

## Covenants and End Times

### 1. Introduction

- a. How do the Covenants of the Old Testament relate to the end times and how do they contribute to our understanding of God's redemptive plans for us?
  - i Refer to notes on first ETSG session. The key to understanding the main themes of the end times is to know the foundations of the biblical story and how they set up the end of the story.
- b. The foundation of the whole biblical narrative is built upon these promises that God made with Israel. Today we're going to revisit three of these covenants plus one other.
- c. These covenants give us a deep insight into our relationship with God today. Understanding these covenants will give us confidence that the basis for our salvation is rock solid. Each brings a new dimension of how God is preparing the earth to transition from where we are now, through the messianic Kingdom and ultimately to the eternal age.
- d. More than 30% of the New Testament comprises either quotes from the Old Testament, or references to Old Testament themes, and much of this centres on Old Testament covenant material.
  - i God's end-time programme has its beginnings in these Old Testament covenants that God made with the nation of Israel.
  - ii Each covenant provided Israel with a hope and a future of certainty based on the faithfulness of God. They guarantee a hope and a future for the whole of mankind.
  - iii They form the basis of both our biblical theology and our biblical eschatology.

### 2. What constitutes a covenant?

- a. What is meant by a covenant? There is confusion about the difference between a covenant and a contract. They are quite different, and fulfil different purposes.
- b. First – **contracts**. We're probably more familiar with these because they are part of our normal lives. Many of the things that are part of our everyday life are ours through a contractual arrangement.
  - i Your electricity provider, your car insurance, your mobile phone etc. are all covered by a contract.
  - ii You have signed to say that you will fulfil certain obligations, and your provider has also signed to say that they will undertake their obligations to provide services under the terms of the contract.
  - iii Alongside your commitment to undertake certain obligations, there are penalties if you fail to maintain these obligations. Similarly there may be penalties if the provider fails in their responsibilities.
- c. A contract is an agreement made in suspicion, where two parties do not trust each other, and they set legally enforceable limits to their own responsibility.
  - i With a contract, if one agreeing party does something in violation of the contract then it is considered broken. The whole contract becomes null and void.
- d. A **covenant** is an agreement made in trust. Both parties to the covenant trust each other.
  - i Both parties agree to hold up their ends *regardless* of whether the other party keeps their part of the agreement. It is a personal relationship which people enter into voluntarily. In a covenant

agreement the relationship itself is different. At the first sign of a breach, there is an incentive to look for ways to fix it. What are we going to do together to fix this problem?

- e. Today we have lost the understanding of covenants. We only think in terms of contracts. The biggest challenge that comes out of “*contract thinking*” is that we misunderstand our relationship with God.
  - i We filter everything we understand about God in terms of a contract. We assume that if we don’t hold up our end then, contractually, God won’t hold up his. As a result we find it impossible to approach a Holy God because we *know* we can never hold up our end of the bargain. We erect an artificial barrier that prevents us from seeing God as approachable and forgiving.
  - ii Losing sight of God’s covenants and seeing our relationship with God in terms of contract warps our understanding of who God is and how he thinks of us.
  - iii Each of the covenants we are going to look at today are unconditional covenants. That means that their fulfilment is not contingent upon either Israel’s or our ability to keep our part of the covenant.
- f. There are two types of covenant that God made with Israel: conditional and unconditional. The Covenant that God made with Moses is conditional. Conditional covenants are the “IF you do this....THEN I will do this” types of covenant – where God requires the people to fulfil certain obligations before he fulfils his promises.
  - i It was a temporary covenant that detailed God’s laws for the nation of Israel, and it was to only continue until the coming of the Promised Seed.
- g. The Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants, are all unconditional, and are all eternal covenants. An unconditional covenant is one where God doesn’t attach any “IFs” for it to be fulfilled. The phrase to look out for that indicates an unconditional covenant is “I WILL...”
  - i In Hebrew this phrase is in the imperfect tense. We don’t have this in the English language. It is a past action that is not complete, but refers to an action that began in the past but will be completed in the future.
  - ii These unconditional covenants are agreements where God promises to eventually, yet with certainty, bring about total fulfilment regardless of the actions of those with whom he made the covenant.
- h. Disobedience on the part of the recipients of the covenant’s promises may delay or postpone the fulfilment of the promises.
- i. Each of these 4 Old Testament Covenants have eschatological significance. These covenants are all literal, unconditional and eternal, thus they have something to say to us about the end times. The foundational covenant is the Abrahamic Covenant, on which the other three are built.
- j. The Covenant God made with Abraham introduces us to three end-time elements: land, seed and blessing. Each of these elements is amplified in the successive three covenants.
  - i The Palestinian Covenant amplifies the land element
  - ii The Davidic Covenant amplifies the seed element
  - iii The New Covenant amplifies the blessing element

