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 34:25-31; 37:26-28; and, Romans 11:25-27.

From the original covenant and its various confirmations, nine provisions can be found. First, it is an unconditional covenant involving God and both houses of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31). Second, it is clearly distinct from the Mosaic Covenant (Jeremiah 31:32). It is not merely an elaboration of the Mosaic Covenant, but it is distinct from it;

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<sup>5</sup> Note 2 Samuel 23:1-5; Psalm 89:1-52; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:8-9; 33:14-17, 19-26; 19:26; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11; Luke 1:30-35, 68-70; and Acts 15:14-18.

and it is ultimately to replace it, for the Mosaic Covenant was now considered broken.

Third, it promises the regeneration of Israel (Jeremiah 32:33; Isaiah 59:21). The essential aspect of this entire covenant is the blessing of salvation; included in this covenant is Israel's national regeneration.

Fourth, the regeneration of Israel is to be universal among all Jews (Jeremiah 31:34a; Isaiah 61:9). The national salvation is to extend to every individual Jewish person, and it is to be true through succeeding generations from the time that the initial regeneration of Israel occurs. That is the reason there will be no need for one Jew to say to another, know the Lord, for they shall all know Him.

Fifth, there is provision for the forgiveness of sin (Jeremiah 31:34b). The New Covenant will do the very thing that the Mosaic Covenant was unable to do. The latter was only able to cover the sins of Israel, but the New Covenant will take them away.

The sixth provision is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27). The reason Israel failed to keep the law under the Mosaic Covenant was that the people lacked the power to comply with the righteous standards of God. The Mosaic Law did not provide the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; that was not its purpose. However, the New Covenant will do just that, and every Jew will be enabled to do the righteous work of God.

Seventh, Israel will be showered with material blessings (Jeremiah 32:41; Isaiah 61:8; Ezekiel 34:25-27). Eighth, the sanctuary will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 37:26-28). The Davidic Covenant provided for the building of the first Temple by Solomon; the New Covenant will provide for the building of the Messianic or Millennial Temple. This temple will be a continual reminder to Israel of all that God has done. The ninth provision is the Law of Christ, which will be discussed under Israel Present.

The importance of the New Covenant is that it amplifies the blessing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, especially in relationship to salvation. In relationship to the Church, the New Covenant is the

basis for the Dispensation of Grace. In relationship to Israel, it will be the basis for the Dispensation of the Kingdom. The New Covenant, being an unconditional covenant, is still very much in effect.

Again, all of these are Jewish covenants in that they were made with the Jewish people and are to be fulfilled to and by the Jewish people. The Church's relationship to these covenants will be discussed under Israel Present.

#### The Conditional Mosaic Covenant and the Law of Moses

While the previous four covenants were unconditional, this one is conditional. A conditional covenant is a bilateral covenant and may be defined as a proposal of God to man conditioned by the formula, if you will, whereby He promises to grant special blessings to man providing man fulfills certain conditions contained in the covenant. Man's failure to do so often results in punishment. In this case, conditions had to be met before God's promise could be experienced.

#### The Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant contains very extensive detailed information, and the Scriptural account of the covenant extends from Exodus 20:1 through Deuteronomy 28:68. The parties involved in this pact are God and Israel. The covenant was made with Israel and Moses acted as a representative of Israel (Exodus 19:3-8).

The Mosaic Covenant was ratified by blood, and signed and sealed by the Shechinah Glory (Exodus 24:1-11).

The main provision of this covenant was the Law of Moses, which contained 613 commandments. Being a conditional covenant, it provided blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. This conditional nature is spelled out in Exodus 15:26. This also comes out at the time of the actual making of the covenant in Exodus (19:3-8).

The key element of the entire Mosaic Law was the blood sacrifice, brought out in Leviticus 17:11:

*For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life.*

There were five different types of offerings (Leviticus 1-7). However, the blood of the animal only covered the sin, but did not remove it (Hebrews 10:1-4). It did provide for the forgiveness of sin and for the restoration of fellowship.

The Mosaic Covenant imposed a restriction upon one of the provisions of the Noahic Covenant: no longer would Israel be allowed to eat all animals without limitation. The Mosaic Covenant prescribed what the Jews could eat: seafood had to have both fins and scales; animals had to both chew the cud and be cloven-hoofed; all birds of prey were forbidden; and, no insects were permitted except for certain types of locust. It also elaborated on what crimes incurred the death penalty (adultery, idolatry, cursing God, cursing parents, etc.). Circumcision now became more than merely a sign of Jewishness as was true of the Abrahamic Covenant. It now signified submission to the law and obligated the Jews to keep the whole law. Gentile converts to Mosaic Judaism had to be circumcised. The Sabbath was the token of the Mosaic Covenant, as the rainbow was of the Noahic and circumcision of the Abrahamic.

