

Covenants of Promise

April 21, 2024

Let's look at a verse in the book of Ephesians that states something unique. Ephesians is written to the Church of the Body of Christ to which you and I belong to, but specifically mentions the people at Ephesus.

Ephesians 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

The statement means that at that time they were "alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise." Ephesus was in Asia Minor and was not part of the nation of Israel. Hence, "aliens from the commonwealth," meaning: "without citizenship." Furthermore, it states "strangers from the covenants of promise."

Why was being a citizen of Israel so credible? Because they were the people whom God chose who were descendants Abraham, then later on, Isaac and Jacob. They received the promises from God because of Abraham's believing of God's promise to him.

Romans 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew [Judean]? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles [or, declarations] of God.

There were major advantages to being a part of this nation of people. To be a citizen of Israel was a big deal. Which is why some people from other nations would travel to Israel to become proselytes, or converts to Judaism. Furthermore, **Ephesians 2:12** also states, "...strangers from the covenants of promise."

Again, the believers of Ephesus were Gentiles in background, and not part of the nation of Israel. They were not Judeans, it further tells them that they were "**strangers from the covenants of promise.**" The Gentiles were strangers of God's covenants with Israel. For a stranger to partake of the promises in previous times, they had to be circumcised and live according to the covenant agreements. Those who were uncircumcised remained strangers from the covenants of promise.

Genesis 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

And...**10 This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.**

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

The token of the covenant agreement that God made with Abraham was **circumcision**. There are two covenants that God made with Abraham. In **verse 8** God says, "I will give unto thee... all the land of Canaan." This land involves what later became known as the Promised Land. Originally, this included what is now known as all of Persia. Next, let's read what else God is going to promise Abraham.

Verse 15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name *be*. **16** And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her. **Verse 19** And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.

Abraham already had a son named Ishmael that was born of Hagar, the bondwoman. God told Abraham that Ishmael wasn't going to be the heir of the promise, but rather this next son would be born of Sarah whom God called Isaac. The seal of Abraham's seed inheriting the land was established with him by way of circumcision.

Verse 27 And all the men of his [Abraham] house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

Abraham must have agreed to the terms of God's covenant, because he did what God had asked him to do.

Psalm 105:7 He *is* the LORD our God: his judgments *are* in all the earth. **8** He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations. **9** Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; **10** And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant: **11** Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.

The first covenant God promised that Abraham's seed was to inherit the land. In the second covenant, God promised Abraham a son Isaac by his wife Sarah, and God would establish His covenant with Isaac...established by an oath to Isaac, and later it was confirmed to Isaac's son Jacob.

There is a third covenant that God made later on to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Deuteronomy 5:1 And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. **2** The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb [Sinai]. **3** The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even* us, who *are* all of us here alive this day. **4** The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire.

This covenant mentioned here is a covenant that was made between God and the people of Israel. Notice in verse 3 that this covenant made here had not been made to the fathers, referring to their ancestors including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was a different covenant made with Moses and the children of Israel.

Exodus 19:2 For they [Israel] were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. **3** And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; **4** Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. **5** Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: **6** And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. **7** And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. **8** And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

After the children of Israel traveled from Egypt to the wilderness of Sinai, God told Moses to speak to them about obeying His voice and keeping His covenant. This is the first mention of this covenant wherewith God

promised that they would be a peculiar treasure to Him above all people, and that they would be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Also in this agreement between God and Israel, God promised to be their God and to take care of them. The children of Israel promised to keep all the words in the book of the covenant, which included the 10 commandments in Exodus 20. But this covenant is summarized in Exodus 24.

Exodus 24:7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. 8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Again, the children of Israel agreed to the terms of the covenant. This covenant was ratified by the sacrifice of certain animals and the sprinkling of blood. Of course, we know that Israel did not do all that they said they would do. In fact, they came to the point of completely ignoring it altogether!

