

Dispensations, Part 6

We are examining the four unconditional covenants that God made with Israel. These covenants represent promises made by God, and their fulfillment depends entirely on His integrity and ability to deliver on what He has promised. Israel has no obligations to fulfill to receive the promised blessings, except to be present at the appointed time they are distributed; thus, they are referred to as “unconditional covenants.”

These covenants were not made with the Church; God established no covenants specifically with the Church, although the Church will be fellow heirs of the promises made to Abraham and his descendants (Galatians 3:29). The Church is also described as fellow heirs with Christ due to our relationship with Him (Romans 9:16-17).

The Palestinian Covenant (Land Grant Covenant)

Right away, we encounter an issue with the name, “Palestinian Covenant.” Palestine was the designation assigned to the land by the Roman emperor Hadrian following the second Jewish revolt led by Bar Cochba (AD 132-135). His goal was to obliterate any Jewish memory of the land as part of his strategy to “de-judaize” it. Due to historical developments in the twentieth century in the Middle East, the name is now more closely linked to Arabs than to Jews. A more fitting title might be the “Land Grant Covenant,” as Palestine is not a biblical term.

The name “Palestine” originates from the “country of the Philistines,” a northern Mediterranean seafaring people who settled along the coast of what is now modern Israel.

Gen 12:7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”

Gen 13:14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and

southward and eastward and westward, ¹⁵ for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.

Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Scripture clearly indicates that God has designated a specific area of land and promised it to Israel. He made a blood oath to Abraham regarding this land, as noted in Genesis 15.

Gen 15:7 And he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ⁸ But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” ⁹ He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

This ritual, where God walks between the halves of ritually sacrificed animals, serves as His assurance that the promise of this land grant will not

be violated by Him. It was typically employed when two parties established a covenant involving mutual obligations. Each party would walk between the animal halves arranged in two rows. The concept conveyed is that if either party breaks the covenant, they should be cut in half, just like these sacrificial animals. However, in this case, Abram was put into a “deep sleep,” and only God walked between the animal halves; thus, it represents an unconditional covenant with only one party obligated—God.

What does this land grant represent regarding landmass? The northern and eastern boundaries are marked by the Euphrates River, while the southern and western limits are defined by the “River of Egypt” (Wadi el-Arish, not the Nile River), with much of Saudi Arabia situated in between. The land and its divisions are detailed in Ezekiel 48:1-29.

The content of the Land Grant Covenant is found in Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20. Moses prophetically spoke of Israel's impending disobedience to the Mosaic Law and their subsequent scattering throughout the world (29:2-30:1). The remaining verses discuss aspects of Israel's ultimate restoration and their forthcoming repentance.

In Greek, the term for repentance is *metanoeo*, which means to have a change of mind. Many assert that the Bible teaches we must repent *of* our sins. In the six verses, I found where "repent" or "repentance" and "sin" or "sins" appear in the same sentence (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47), none state "repent *of* your sins." Instead, it states, "repent *for* the remission of sins." When used in the context of a Christian today, “repent,” as a change of mind, relates to the question, “What think ye of Christ?” It signifies altering one's perspective about Christ *for* the forgiveness of your sins.

Israel will experience a *change of mind* regarding Christ, leading to the forgiveness of their sins. In Deuteronomy 30:3-10, the Messiah will return, Israel will be regathered, the land will be possessed by Israel, they will be regenerated, Israel's enemies will face judgment, and Israel will receive complete blessings, specifically the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. This reaffirms Israel's title deed to the land as promised to Abraham.

This covenant made by God with Israel regarding their relationship to the land must be understood as unconditional since it is referred to as an eternal covenant in Ezekiel 16:60. Its fulfillment is independent of human responsibility and serves as an amplification of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. With this covenant comes God's necessary guarantee that He will bring about the required conversion for its fulfillment (Romans 11:26-27; Hosea 2:14-23; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:16-21).