The Mosaic Covenant was the basis for the Dispensation of Law.

#### The Law of Moses

It is important to state up-front that the law was given to Israel and not to the Gentiles or to the Church (Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Psalms 147:19-20; Malachi 4:4).

As stated earlier, the content of the Mosaic Covenant was the Law of Moses that contained 613 specific individual commandments. These are often categorized in various categories. Rabbinic Judaism divides them into positive and negative commandments. Among Christians, there are a variety of different categories, though two are primary. The first is the Ten Commandments, as separated from the other 603.

A more common division is that of moral, ceremonial, and legal or civil, though there is no absolute agreement as to which ones fall where. However, the Law of Moses never divides itself into these categories, but views itself as a single unit. The prophets of Israel also viewed the law as a unit, not to be broken in any one particular. While the above divisions are helpful in studying the different types of commandments, it is not to be assumed that any of these are biblical divisions. They are not. The Law of Moses is a single unit and all Scripture after Moses treats it as such.

#### The Purposes of the Law

Let it be stated categorically that Dispensationalism has not and does not believe that the Law of Moses was a means of salvation. This concept is rejected because it would make salvation by means of works. Salvation was and always is by grace through faith. While the content of faith has changed from age to age, depending on progressive revelation, the means of salvation never changes. God did not give the law to serve as a means of salvation (Romans 3:20, 28; Galatians 2:16; 3:11, 21).

He gave it to a people already redeemed from Egypt and not to redeem them. However, there were several purposes for the giving of the law. As found in both Testaments, there were at least nine reasons for the Law of Moses.

The first purpose was to reveal the holiness of God and to reveal the standard of righteousness which God demanded for a proper relationship with Him (Leviticus 19:1-2, 37; 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16). The law itself is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12).

The second purpose of the law was to provide the rule of conduct for the Old Testament saints (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7-8, 26). For the Old Testament believer, the law was the center of his spiritual life and his delight (Psalm 119; note especially verses 77, 97, 103-104, and 159).

The third purpose was to provide for Israel occasions of individual and corporate worship. The seven holy seasons of Israel are an example of this (Leviticus 23).

The fourth purpose was to keep the Jews a distinct people (Leviticus 11:44-45; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:1-2). This was the specific reason for many of the laws, such as the dietary laws, clothing laws, etc. The Jews were to be distinct from all other people in a variety of ways, as in the worship habits (Leviticus 1-7, 16, 23), eating habits (Leviticus 11:1-47), sexual habits (Leviticus 12), clothing habits (Leviticus 19:19), and even the way they cut their beards (Leviticus 19:27). Other passages for this point include Exodus 19:5-8 and 31:13.

The fifth purpose is stated in Ephesians 2:11-16. A more detailed exposition of this passage will be given under Israel Present. For the purpose of this section, it is important to note that the Law of Moses served as a middle wall of partition. The four unconditional covenants are Jewish covenants and God's blessings, both physical and spiritual, are mediated through the four covenants, the *covenants of the promise* mentioned in verse 12. Because of the Jewish nature of these unconditional covenants, a conditional covenant was also added, the Mosaic Covenant, containing the Law of Moses, the law of commandments and ordinances of verse 15.

The purpose of the law then was to become a middle wall of partition to keep Gentiles, as Gentiles, from enjoying the Jewish spiritual blessings of the unconditional covenants. Because of this purpose, Gentiles were both alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise. The only way Gentiles could enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants during the period of the law was to take upon themselves the obligation of the law, undergo the rite of circumcision, and then live like every Jew had to live. Gentiles, as Gentiles, could not enjoy the Jewish spiritual blessings, only Gentiles as proselytes to Mosaic Judaism.

The sixth purpose for the Mosaic Law was to reveal sin (Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7).

The seventh purpose was to make one sin more (Romans 4:15; 5:20). The picture Paul gives is that the law came in to cause more sin, actually to make one sin more. How does that work? Paul explains in Romans 7:7-13 and 1 Corinthians 15:56. The latter passage reads: *The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law.* What Paul teaches



is that the sin nature needs a base of operation. Furthermore, the sin nature uses the law as a base of operation. Paul said, *Where there is no law, neither is there transgression*. He did not mean, of course, that there was no sin before the law was given. The term "transgression" is a specific type of sin: violation of a specific commandment. Men were sinners before the law was given, but they were not transgressors of the law until the law was given. Once the law was given, the sin nature had a base of operation, causing the individual to violate these commandments and sin even more.