All three of these covenants were part of what is mentioned back in **Ephesians 2:12** “**That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens [or, alienated] from the commonwealth [citizenship] of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise...**” In other words, “you had nothing and you got nothing!

Then the rest of Ephesians 2:12 states: “... **having no hope, and without God in the world.**”

Wow, that’s pretty destitute! This statement epitomizes the Gentile’s position in the sight of God. There was no grey area, but rather complete separation. “**Having no hope, and without God in the world,**” means, “no relationship with God now, and no hope for a future with God.” Ouch!

And now, the music begins to rise in a crescendo, with cymbals crashing,

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

“**But now...**” The word “but” is a connective, it ties a stark contrast to what has preceded with what is to follow. It looks something like this... “**But now** in Christ Jesus, you who were formerly far away have now become near to God by way of the blood of Christ.” What a difference! Completely changed from death unto life. From no promises from God either now or in the future... to now having a nearness to God that was never before available! Jesus Christ’s accomplishments and our acceptance of his sacrifice gave us this nearness.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

“**Foreigners**”: Greek: *paroikos*, a term used to refer to a person who was living in a country in which they were not a citizen, hence, a visiting foreigner, a resident alien. Our status as fellowcitizens with the saints and the household of God is another stark contrast to our former state. A fellow citizen puts us back into right standing with God as a member of His household. The book of Colossians expands upon this.

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Jesus Christ had told his disciples that some of them would not die until they had seen him coming in his kingdom and until they had seen the kingdom of God come with power, as recorded in **Matthew 16:28**. The Greek word translated “hath translated” in verse 13 means “to transfer” or “to remove from one place or position to another.” It is not necessarily a physical position, but a position of status or vocational position. Entrance into

the kingdom of God's dear Son is spoken of in **II Peter 1:11** as a future reality: **"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."**

The transfer in **Colossians 1:13** which means, the removing of people from being in the position or status in the power of darkness to the position or status in the kingdom of God's dear Son, rather than a physical transfer. The actual *physical* transfer, or entrance into that kingdom is a future reality. We will physically transfer into the heavenly realm with new spiritual bodies. From limited bodies, to bodies unlimited in scope and activity!

If you take the time to study the parable of the tares in **Matthew chapter 13**, you will see that Jesus mentions two phases. The first phase was referred to as the time when the children of the kingdom are the good seed sown by the Son of Man, and the second phase, referred to as the time when the children of the kingdom shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father in the harvest, the end of the age.

Not only have we passed from death unto life in this life that we now live, we also have a solid future. A future that is assured. A future that has so many benefits that they can't be comprehended now.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

"A lively hope" is one that keeps on going in this life. It is a most joyous anticipation of our everlasting inheritance, that is, with a view to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance reserved in heaven for you and me! No one is going to abolish your inheritance at the last minute. We will never be cheated out of it. It is a certified promise of God. God not only is making it available, but He has set a guard against it from being corrupted or stained; and is perpetually reserved in heaven for us. Today, there are two warring factions; God and the Adversary. But for all that the Adversary tries to pull off in tricking us in this day and age, he cannot take our future inheritance away. It is ours without a fight.

Philippians 3:21 says that Jesus Christ will change our vile, or humiliated body to be fashioned like his glorious body. **I Corinthians 13:12** says that presently, we see things with obscurity and without clarity, but when Christ returns, shall we know fully even as we also were fully known.

For now, we have a down payment of what is to come via the gift of holy spirit, as stated in **Ephesians 1:13,14** as... **"ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest [token] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession"**

Furthermore, **I Corinthians 15:52** states that when he comes back, in a moment (Gr. *atomōs*) which means in an indivisible moment of time, we shall be changed. That's fast! The dead will put on incorruption, those who are alive shall put on immortality. Which means, NEW BODIES! For now, it is as **Colossians 1:27** states: **"...Christ in you [presently], the hope of [our future] glory."**

As believers, we all have gone from being estranged from any covenants of promise, to having citizenship in heaven and the hope of a future glory!

God bless you,
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