Israel was dispersed but remained under divine protection. At the Second Advent, Israel will be regathered, converted, and given the land. Portions of the covenant have already been literally fulfilled, and there is no reason to believe the rest will not be. God will keep all His promises to Israel.

The Davidic Covenant

The third covenant in our series of unconditional covenants is the Davidic Covenant, named after King David. In the Land Grant Covenant, God elaborated on the land provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant. Similarly, in the Davidic Covenant, God expanded upon the seed provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant.

2 Samuel 7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

Psalms 89:3 You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ⁴ 'I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.' "

The seed promise in the Abrahamic Covenant is central to the Davidic Covenant. The seed provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant are further elaborated upon in the Davidic Covenant and ensure that David's lineage will rule Israel forever.

Provisions of the Davidic Covenant

2 Samuel 7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ”

Historical Background

This covenant was established while David was in power and held authority over the kingdom. At that time, the Ark of the Covenant still resided in a tabernacle or tent, just as it did when Moses and the children of Israel roamed the desert for forty years. David lived in a house of cedar, and it seemed incongruous to him that the One from whom he derived his authority and governance should dwell in a house of skins. David intended to build a suitable dwelling place for God, but he would not be permitted to construct the Temple because he had been a man of war and had blood on his hands as a murderer. That responsibility would fall to his son Solomon, the prince of peace.

However, God makes certain promises to David regarding the perpetuity of his house. David will have a son, who has yet to be born, who will succeed him and establish his kingdom. This son will build the Temple instead of David. The throne of the kingdom will be established forever, and it will not be taken away from him, even though David's sins warrant chastisement. David's house, throne, and kingdom will be established forever.

Three key terms here have significant implications for eschatology: house, throne, and kingdom.

- David's house — This promise is made to David's descendants, his physical heirs. It ensures they will never be harmed or displaced by another family entirely. The line of David will always be the Royal Line.
- David's throne — the right to rule belongs solely to David's lineage. It signifies the dignity and power that are sovereign and supreme within this lineage.

- David's Kingdom — This refers to David's political realm over Israel. The word "forever" signifies that David's authority and kingdom, or rule, over Israel will never be taken away from his descendants. The right to rule will never be transferred to another family. There may be altered forms, temporary interruptions, or chastisement, but the lineage of David will always retain the right to govern Israel and will indeed do so.

Character of the Davidic Covenant

Is it conditional and temporary, or unconditional and eternal? The amillennialist argues that it is conditional, with a spiritual fulfillment.

- Christ, as the seed of Jesse, sits on a throne at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, becoming the throne of the covenant.
- The household of faith transforms into the house of the covenant.
- The Church becomes the Kingdom.
- The temporal aspects were fulfilled by Solomon.
- The Church and Christ ascended fulfill the eternal aspects.
- The Church becomes the seed.
- The kingdom is heavenly and not earthly.
- The Davidic rule on Earth becomes a type of the reign of Christ in Heaven.
- Covenant Theology allegorizes the entire covenant.
- Many mainline Protestant denominations share this perspective.
- It is wrong!

The Davidic Covenant is unconditional:

1. It is called eternal because it is unconditional and rests on God's faithfulness to execute it. It could never be called eternal if it depended on man.
2. It restates the seed promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is unconditional.
3. The covenant is reiterated by the prophets even after numerous acts of disobedience by the nation, demonstrating that its fulfillment does not rely on Israel's obedience.

The Davidic Covenant will be literally fulfilled:

1. The aspects of the covenant that have already been fulfilled were fulfilled literally. There is no reason to believe that the remaining provisions will not also be fulfilled literally.
2. David's exposition in Psalm 89 clearly indicates that he expected a literal fulfillment.
3. Throughout both Biblical and extra-Biblical history, the Jewish people have interpreted the terms of the covenant literally.
4. The New Testament interprets the covenant literally. The preaching of John, Christ, and the twelve presented Israel with an earthly, literal kingdom. Even after Israel rejected the Messiah and the Kingdom along with Him, there were still prophecies of a literal earthly kingdom.
5. The New Testament does not connect the promises of the covenant to Christ's present heavenly reign.
6. Gabriel's announcement to Mary in Luke 1:31-33: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Note the three key words: throne, house, and kingdom.
7. In both the New Testament and the Old Testament, the covenant is consistently regarded as literal.