The eighth purpose was to show the sinner that there was nothing he could do on his own to please God and had no ability to keep the law perfectly or to attain the righteousness of the law (Romans 7:14-25). This led to the ninth purpose which was to drive one to faith (Romans 8:1-4 and Galatians 3:24-25).

### Circumcision

Circumcision was prescribed under the Abrahamic Covenant, but it was also prescribed under the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 12:3), though the significance was not the same. Under the Abrahamic Covenant, it was mandatory for Jews only and it was a sign of their Jewishness. Under the Law of Moses, it was mandatory for both Jews and Gentiles and it was a means of submission to the law. It obligated the one circumcised to keep the whole law, according to Galatians 5:3:

*Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

### The Sabbath

Just as the rainbow is a sign of the Noahic Covenant and circumcision the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant. The observance of the Sabbath clearly begins with Moses and did not precede him. There is no command for anyone to keep the Sabbath before Moses, nor is there any record of anyone keeping the Sabbath between Adam and Moses. It is first found in Exodus 16:23-30, where we discover the word the word for the first time; it is the first occurrence of both the word and the concept.

Since it was not known before this time, the full form is used: *shabbaton shabbat kodesh* ("a sabbatical celebration, a holy Sabbath"). The Hebrew root for the word means, "to desist," "to cease," or "to rest." There is no definite article before the word in the Hebrew text that, grammatically, can imply that the Sabbath was unknown until this period. Literally, the text reads, "tomorrow is a rest of a holy Sabbath." The fact that so many disobeyed and went out to gather manna on the Sabbath also implies that they were not accustomed to simply resting on that day. The specific prohibition at this point was not to gather manna on the Sabbath day.

Concerning the Sabbath under the Law of Moses, four things should be noted. First, the Sabbath as a command was embodied as part of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12. They were to keep the day holy, meaning they were to keep it as a special day separate from every other day, and dedicated to God. The main element involved in keeping it a holy day was cessation from work, including family members, servants, and domesticated animals. It should be noted that in neither version of the Ten Commandments is there any obligation to worship the Lord on that day.

Second, the emphasis of the Sabbath is not as a day of corporate worship, but as a day of rest. According to Deuteronomy 5:11, because God rested on the seventh day, Israel is now to rest on the seventh day. Only now is *shabbat* actually identified with the seventh day of Genesis 2:2-3 for the word was not used in the Genesis account. This does not imply that the seventh day of Genesis 2:2-3 was already set aside for humanity. The Hebrew, *al-kein*, as lexical studies show, means that the present command is based upon a previous event. It does not mean that the command itself was previously in force. The construction connects causatively an event in the past with a situation sometime later.

As the Sabbath commandment was further developed in other parts of the Law of Moses, what was meant by "resting" on the Sabbath was largely a matter of prohibitions: no gathering of manna (Exodus 16:23-30); no traveling (Exodus 16:29); no kindling of fire (Exodus 35:3); and, no gathering of wood (Numbers 15:32).

Outside the law, other prohibitions on the Sabbath included no burden bearing (Jeremiah 17:21); no trading (Amos 8:5); and, no mar-

keting (Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15, 19). Nothing was said about corporate worship. In the Law of Moses, the Sabbath was a day of rest and cessation, not a day of corporate worship. The Sabbath synagogue services found in the New Testament originated with the Babylonian Captivity, not with the Law of Moses.

While it was not a day of total inactivity, it was to be a day of rest and refreshment from the regular work of the other six days. While the rest itself may have been an act of worship, corporate worship on the Sabbath was not a factor in the Old Testament.

In connection with the Sabbath, the phrase a holy convocation is often found, which is sometimes used as the basis for teaching that the Sabbath was a day of corporate worship for all. However, this phrase is used only in conjunction with the priesthood and sacrifices. The corporate connotation is for the priests only and the place of this corporate worship is in the Tabernacle or Temple and for the purpose of sacrifices. Since only the priesthood could do the work of sacrificing, the holy convocation only applied to them. The phrase is found a total of 19 times, all in three books of Moses: Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Eleven of the 19 are found in one chapter: Leviticus 23. Six others are found in the two chapters of Numbers 28-29.

In all cases, the phrase holy convocation refers to a convocation of priests for performing special sacrifices and the Sabbath was one of those occasions. It was not a time of corporate worship for all Israel. So the one passage used to try to substantiate corporate worship on the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3), which refers to the Sabbath as a holy convocation, has to do with priestly corporate sacrifices. While it has relevance to family gatherings, these were not corporate acts of worship.