### 3. The Abrahamic Covenant

- a. This covenant spans a number of passages from Genesis 12 – 22. **First stated** in Genesis 12:1-3; it is then **confirmed** in Genesis 12:6-7 with the promise of a **land**; 13:14-17 the promise of **land** and **offspring**; 15:1-21 the **enactment** of the covenant; 17:1-14 God changes his name to Abraham, “father of a multitude of nations”, and introduces circumcision as a sign of the covenant; and 22:15-18 God **confirms** his promises to Abraham because of his obedience in being prepared to sacrifice Isaac.

**Genesis 12:1-3** *Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

- b. Although the covenant was made with Abram, it was pointing to a great nation that would come from him. Israel did not yet exist as a nation, but it did exist in the seed that would come from Abram, and in that sense it is a covenant with both Israel and all of Abram’s offspring, both natural and spiritual.
  - i The bible abounds with references to this covenant, referred to by many Old Testament prophets, and is frequently referenced by Paul in the New Testament, as well as being expounded by the writer to the Hebrews.
- c. This covenant highlights three central aspects that impact on our study of the end times. First God promised a **land** to Israel, and the exact boundaries of that land are recorded in Genesis 15:18-21.

**Genesis 15:18** *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...”*

- d. Second, God promised numerous **descendants** from Abraham who would live and rule in this land. And then thirdly God promised that both Abraham and Israel would be a **blessing** to all the nations of the earth. These three elements of the covenant impact upon the end times.
- e. There are some parts of this covenant that have already been fulfilled: the individual promises made to Abraham concerning blessing, the greatness of his name, and making him a blessing to others.
  - i God made him a rich, powerful man with a great reputation. He is known as an outstanding example of faith, and he is mentioned close to 300 times in the Bible.
  - ii God gave national promises to Israel, whereby his dealings with other nations would be reciprocated by the way they dealt with Israel.

## 4. Eschatological significance of the Abrahamic Covenant

- a. Have these three central elements been literally and completely fulfilled? The answer in each case is – not yet.

### LAND

- b. Genesis 12:1 “...to your descendants I will give this land”. This refers to the physical land as outlined in Genesis 15:18-21. The extent of the land is described as being from the river of Egypt – ie. the Nile, to the great river, the Euphrates.

**Genesis 13:14-17** *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, <sup>15</sup> for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. <sup>16</sup> I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.”*

- i It was the land that Abraham could see, walk about in and live in. Has the promise that God made to Abraham been completely fulfilled? Not yet! Israel has never occupied the extent of land that God promised to them in these verses.

**Deuteronomy 11:24** *Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea.*

- ii The nearest Israel came to possessing the territory that God promised them was during the reign of King David which extended into the reign of Solomon.
- c. When Israel once again became a nation on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1948, after exile from the land for 1,878 years, God's prophetic time clock now once again moves forward. God has not forgotten his promises to Israel and he will fulfil them all. There is a future fulfilment of Israel's possession of the land that will be exactly what has been promised in this covenant.
  - i God is committed to deliver on his promises, he will accomplish them all in the end times. There is contention over the land right now, even over the much reduced territory that Israel now occupies.
  - ii The land itself forms part of the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham, so we must expect Israel's sovereignty to continually be contested.
  - iii God will have the last word. The OT prophets also prophesied that God would bring an exiled and scattered Israel back from all the other nations to their land of promise, and apportion it out among the twelve tribes of Israel (eg. Jeremiah 23:7-8, Ezekiel 39:25-29). It is God's declared word so we can expect it to be fulfilled literally and completely at some time in the future.