The Davidic Covenant promises to David:

- His house will stand forever
- His throne will stand forever
- His kingdom will stand forever

These promises are literal and as yet unfulfilled. It is an unconditional covenant depending solely on God to deliver as He promised. We will see the literal fulfillment when we get to our study of the Millennium.

The New Covenant to Israel

The New Covenant to Israel guarantees Israel's conversion as the foundation of all her blessings.

Jeremiah 31:31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Provisions of the Covenant.

The New Covenant is an unconditional grace covenant based on God's "I will. " The frequency with which this phrase is used is striking. (Similar language appears in Ezekiel 16:60-62.)

The New Covenant is an everlasting covenant closely related to the fact that it is unconditional and made in grace.

Ezekiel 37:26 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore.

Jeremiah 31: 35 Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord of hosts is his name: ³⁶ “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.”

Note the language: God says He made the ordinances that establish the sun, which provides light, as well as the moon and stars at night. These divinely ordained ordinances will pass away before He casts off Israel. It promises the impartation of a renewed mind and heart, which we refer to as regeneration.

Jeremiah 31:33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Isaiah 59:21 “And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.”

Israel will be brought to national regeneration and will recognize Christ as Messiah.

The New Covenant provides for the favor and blessing of God.

Isaiah 61:8 For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹ Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.

Hosea 2:19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰ I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.

Forgiveness of sin is included in the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:34 ... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is included.

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will be manifested, and the will of God will be known by obedient hearts.

Jeremiah 31:34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

As always, when Israel is present in the land, she will be materially blessed according to the provisions of the New Covenant.

Ezekiel 34: 25 "I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶ And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷ And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

Animal ferocity will be removed as part of the curse in the Garden. Israel will be blessed by her presence in the land.

The Sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 37: 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷ My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

War shall cease, and peace shall reign.

Hosea 2:18 And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.

Isaiah 2:4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into

plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

The blood of Jesus Christ is foundational to the blessings of the New Covenant.

Zechariah 9:11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

The “waterless pit” or “cistern” is used here as a dungeon and serves as an analogy for redemption from the slave market of sin.

The Covenant is clearly made with the Jewish people. Its fulfillment is still to come, commencing when the Deliverer arrives and continuing throughout eternity.

The Character of the New Covenant

- It is literal
- It amplifies the Abrahamic Covenant
- It is largely occupied with the question of salvation from sin and the impartation of a new heart
- It guarantees salvation to Israel apart from all human agency and is therefore unconditional

The New Covenant and its relationship to the Church:

There are two main perspectives regarding the New Covenant and the Church. Amillennialists believe that the New Covenant is currently being fulfilled within the Church. We are in the Kingdom, and there will not be a literal 1000 years. The eternal Kingdom will arrive only after the Gospel has spread worldwide and all have come to Christ. The Catholic Church and some Protestant denominations adhere to this view.

The second major group is the premillennialists, who believe that Christ will return before the Millennium to establish His earthly kingdom. There are three primary premillennialist positions:

1. The first view is that of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Darby asserts that there is one and only one covenant made with Israel, to which the Church bears no relationship whatsoever. He states, “This

covenant of the letter is made with Israel, not with us; but we get the benefit of it.... Because Israel did not accept the blessing, God brought out the Church, and the Mediator of the covenant went on high. We are associated with the Mediator. It will ultimately be made good to Israel by and by.” Darby claims that all New Testament references to the New Covenant refer to Jeremiah 31.