Even Leviticus 23:3 states concerning the Sabbath, *it is a Sabbath unto Jehovah in all your dwellings*. Again, the emphasis has to do with staying at home (Exodus 16:29) and resting as a family, rather than getting together in corporate worship. The expression holy convocation emphasized that on such occasions the priests were to offer special sacrifices.

In reality, the Mosaic Law mandated corporate worship only on three occasions (Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles), when they were to migrate to wherever the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, stood (Shiloh, then Jerusalem). Corporate worship by non-Levites was mandated only three times a year, but not on a weekly Sabbath. This would have been physically impossible in light of the time it took to journey during biblical times. The penalty for profaning the Sabbath was death, and to profane the Sabbath was to consider it like any other day. Therefore, on the Sabbath they were to do no labor and they were to stay home and rest (Exodus 16:29).

Third, the Sabbath was a sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 31:12-17). According to this passage, then, the Sabbath in relationship to Israel is a memorial of creation and a sign of Israel's covenantal relationship that began at Mount Sinai.

The Sabbath was also a sign that God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, a sign of the Exodus (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). It is this same point that Ezekiel emphasizes (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Both verses from Ezekiel are in a context of rehearsing God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. In Ezekiel, the Sabbath is still a sign of Israel's setting apart, a memorial of the Exodus, and a sign that Jehovah is Israel's God.

Because the Sabbath was a sign of the Mosaic Covenant, just as circumcision was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, it is obvious that the Sabbath can only be related to Israel, since only Israel was set apart at Sinai and only Israel has been delivered from the land of Egypt. In the context of the Mosaic Law, the Sabbath and the reasons for the Sabbath can only be related to the Jewish nation. The reasons given for Sabbath observance in the Law of Moses then included a memorial of creation, a memorial of the Exodus, a sign of Israel's sanctification or setting apart as a nation, and a sign of the Mosaic Covenant. No one single event is given as the subject of its observance, but several. Because the Sabbath is a sign of the Mosaic Covenant, it is in force for the duration of the covenant. If there is a time when the covenant ends, the sign would no longer be obligatory. This issue will be dealt with later.

Fourth, there were special ceremonial aspects to the observance of the Sabbath. Besides setting the day apart as a day of rest and a holy convocation in their dwellings, other commandments included the putting out of new showbread (Leviticus 24:8) and doubling the daily sacrifices (Numbers 28:9).

### The Remnant of Israel

The doctrine of the remnant means that, within the Jewish nation as a whole, there are always some who believe and all those who believe among Israel comprise the Remnant of Israel. The remnant at any point of history may be large or small but there is never a time when it is non-existent. Only believers comprise the remnant, but not all believers are part of the remnant for the remnant is a Jewish remnant and is, therefore, comprised of Jewish believers.

Furthermore, the remnant is always part of the nation as a whole and not detached from the nation as a separate entity. The remnant is distinct, but distinct within the nation.

The concept of the Remnant of Israel was true from the very beginning of Israel's history as they began to multiply. As a doctrine, the theology of the remnant begins with the prophets and the development of the doctrine continues through the New Testament. The historical event that gave rise to the doctrine involves Elijah the prophet's encounter with God at Mount Sinai. During this encounter, God declared that Elijah was not the only one left who was faithful, for God had seven thousand others. These seven thousand were the remnant of that day, quite small compared to the nation as a whole. It was with this historical remnant of the seven thousand of Elijah's day that the doctrine of the Remnant of Israel began.

It is Isaiah the prophet who put the remnant concept into theological terms. It is mostly found in the unit comprising chapters 7-12 and called "The Book of Immanuel" since, in the Hebrew text, that name is found three times (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10). Isaiah (8:5-8) points out that the non-remnant tends to put its trust in that which is noisy (the Assyrian Army), but the remnant has a quiet confidence in the God of Israel and the One to come, Immanuel. Ultimately the noise will de-

stroy the non-remnant which puts its faith in the noise, but Immanuel will save those who trust in Him (8:9-11).

Immanuel thus becomes the point of division between the remnant and the non-remnant. For the remnant, Immanuel will prove to be a sanctuary, but for the non-remnant, Immanuel will prove to be a Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of Offense (8:14-15). The remnant places its trust in the law and the prophets (8:16) and, therefore, waits upon the Lord (8:17).

So important was the doctrine of the remnant to Isaiah that he named one of his sons Shear Yashuv, which means "a remnant shall return" (7:3). With that naming, Isaiah was looking forward to the future final salvation of the Remnant of Israel (10:20-23). Until then, it is God who will protect the remnant guaranteeing its survival (46:3-4). More will be said about the doctrine of the remnant under other relevant sections.

**--To be continued--**

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