## DESCENDANTS

- d. Three times God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2, 13:16 and 17:2-6). Some bible translations render the word "*descendants*" as "*seed*" – the literal translation of the Hebrew word "*zera*". The context of these verses clearly shows that God intends for us to understand this to mean physical descendants.
- e. Any confusion on this point can be cleared up if we understand the three different senses in which the word "seed" is used in relation to being a child of Abraham.
  - i First is the **natural lineage** ("seed") of Abraham, limited to the descendants of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel who received the Law. These were literally the children of Abraham. We could refer to them as "Natural Children/Natural Israelites."
  - ii Second is a **spiritual lineage of natural Israelites**. While not literally Abraham's seed, as God-fearing Jews they are also called the children of Abraham. We could refer to them as "Spiritual Children/Natural Israelites."
  - iii Third is a **spiritual lineage** who are **not natural Israelites**. These are God-fearing Gentiles who comprise the "all the families of the earth" promise in Genesis 12:3, a part of what is called the "Church." We could refer to them as "Spiritual Children/Non-Israelites."
  - iv These are the God-fearing Gentiles that Paul referred to in Galatians 3:7-9 – "it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham ...so then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham..."
- f. God is promising Abraham in the verses **physical descendants** who will ultimately become a great nation. The very fact that Israel as a nation still exists today is testimony to God's faithfulness and confirmation that he still has a great purpose for his chosen people in the end times. Many prophetic scriptures give us insight into the role that national Israel, will play in the end times, from the writings of the OT prophets, and Paul, Peter and John in the NT.

## BLESSING

- g. God promised that all the people on the earth would be blessed through Abraham's seed. What does it mean? How will all the earth be blessed through the offspring of this one man? Abraham understood this promise as meaning his physical descendants. This is in fact what happens through Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes.
- h. How should we interpret what God meant by Abraham's seed? The Hebrew text helps us, because the word "seed" is a singular noun. Rather than referring to all of Abraham's physical descendants, it is pointing to one specific seed.

**Galatians 3:16** *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ.*

- i. Paul interpreted Genesis 22:18 as saying the "seed" referred to Christ. Jesus, the promised "seed" of Abraham, is the Mediator of God's blessings to all the families of earth as their Saviour.
- i. The fact that Abraham also has spiritual children does not change the literal promise. Even the spiritual children of Abraham were a literal fulfilment of prophecy. The lineage from Abraham to Christ is a literal lineage, and Christ was literally born.
- j. Paul establishes a principle in 1 Corinthians 15 that the natural comes first, and then the spiritual. The fulfilment of the literal promise was essential to God's purpose not only for the physical seed of Abraham but also for the spiritual seed. Without the literal, the spiritual could not have been fulfilled.
- k. We can see how this covenant is foundational to all the subsequent covenants that God made with Israel, and it is on this foundation that God will now build with greater detail and enhanced promises.

## 5. The Palestinian (Land) Covenant

- a. This is the least familiar of the covenants that God made with Israel. The promises contained in this covenant are specific to Israel as a nation, and they specifically concern their inheritance of the land. This covenant is important as God intended to reassure a new generation of Israelites of their right to inherit the land of promise. We find this covenant in Deuteronomy 30:1-10

**Deuteronomy 30:1-10** *"And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup> and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. <sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. <sup>8</sup> And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today. <sup>9</sup> The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, <sup>10</sup> when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

- b. The content of this covenant amplifies the land promise from the Abrahamic Covenant, and includes the following:

