

UNDERSTANDING COVENANT THEOLOGY

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- VII -
The Covenant Church

The Church as the New Israel

- Biblical Statements:

“For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:2).

“Some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:17).

“And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16).

- Why Twelve Disciples?

“By the acted parable of choosing the twelve, Jesus taught that he was raising up a new congregation to displace the nation that was rejecting his message.” George Eldon Ladd

- The Church *springs from* OT Israel as the *true Israel*, the historical people of God.

“No one is a Jew^who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter” (Rom. 2:28-29).

The Church & Israel's Privileges

“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (*Gal. 3:29*).

- God’s Chosen People

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (*2 Cor. 6:16*).

- A Glorious People to Belong to

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (*1 Pet. 2:9-10*).

- God’s Protection & Might

“The battle is not yours but God’s. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf” (*2 Chron. 20:15-17*).

- Possession of God’s Revelation

“The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God” (*Rom. 3:2*).

- God’s Preserving Grace

- “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (*Jer.29:11*).

- Answers to Prayers

- “Call on me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you” (*Jer. 29:12*).

- The OT is relevant for Christians! The OT hope is fulfilled in us.

The Church & Israel's Promises

“The promises of the new covenant – promises looked for even under the old covenant – are fulfilled in the church.” (Michael Williams)

- **Salvation available throughout the world**

“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... In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:2).

- **The Holy Spirit Poured Out on the Church**

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28-32).

“Christ redeemed us ... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” (Gal. 3:13-14).

- **Inward Transformation of the Believer:**

“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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Eze. 36:25-27).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

- **“The new covenant expands the old; it does not replace it.” (Michael Williams).**

The Church Mission

- Substantially same mission

“God calls the church, as he did Israel, to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation, to mediate the blessings of the covenant to a world estranged from God, to proclaim and live out the word of God, to be a mission nation.” (Michael Williams).

“Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing” (2 Cor. 6:17).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-20).

- Old boundaries broken down

“I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 8:11).

- New power and authority

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:18, 20).

“So shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him” (Isa. 52:15).

- New missions strategy:

“Yahweh intended Israel to function as a spiritual magnet, attracting other nations to him through its witness to God. He did not call Israel to go to the ends of the earth with the message but to be a living testimony to his rule in Canaan... In contrast to the centripetal model of the Old Testament... Jesus charges his disciples with a centrifugal missionary mandate. Rather than the nations coming to Israel to hear the word of God, the disciples are to move out from the ancient land of the covenant to take the gospel to all nations.” (Michael Williams).

The Church Community

- The covenant community should contrast starkly with the surrounding world.
- The covenant community is a community of the Spirit.
- The church is a community of wondrous diversity.
- The covenant community is built by the Word and prayer.
- The covenant community is led by Spirit-empowered men.
- The covenant community is composed of fully responsible members.
 - Caring for one another sacrificially
 - Encouraging one another spiritually
 - Carrying the gospel message to the world
 - Eagerly and generously supporting the work

*Derived from T. M. Moore, *I Will Be Your God*, ch. 8.