

Israel: Focal Point of History

LESSON ONE

Gerald R. McDermott edited a recent book titled The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016). Gerald McDermott is Anglican Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School and he states in the introduction:

"...the people and land of Israel are central to the story of the Bible. This might seem obvious. But Israel has not been central to the church's traditional telling the story of salvation. Typically the story has moved from creation and fall to Christ's death and resurrection, with Israel as an illustration of false paths. We believe that the Bible claims that God saves the world *through* Israel and the perfect Israelite; thus the Bible is incoherent and salvation impossible without Israel. We propose that the history of salvation is ongoing: the people of Israel and their land continue to have theological significance."

Rich Robinson's recently reviewed The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land:

This book is vital reading and a measured and crucial contribution to a discussion too often marked by the proverbial heat rather than light. I close by making a few observations. Firstly (and from my North American vantage point), as several of the contributors point out **the church has lost sight of the larger narrative of Scripture. A typical church service today, particularly among newer congregations, tends to give sermons on topical issues, ignoring a more holistic biblical education or perhaps leaving it to small groups—a dicey proposition. As a result, the Jewish people and Israel are off the radar in many cases, the theological attention paid to Jews and Israel in God's plan thus coming out of left field for many. Somehow, the church needs to be encouraged to embrace the larger narrative.**

David M. Torrance & George Taylor, Israel God's Servant: God's Key to the Redemption of the World, Paternoster, 2007, page 5-6

"Sadly, the Christian Church, for the most part, only partially understands Israel's calling and mission. There is a veil over the minds and hearts of most of the Jewish people so that they still neither see nor hear the things of Christ. There is also a veil over the minds and hearts of many within the Christian Church so that they fail to understand what Scripture says about God's on-going purpose for His covenant People. They fail to recognize what God is doing through them, in challenging the nations to faith in God."

Elmer A. Josephson, Israel: God's Key to World Redemption, Bible Light Publications, 1974, page 5

"The Jewish problem' is not at the periphery of Christianity, though there were always many Christians who almost never thought about the Jews, and were sure that they are good Christians. In reality, the Jewish problem is one of the central Christian problems: a wrong position toward the Jews means a distorted approach to God and his Word and a misunderstanding of the very claim to the Christian message. This I say, not because I myself am a believing Jew, but because I have learned and have taught the New Testament and early Christianity many years at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem."

Isaiah 44:21-26

David Torrance & George Taylor, Israel God's Servant: God's Key to the Redemption of the World, Paternoster, 2007, page 55

"Israel is chosen in preparation for the coming of Christ, and in order to be the instrument of God's redemption of the world. Because of her election she occupies a special place and carries a special responsibility within the world of nations to which she belongs. God has called her from among the nations, set her apart, taught her, and prepared her so that she might be before God a mediator on behalf of the nations."

LESSON TWO

THE BROAD VIEW OF WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THIS WORLD

1. GOD RULED OVER MAN AND GAVE MAN DOMINION OVER THE EARTH - Genesis 1:26,28 (theocratic form of government)

Genesis 1:26, 28

26 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

28 *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

Loss of theocratic rule and dominion when Adam disobeyed God and followed Satan - Genesis 3

2. SATAN REBELLED AGAINST GOD AND USURPED THE DOMINION FROM MAN - Isa. 14:12-14

12 *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! {O Lucifer: or, O day star}*

13 *For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:*

14 *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*

Satan is now ruling the world's system

1 John 5:19 *"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."*

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 *"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*

Ephesians 6:12 *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*

Luke 4:5-7 *"And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."*

3. GOD PLACED ALL OF NATURE UNDER A CURSE - Genesis 3:17-19

17 *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

18 *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;*

19 *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

The collective heartaches and tears of mankind - death, divorce, murder, perversion, wars, disease, etc. - is the result of one, seemingly innocuous act.

History is HIS STORY!!! And, where all of history is going is to the reversal of these 3 results of Satan's and man's rebellion against God.

1. THE THEOCRATIC RULE OF GOD WILL BE RE-ESTABLISHED

Zechariah 14:9

"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."

2. SATAN'S CONTROL OF THIS WORLD WILL END AND MAN WILL HAVE DOMINION

Revelation 11:15

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

3. THE CURSE WILL BE REVERSED

Isaiah 11:6-9

- 6 *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*
- 7 *And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*
- 8 *And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.*
- 9 *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

Others have taught these same truths using different terminology. John Schmitt and J. Carl Laney identify these three areas as:

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| 1) | Redeem humanity | (Humanity has fallen into sin) |
| 2) | Reclaim His kingdom | (Because of the fall the world has fallen under Satan's sway) |
| 3) | Execute Judgment | (The earth and its inhabitants have been affected by sin and must be purged) |

They comment:

"Most of biblical history and theology can be viewed as the outworking of one of these aspects of God's divine program."

Messiahs Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple, John Schmitt and J. Carl Laney, Kregel Publishers, page 201, 2014 Updated Edition

LESSON THREE

THE MORE FOCUSED VIEW OF WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THIS WORLD

God instituted a covenant (Abrahamic) with a people (Jewish) to bring his plan to fruition

The Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12:1-3, is a narrowing focus of God's redemptive plan and the ultimate re-establishing of His theocratic reign in His kingdom.

1. Land Genesis 12:1; 13:14,15; 15:18-21; 17:4,8; 22:15-18

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:"

2. Seed Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 17:7

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:"

Seed came through Isaac Genesis 17:19; 21:12; 26:24
and then through Jacob Genesis 28:13,14

3. Blessing Genesis 12:3

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Old Testament sees this accomplished by the servant - Isaiah 49:3-6, 22, 23.

New Testament sees this fulfilled in the Messiah - Galatians 3:16

The Servant is the Messiah!

The Abrahamic Covenant is the most important of the Covenants for understanding the Bible. The rest of the Bible, from Genesis 12:4 through Revelation 22:21, is, in essence, commentary on how God brings to pass the three basic promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant can be developed through the rest of the Scriptures in God's dealing with the Land of Israel, the Jewish people and the Messiah, and the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. The three other major covenants with Israel - Land, Davidic, and New - expand on the three basic promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

"It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible that the covenant of God with Abraham is one of the important and determinative revelations of Scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New. In the controversy between premillenarians and amillenarians, the interpretation of this covenant more or less settles the entire argument. The analysis of its provisions and the character of their fulfillment set the mold for the entire body of Scriptural truth."

Dr. John Walvoord, *Millennial Series: Part 12: The Abrahamic Covenant and Premillennialism*, <http://walvoord.com/article/49>

When the Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation Period, this is also the time that the broader view of God's plan is consummated.

SUMMARY

The Broad View of What God is doing in the World:

1. The loss of the theocracy
2. The establishment of Satan's rule
3. The curse on all of creation

These three present conditions will be reversed through:

1. The re-establishment of God theocratic kingdom over all of man-kind
2. The defeat of Satan and his world's system
3. The reverse of the curse on man and this world (partially initially).

A more focused "view" of God's plan revealed in the Word of God, is God's use of the Jewish people, the nation of Israel, to be His instrument through which He brings His plan to fruition through:

1. The uniqueness of the (holy) land of Israel.
2. The birth of a people/nation (Jewish/Israel) and their Messiah, (it is the Messiah, Jesus, who is the focal point of this plan in regard to the land, the seed, and the blessing and their establishment).
3. The redemption of Jew and Gentile (not all).