

Israel 1948: Countdown To No Where!

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In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-29, we find God's conditions for Israel to dwell in the land, and the conditions for restoration to the land when/if they should be expelled. Simply stated, Jehovah said that if Israel obeyed the Mosaic Covenant faithfully, she could dwell in the land. However, "If you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments...I will do this to you: I will appoint terror over you... I will punish you seven times over...I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw a sword after you...those who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands" (Leviticus 26:14-34).

The condition for restoration to the land is then given, "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also walked contrary to Me, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Abraham will I remember, I will remember the land" (Leviticus 26:40f). In other words, if, and when, Israel repented, then and only then would Jehovah return them to the land. There is not a single word to hint that He would reward their unrighteousness by re-gathering them to the land in their disobedience.

The same is true of Deuteronomy 28-30. Over and over the Lord of Hosts threatened them with captivity and scattering if they violated the Covenant (Deuteronomy 28:36-37; 45-49; 28:64

Three times in the text, Jehovah said that when the plagues and dispersion for sin came upon them, and they would call to

mind the Covenant “among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey his voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children...that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity” (Deuteronomy 30:1-3). Repentance and obedience to the Mosaic Covenant were the conditions for return.

THE CONDITION FOR RETURNING

The fact is this, in Deuteronomy 30, no less than three times Moses said the condition for a return to the land, after dispersion, was for Israel to obey the Law of Moses!

Since the Mosaic Covenant has been, as Hebrews 8-10 declares, removed forever, then the divine prerequisite for any return to the land has been removed, and thus, there cannot be a continuing promise of a return to the land!

Even if Israel were to attempt to obey the law it would do no good.

It was Jehovah Himself that took away that Covenant with its provisions and promises for return! No obedience, no land. No Covenant, no promise of return to the land.

Moreover, most dispensationalists totally ignore what honest observers have attempted to explain: “the majority of the ones who have returned are...atheists and skeptics.” Why would dispensationalists ignore this? Because God never promised to return Israel to the land in unbelief. Crouch knows that those who returned were unbelievers. Thus, he has to ignore the Divinely mandated conditions for restoration, and just insist that 1948 was the fulfillment of prophecy anyway

History and the present, proves that Israel was not, and is not, in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, Deuteronomy 30 can-

not be properly applied to 1948.

In Amos 3:7, Jehovah said, “Surely the Lord does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” As God’s spokesmen, the prophets were duty bound not to add to or take from the covenant. To do so would be to bring condemnation on themselves. Thus, if the covenant did not provide for a return in unbelief—and it clearly did not- then the prophets did not predict a return in unbelief.

The bottom line is that
God made no covenant promises
to return Israel to the land
in unbelief.

BUT, THE LAND IS ISRAEL'S FOREVER...ISN'T IT??

One reason so many people firmly believe that Israel has returned to the land, or one day will, is because God promised the land to her forever. And, the thinking goes, if God gave the land to Israel forever, then forever means forever, right? Well, actually, not necessarily.

The question is, and this will sound strange to the western mind, what does forever mean in the Hebrew Bible?

Olam, (Strong's Concordance reference #5769), and is translated as forever, everlasting, perpetual, and other corollary terms. Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldea Lexicon of the Old Testament,⁴⁵ coded to Strong's' #5769, says that Olam means "what is hidden; specially hidden time, long; the beginning or end of which is either uncertain or else undefined, eternity, perpetuity." He then proceeds to illustrate that the word does not inherently mean forever, in the sense of endlessness.

The Old Testament used the word olam to speak of things that virtually everyone agrees were temporary. Even though, as we know, that Covenant was temporary and came to an end.

- 1.) Genesis 17:7-8 – God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham to give them the land. Now as we have already seen, the retention and possession of the land was a conditional promise, that demanded obedience to the Law of Moses.
- 2.) Genesis 17:13 – Circumcision was to be an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel. Yet, Paul said that circumcision now means nothing, and, to be circumcised for a religious reason is to lose the benefit of Christ's work (Galatians 5:1-6). Thus, circumcision, though everlasting,

has ceased as a theologically significant practice.

- 3.) Exodus 12:14 – Jehovah instituted the Passover as an “everlasting ordinance” (Exodus 12:14). Is the Passover binding today? Not if we accept the New Testament teaching. For the Christian “Christ is our Passover” (1 Corinthians 5:7) and the old Jewish feast days were “shadows of good things that are about to come” (Colossians 2:14f). The Old Covenant Passover has ceased as a mandate of Jehovah because what it typified, the deliverance from sin, death, and bondage has become a reality in Christ.
- 4.) Exodus 27:21 – The statute concerning the care for the lamp stand that stood in the Holy Place was to be “a statute forever to their generations.” The term “throughout their generations is the key term here. The idea is that the ordinance would stand as long as Jehovah intended for it to stand.
- 5.) Exodus 29:9 – The Lord promised that the priesthood would belong to the Aaronic family “for a perpetual statute.” Yet, the New Testament is abundantly clear that the Aaronic priesthood has been superceded by Christ’s superior priesthood, and that in fact, the promise of the Levitical priesthood is now “annulled” (Hebrews 7:12-18).
- 6.) Exodus 29:28 – The law of the heave offering was to be a “statute forever.” The same is true of the trespass offering (Leviticus 6:18), the division of the sacrifices to the priesthood (Leviticus 7:34), the provision forbidding the priests to drink wine before serving at the altar (Leviticus 10:9), and a variety of other ordinances concerning the sacrifices and the Temple cultus. Yet, the writer of Hebrews says that

the Old Covenant ordinances were only imposed, “until the time of reformation” (Hebrews 9:10). Thus, eternal statutes are specifically said to be temporary.