- i The nation is removed from the land because of disobedience and is sent into captivity (v1-3)
  - ii God will restore the nation to the land (v3-5)
  - iii Israel will be converted as a nation (v6 and 8; cf. Romans 11:26-27)
  - iv Israel's enemies will be judged (v7)
  - v God will bless the nation (v9-10)
- c. This is an unconditional promise that Israel will inherit the land. The covenant comprises 12 "I will" statements that God makes, promises that he binds himself to fulfilling.
- d. When considering the end-times significance of this covenant, we must first note that parts of this covenant have already been literally fulfilled. Israel has experienced dispersion under Assyria, Babylon and Rome as judgment for disobedience. Now, after a period of nearly 2,000 years dispersed among the nations of the earth, they have experienced a physical restoration to their ancient land.
- e. Which parts have not yet been fulfilled?
- i Even though the nation has returned to the land, it still is not occupying the entire territory promised to them in Genesis 15 and Deuteronomy 11.
  - ii This will happen when the entire nation turns to Yeshua as their Messiah.
- f. Note 4 things that the bible tells us will happen in relation to Israel's return to the land and **God's end-times programme.**
- i **Israel will return to the land in unbelief.** In Ezekiel 36:24 God says he will take them from the nations and gather them once again in their own land. In v25-26 he says "...then I will sprinkle clean water on you and cleanse you from all your filthiness..." The national restoration of Israel will precede the spiritual regeneration of Israel.
  - ii **Israel will return to the land in stages.** Ezekiel 37 contains the vision of the valley of dry bones. From verses 6-10, the bones come to life in stages, and in verses 11-12 God says this is a picture of how He will bring Israel into the land, and ultimately to Himself. From this it is clear that Israel's re-gathering will not occur at one time in a single event, but as a process of stages ultimately leading to the nation's repentance and turning to the LORD. The final step of the entire nation turning in faith to the Messiah can also be expected to be literally fulfilled.
  - iii **Israel will return to the land through persecution.** In Jeremiah 16:15-16, God states He will restore Israel through the pursuit of her enemies and persecutors, the hunters and the fishers. This has been literally fulfilled in the rebirth of Israel. Since the birth of modern Israel, the primary motivation for Jews to return to their land has been anti-Jewish persecution.
  - iv **Israel will return to the land to set the stage for end times events.** We covered this in some detail when we looked at Daniel's prophetic words. One important factor that we must also take into account is that while Israel has a right to the land, she does not, as yet, have the right to the blessing of God in the land. And it doesn't mean that her covenant with God has been fulfilled.
- g. There are numerous scriptures concerning the return of Israel to their land, all of which give us confidence that God will completely fulfil his promises to Abraham and to Israel concerning the land. Isaiah 11:11-12; 14:1-3; 27:12-13; 43:1-8; 49:8-16; 66:20-22; Jeremiah 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 30:10-11; 31:8, 31-37; Ezekiel 11:17-21; 20:33-38; 34:11-16; 39:25-29; Hosea 1:10-11; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:4-7; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 8:4-8.

## 6. The Davidic Covenant

- a. In this covenant God makes promises to David concerning his seed, or his offspring, and so confirms and enlarges upon the seed promise made in the Abrahamic covenant.

**2 Samuel 7:8-16** *Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup> And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> 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, <sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'*"

- b. Again, this covenant is unconditional and eternal, and thus rests upon the faithfulness of God for its execution and fulfilment. The eternal nature of this covenant is confirmed several times in the bible (2 Samuel 7:13, 16, 19, 23:5; 1 Chronicles 17:12, 22:10; Isaiah 55:3; and Ezekiel 37:25).
- c. The Davidic covenant can be summed up in 5 parts:
  - i David will have a son who will succeed him and establish his kingdom (v12)
  - ii this son (not David) will build the LORD's temple (v13a)
  - iii the throne of his kingdom will be established forever (v13b)
  - iv though the LORD disciplines this son for sins, his throne will not be taken away from him (v14-15)
  - v David's **house, kingdom, and throne** will be established forever (v16)
- d. To put this covenant into our context of exploring its end-times significance, we need to clarify what is meant by **house, kingdom and throne**.
  - i "**House**" refers to David's physical descendants. A line stemming from David would continue indefinitely and would be the divinely recognized royal line.
  - ii "**Kingdom**" refers to the political body David would rule and over which his descendants would successively reign.
  - iii "**Throne**" refers to the right to rule, the authority as king vested in David.
- e. This covenant establishes that David's house, kingdom and throne will last forever. Forever is a timing word, and indicates that this is an eternal covenant, and therefore we need to look at how it impacts upon the events at the end of the age.
  - i Even though there might be temporary interruptions in the exercise of royal authority because of divine discipline, the authority and the mandate would never transfer to another line.
- f. How will this covenant be literally fulfilled and how does it relate to the end times? Jesus will re-establish a literal Davidic kingdom here on the earth when he returns. He will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem and in fulfilment of Isaiah 2:3 the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem.
  - i Matthew and Luke in their genealogies prove Jesus is a direct descendant of both David and Abraham, it is through him this covenant will be both continued and fulfilled.