2. The second view is that of C.I. Scofield. He argues that there is one New Covenant with a two-fold application. This perspective places the Church under the New Covenant and sees that relationship as a partial fulfillment. The national, material, and spiritual provisions of the Covenant are intended for Israel and are to be granted to Israel during the Millennium. However, during the Church Age, believers experience the spiritual aspects of the New Covenant: redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the ministries associated with the Holy Spirit. This framework positions the Church under the New Covenant and considers it as a partial fulfillment.
3. The third view is the two-covenant view held by Louis Chafer, Charles Ryrie, and John Walvoord. The New Covenant to Israel includes national, material, and spiritual blessings for Israel awaiting fulfillment. The New Covenant to the Church encompasses the spiritual blessings associated with the New Covenant to Israel, emphasizing its spiritual aspects. Strong arguments suggest that some New Testament passages refer to the New Covenant for Israel, pointing to Jeremiah 31, while other passages refer to a New Covenant for the Church. References in the Gospels and in Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 10:29; and 13:20 pertain to the New Covenant for the Church, while those in Hebrews 8:7-13 and 10:16 may allude to both.
4. The fourth view is held by Dwight Pentecost in *Things to Come* and Arnold Fruchtenbaum in *Israelology*. It is largely based on Pentecost's exposition of Hebrews 8 and references to the New Covenant in the Gospels. There is one covenant, and it is to Israel; none belongs to the Church. Pentecost contends that Jesus was referring to the New Covenant made with Israel when He said, “This is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant.” The disciples likely understood Him to be referencing Jeremiah 31, and Jesus offers no explanation indicating that this differs from their expectations. This may be hair-splitting, but it could represent the most valid view. There is one New Covenant,

and it is to Israel. The Church is neither under a New Covenant of its own nor is it fulfilling the spiritual aspects of the New Covenant; those belong solely to Israel. The Church is "receiving" spiritual blessings from the New Covenant given to Israel and shares in those blessings, but not the physical benefits.

It probably isn't terribly important which view you hold, as the results for the Church remain the same. We experience what amounts to the spiritual aspects of the Kingdom during this Church Age, while Israel experiences both the spiritual and physical aspects in the Kingdom Age.

Some key points to remember:

- Israel will be re-gathered
 - Israel back in the land today is not the re-gathering spoken of
 - God will gather *all* Jews from all the nations to Israel
 - None will be left outside Israel
- Israel will be one nation
- Ruled by one King
- Israel will forever be in the land
- The covenant with them will be everlasting
- God's Tabernacle will be with them in a visible way
- Israel will be known among the Gentiles as a nation blessed of God
- This covenant addresses the regeneration, forgiveness, and justification of Israel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit along with His subsequent ministries, and Israel's regathering and restoration to a place of blessing, all founded on the blood of Christ.

What is Covenant Theology?

The false doctrine of Covenant Theology's chief exponent is John Cocceius (1603-1669), a biblical scholar from Holland. His teachings led to the formation of the Dutch Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches, and some of these teachings have subtly spread to other denominations. He also holds the amillennial view, believing that there will be no literal millennium and that we are currently in the Kingdom. Christ will return once we have transformed the hearts of men through the conversion of the entire race.

Cocceius developed a theory of two covenants: a covenant of works before the fall of Adam, replaced by a covenant of grace after the fall. This doctrine cannot be supported by Scripture. Covenant theology does not recognize the different ages (dispensations) or the varying relationships of the Jews, Gentiles, and the Church to God. As a result of this failure, the distinction between the Church and Israel becomes confused.

Covenant theology teaches that Israel lost all claims to the promises given to Abraham and his seed, when the Jews rejected Christ as the Messiah in the first century. It asserts that the Church represents the spiritual remnant within Israel, to whom all Old Testament blessings will be granted, while Israel is permitted to inherit the curses. Covenant theology argues that the Jews are entirely excluded from God's plan and have not mattered for approximately 2,000 years. Satan would love for you to believe that. If this were true, and the Jews no longer mattered to God, then why is there such rampant antisemitism throughout the Church Age? Why is Satan so focused on eliminating the Jews? The Church has not replaced Israel in God's plan. Replacement Theology is a lie direct from Satan.