From these examples it is evident that forever does not necessarily mean, without end. The demand that forever means without end, can, in fact, lead to serious problems of interpretation.

A PERPETUAL CURSE?

In Jeremiah 23:39-40, Jehovah threatened Israel with destruction at the hands of the Babylonians: “I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.” God threatened to make Israel a perpetual (olam) shame and reproach. Not only did He threaten her with perpetual shame, He also said that their sin had kindled His fury, and it would burn “forever” (Jeremiah 17:4).

In other words, God’s anger was going to burn against Israel forever, and, what this means therefore, if you press the endless definition, is that Israel would have to be in bondage endlessly. You see, the expression of God’s fury was destruction and captivity (cf. Ezra 10:14). Thus, when Jeremiah said that Jehovah’s wrath was going to burn against Jerusalem “forever,” that meant they would be in captivity forever.

If one argues that Israel according to the flesh was to be God’s people forever, they must also admit that Israel was to be cursed forever.

To suggest that Israel remains under a curse today, is to totally misapprehend the nature of God’s judgment). Further, if it be argued that the eternal curse could end, then this is a tacit admission that the eternal relationship could end. You cannot argue one without arguing the other.

TRANSLATING WITH UNDERSTANDING

The fact is, the word *olam*, translated as forever, everlasting, etc. cannot of itself, isolated from other evidence, be pressed to prove that Israel remains the chosen people of God, and that the land still belongs to them.

From the evidence above we can see that the Old Testament cultic and sacrificial laws were specifically said to be eternal, perpetual, and everlasting. And yet, the New Testament writers emphatically said those things were intended to be temporary.

- 1.) It was only a shadow of better things to come (Colossians 2:16-17). See the discussion just below. This is a vital truth being almost totally ignored by the millennial world.
- 2.) Even though they were perpetual ordinances, they constituted a law that could not provide salvation (Hebrews 8:8-13; 10:1-4). In other words, that perpetual law was flawed, and thus, needed to be replaced
- 3.) Although the Old Law was everlasting, it was only a tutor, a guardian, of Israel until the Messiah was to come (Galatians 3:23-25). When the object and goal of the Law was reached, the Law was to pass.

Now, if a person can understand how the everlasting sacrificial system of Moses has been removed by Christ, it should not be too difficult to see that although God gave the land to Israel forever, and chose them as His people forever, that this situation was not intended to last without end.

When Israel and the land had served her divine purpose, and reached her appointed goal in God's scheme, just like when the Temple, the sacrifices, and the Levitical priesthood had served

their purpose, then that exclusive, divinely sanctioned status ended.

We can only briefly note a few passages that suggest that when God's purpose for Israel had been fulfilled, that her special place in the sun, her eternal standing, was to cease.

- 1.) Genesis 49:1-2, 10 – Jacob gathered his sons around him and predicted what would happen “in the last days” (v. 1-2). He then gave the famous prophecy of v. 10: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and to him shall be the obedience of the people.” Here is a clear-cut statement that when the Messiah came, Judah would lose her sovereignty. Her eternal relationship would cease to exist, because Messiah was to rule. (It is almost universally admitted that the scepter passed from Judah in the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70)
- 2.) Jeremiah 3:16 – In this great passage, Jehovah foretold the time when Israel would worship Him from their heart, and, “they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made any more.”

This remarkable prophecy finds its fulfillment in the words of Jesus in John 4, when he spoke to the Samaritan woman, “The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father” (John 4:21). Jerusalem, and thus the land, was to lose its centrality in God's mind.

It is of great importance for folks that have a dispensational¹ mindset to note that Jesus' words here were spoken well before the Jews rejected Jesus, and his so-called "withdrawal of the kingdom offer."² This statement was made early in Jesus' ministry, and thus, Jesus' vision of the kingdom was not geo-centric, earth centered and earth bound.

Thomas Ice (a dispensationalist) says,

"Israel could have obtained her much sought after messianic kingdom by recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. We all know the sad reality—the Jews rejected Jesus. As a result, the kingdom is no longer near, but postponed." (Tribulation, 115)

The problem is, the Jews did recognize Jesus as Messiah, enough so that they offered him the kingdom. But Jesus rejected that offer. Then, and only then, did the Jews reject Jesus.

Are we to believe that Jesus could not communicate well enough to let the Jews know that He wanted to be a national ruler? Could He not tell them, as other would be messiahs had done, "Take up your swords."? Could Jesus not perceive what kind of kingdom they were offering in John 6?

Are we, after all, to believe, to borrow some famous words, "What we have here is a failure to communicate"? Are we, after all, to believe that Jesus did want what they wanted, and, they wanted what he was offering, but they, nor He, could communicate well enough to make each other understand what was actually being offered? Was Jesus' rejection by the Jews just a failure to communicate?

1 Those that see Israel according to the flesh as central, that the land is still part of God's eschatological plan, or that the Jews have promises remaining to them.

2 No such withdrawal ever took place. The Kingdom is established forever in Christ, who reigns today. Psalm 2.

If Jesus was offering what the Jews wanted, an earthly kingdom, and if the Jews were offering what Jesus wanted, an earthly kingdom, there is no explanation for the fact that Jesus rejected the Jewish offer, and for the fact that the Jews rejected Jesus' offer. This can only mean one thing, Jesus was not offering the kind of kingdom the Jews wanted, and since they wanted an earthly kingdom, then this means Jesus was not offering an earthly kingdom, and this is why they killed him.

The idea of an earthly, Messianic kingdom is totally contrary to scripture.