- g. Parts of this covenant have already been fulfilled. The promises in verses 12-16 tell us that David would have a son to succeed him, who would
  - i establish David's kingdom – the political body he and successive descendants would rule over
  - ii sit on David's throne – the authority, the right to rule
  - iii build the temple
  - iv be punished for disobedience
  - v all these were fulfilled by King Solomon, David's physical son.
- h. Solomon's throne was a literal, political throne; we can expect that the ultimate fulfilment through Jesus as Messiah will also be literal and political.
- i. David understood the covenant would be fulfilled literally. In 1 Kings 1:30-37 David arranges for Zadok the Priest and Nathan the prophet to anoint his son Solomon as king over Israel. That was a first fulfilment of the terms of the covenant. But David saw further than that and understood that wasn't the end of the story. In Psalm 89 and Psalm 110 he looks forward to the time when Messiah, a future king, will literally sit on his throne and establish it forever.
- j. The OT prophets speak of a literal fulfilment of this covenant through Messiah:
  - i Isaiah 9:6-7 Messiah's birth, government and reign on David's throne are prophesied and confirmation of their accomplishment by the zeal of God
  - ii Jeremiah 23:5-8, 33:14-17 are prophecies concerning the raising up of the righteous Branch who will reign on David's throne
  - iii In Ezekiel 37:21-28 the prophet refers to the fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant after the nation Israel is re-gathered to the Promised Land
  - iv Daniel 7:13-14 refers to the "Son of Man" whose kingdom will never pass away
  - v Zechariah 14:9 says the Davidic throne will extend God's kingdom authority, through Jesus, over the nation of Israel, and over the Messianic kingdom in the Millennium
- k. In the NT, the angel prophesied the birth of Jesus to Mary in Luke 1:31-33. Jesus is announced to be the Messiah, the One to whom God will give the throne of David, He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom would have no end. Prophetic confirmation that "**house**," "**kingdom**," and "**throne**" from the Davidic Covenant are all fulfilled in Jesus.
  - i At the Council of Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, reference is made to the prophecy of Amos 9:11 that God will restore and rebuild David's fallen tent. This shows their expectation that Jesus would return and that the Davidic kingdom would be re-established exactly as promised in the covenant.
- l. There are two genealogies of Jesus in the NT, both of which converge on David, following different family lines. Solomon's line was to end physically in Joseph, Mary's husband – this would give Jesus, as Joseph's legal son, the legal right to the throne [Matthew 1:1-17].
  - i Mary descended from David through another son, Nathan, and thus would have a different physical lineage [Luke 3:23-38]. This is taken into consideration in the Davidic Covenant. Solomon was promised that his throne would continue forever but not that his house would continue forever. In contrast, David's throne and house were promised to continue forever. This covenant points to the conclusion that Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment [**legally** through Joseph and **physically** through Mary] of this promise to David.

## 7. Throne and Kingdom



- a. Some people believe that Jesus is sitting on David's throne today, but that is not the case. Acts 2:34-35 and Colossians 3:1 are references to where Jesus is presently seated – in a position of powerful heavenly rulership at the right hand of the Father.
  - i Psalm 110 also tells us that Jesus is presently seated on the heavenly throne at God's right hand.
- b. Also in the New Testament there are 58 references to the Davidic Covenant, and many references to the present ministry of Jesus. There is not a single reference which connects Jesus' present ministry or position with David's throne. David's throne is never pictured as heavenly, always as a literal, earthly throne in Jerusalem.
- c. There is also some confusion concerning the kingdom rule of Jesus associated with this covenant. Some believe that the "kingdom" promise in the Davidic Covenant is to be spiritualized and that it has been fulfilled on earth by the Church. But is the kingdom people enter into at salvation associated with the Davidic kingdom?

**Colossians 1:13** *The Father...has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...*

- d. This verse is speaking about salvation, but the "kingdom of God's beloved Son" here is not the same as the kingdom promised in the Davidic Covenant, which will be a literal, political kingdom. The kingdom that we enter into when we are saved is a heavenly kingdom, and that is associated with Jesus reigning from his heavenly throne.
  - i There is no physical godly kingdom currently here on earth. That is a future promise of the Davidic Covenant, there will be a real, physical king, with a real kingdom authority and power invested in David's throne, who will rule the whole earth from Jerusalem. Then we will see the fulfilment of the promises of spiritual, social, political and economic blessing for the nation of Israel.
  - ii This kingdom rule will begin with the 1,000 year reign of Jesus in the Messianic Kingdom, and then at the end of the age, as heaven descends to the earth and the two become one, the two kingdoms, the heavenly and the earthly will become one and together will become the eternal kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth.
- e. Summary of the future implications of a literal fulfilment of the Davidic covenant:
  - i Israel must be preserved as a nation.
  - ii Israel must have a national existence, and be brought back into the land of her inheritance. Since David's kingdom had definite geographical boundaries and those boundaries were included in the promise to David concerning his descendant's reign, the nation must possess all of that land as her national homeland.
  - iii David's Son, Jesus Christ, must return to earth, bodily and literally, in order to reign over David's covenanted kingdom.
  - iv A literal earthly kingdom must exist over which the returned Messiah will reign.
  - v This kingdom must become an eternal kingdom. Since the "**throne**," "**house**," and "**kingdom**" were all promised to David in perpetuity, there must be no end to Messiah's reign over David's kingdom from David's throne.

## 8. The New Covenant

- a. The New Covenant, which actually isn't that new, has its roots way back in Jeremiah. Although it's called the New Covenant, we must be careful that we understand what "new" means in this context. This covenant does not replace any of the ones we have looked at today, but it enlarges upon the blessing promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** *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, <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> But 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. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour 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.*

- b. The New Covenant is both unconditional and eternal. In it there are 7 “I will...” statements made by God, which affirm the certainty of his future actions.
  - i. This covenant is also re-stated in Ezekiel 36:24-30, and in Jeremiah 32:40 God confirms the everlasting nature of the covenant.

**Ezekiel 36:24-30** *I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup> And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup> I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.*

**Jeremiah 32:40** *I will make with them [Israel] an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.*

- c. This covenant is not based on Israel’s righteousness or obedience to the Law. God describes them as a “stiff-necked people”, who were stubborn to the core.
  - i. The Mosaic Covenant was never intended to bring about righteousness in Israel, but rather to bring them face to face with their unrighteousness. In Galatians 3, Paul says, the purpose of the Law was to act as a schoolteacher to teach Israel of their need of a Saviour.
- d. God says that this New Covenant is “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”, making a comparison between this covenant and the one he made with Moses. The Hebrew word here for “not” is “lo.” It is a strong negation which means “the complete opposite of.”
- e. In Genesis 2:18, God says “It is not [“lo”] good for man to be alone.” He says it is very bad for man to be alone. It’s the same weight of emphasis in Jeremiah 31:32 – God says the New Covenant is the complete opposite of the Mosaic Covenant. The Old [Moses] Covenant was temporary and conditional upon Israel’s obedience; the New Covenant is eternal and enacted upon unconditional promises that God has made.
- f. Who did God make this covenant with? The house of Israel and the house of Judah. Since the Mosaic Covenant was made with Israel, the New Covenant must also be made with the same people.
- g. God has never made a covenant with the church or with any of the Gentile nations. We can only come into the blessings of this covenant through relationship with the God who describes himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel.
- h. If we put the two passages that describe the New Covenant together we also see that the promises contained within it are centred on Israel as a nation.

- i Israel will be re-gathered
  - ii Israel will be re-generated and forgiven
  - iii The Holy Spirit will indwell them
  - iv The relationship between God and the nation will be restored
  - v Israel is fully restored to the Promised Land
  - vi Israel comes fully into God's blessings
- i. Today Israel is a long way from entering fully into this covenant – they are at the moment a largely apostate nation. But one of God's declared intents for the end times is that he will use hostile nations to bring Israel as a nation to a place of brokenness where they will cry out to him to come and save them.
  - j. The New Covenant finds its fulfilment when Israel enters fully in to it, when Jesus returns. In the Old Testament it is seen as something that God will do in the future. We, too, must view it as still future, because the sequence of events outlined in the New Covenant have still not been fulfilled by Israel.
  - k. We know from other prophetic scriptures that the blessings of the New Covenant will not be realised until Israel's salvation, and this salvation follows the return of Jesus. The fullness of this covenant will not be complete until the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.
  - l. But – didn't Jesus introduce the New Covenant when he broke the bread and shared the cup with his disciples in the upper room just before his death? In Hebrews 8 and 12 the writer tells us that Jesus is the mediator of a new and better covenant, enacted upon better promises.
    - i How can we say that the New Covenant has not yet come when the church is clearly living with many the blessings associated with it? What is the relationship of the church to the New Covenant?
  - m. We have already established that the New Covenant is an extension of the blessing promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised Abraham that in him and his seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Because the Covenants were made with Israel, even the blessing promised to the Gentiles were routed through Israel.
    - i However, Israel rejected Jesus as Messiah, thus the Gentiles, without an intermediary nation, had no access to the blessings of the New Covenant.

**Ephesians 2:11-12** *Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

- n. The only hope for Gentiles was for a mediator who could enter into the New Covenant himself, and could enable others to enter into it. This mediator would have to be a Jew, one who in some way represented the nation in faith and righteousness. He would also have to have a special relationship with Gentiles. Was there such a person?
- o. Jesus fulfils this role in three ways:
  - i **As a son** – In the OT, the Messiah is identified with Israel, sometimes interchangeably. When Moses confronts Pharaoh, he tells Pharaoh that God says “Israel is my son, my firstborn”. In Psalm 2, God, speaking to Jesus, issues the eternal decree “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”. Son is thus a covenant name for both Israel and the Messiah King.
  - ii **As a servant** – Israel is described as God's servant, “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and

called from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off’” (Isaiah 41:8-9). Isaiah 42:1 and 53:11 both describe the Messiah as God’s servant. Once again we see that Jesus both represents and personifies the nation.

- iii **As God’s covenant** – The Servant/Messiah is designated as the personified covenant: “I will appoint you as a covenant to the people [Israel], as a light to the nations [Gentiles]” (Isaiah 42:6). And again, “I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people” (Isaiah 49:8). From these verses Jesus is the personified, incarnate covenant.
- p. In the NT, Jesus, in His presentation of the kingdom to Israel, made the New Covenant the means of entrance. To enter the kingdom, one had to be “born again” (John 3:3).
  - i Jesus presented Himself as a covenant to the nation. But that generation of Jews rejected its Messiah, and so the Servant has not yet consummated the covenant with the nation of Israel. These covenant prophecies will ultimately be fulfilled with a spiritually revived Israel (Zechariah 12:10-14) when Jesus returns, which culminates in the millennial kingdom.
- q. So when Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples, he said “This is the blood of the covenant”. He was preparing them for his imminent death, and connecting his death with the New Covenant. The shedding of blood was required by the covenant for the forgiveness and remission of sins.
  - i The New Covenant was finally inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost. In the OT this day was the celebration of the giving of God’s Word, the Law. In the NT this same day was marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- r. We must not get sucked in to believing that the church has replaced Israel. The church has not replaced Israel, it cannot fulfil the New Covenant, that is clear from the scriptures, as Paul says in Romans 9-11. God still has a purpose for choosing Israel, and only they as a nation can fulfil the terms of the New Covenant.
- s. This is how we should understand the situation:
  - i The New Covenant is instituted – or established – on the blood sacrifice of Jesus (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25).
  - ii This foundation sets the stage for Israel's future fulfilment of the New Covenant (Romans 11:26)
  - iii In the interim, while Israel is temporarily set aside, Gentiles can receive some of the spiritual benefits of Christ's blood (Romans 11:5-25; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 2:12-13; Hebrews 10:19; 12:24) so that the universal aspects of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants can be met.

**Ephesians 2:13** *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

- t. We participate in the New Covenant because we are in Christ. Though the fullness of the New Covenant has not yet come as far as Israel is concerned, Jesus has begun mediating the New Covenant to those who will receive him.
  - i Living out the blessings of the covenant, will be a provocation to Israel. Their eyes will be opened to the covenantal blessings that we have received and they will realise that they are missing out. We’ll tell them “These are your promises too – in fact they are yours first.”
- u. Israel has yet to come fully into the blessings of the New Covenant – now they are resisting, but at the end of the age, when Jesus returns they will enter fully into the New Covenant and the full blessing and promise of the other three will be fully realised. And when Israel comes fully into the New Covenant it will bring unprecedented blessing to the world – as Paul describes it, it will be like life from the dead.