

ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO THE PROMISED LAND

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I. The Basis: The Unconditional Covenants

Closely connected and intertwined with Israel's election are the four unconditional covenants God made with the nation. An unconditional covenant can be defined as a sovereign act of God whereby God unconditionally obligates Himself to bring to pass definite promises, blessings, and conditions for the covenanted people. It is a unilateral covenant. This type of covenant is characterized by the formula *I will* which declares God's determination to do exactly as He promised. The blessings are secured by the grace of God.

Covenant Theologians have misinterpreted what Dispensationalists mean by "unconditional." Their claim is that Dispensationalism teaches that these covenants contain no conditions whatsoever. By simply citing one or more conditions contained in these covenants, they feel they have disproven Dispensationalism. Either these critics have not bothered to read exactly what Dispensationalists have been saying about these covenants (a case of intellectual dishonesty) or have deliberately distorted what Dispensationalism believes to make their own position look better (a case of intellectual perversion). Let it be stated as clearly as it can be that Dispensationalism does believe there are conditions in the unconditional covenants. What they mean by "unconditional" is that God's fulfillment of His promises are unconditional and He will accomplish all promises stated in the covenants. In other words, the conditions stated in those same covenants are not the basis by which the covenants will be fulfilled. God intends to fulfill the content of the covenants, those promises dependent upon God for fulfillment, regardless of whether Israel fulfills her's.

Before dealing with two of the four unconditional covenants individually, five things should be noted concerning their nature. First, they are literal covenants and their contents must be interpreted literally as well. Second, the covenants God made with Israel are eternal and are not conditioned by time. Third, it is necessary to re-emphasize that these are unconditional covenants which were not abrogated because of Israel's disobedience. Because these covenants are unconditional and totally dependent upon God for fulfillment, they can be expected to have an ultimate fulfillment. The fourth thing to note is that these covenants were made with a specific people: Israel. This is brought out by Paul in Romans 9:4:

. . . who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

This passage clearly points out that these covenants were made with the covenanted people and are Israel's possession. This is brought out again in Ephesians 2:11-12:

Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

The four unconditional covenants belong to the people of Israel and, as this passage notes, Gentiles were considered *strangers from the covenants*. Fifth, while a covenant is made at a specific point of time, not all of the provisions go immediately into effect. At the time a covenant is signed or sealed, three things happen: some do go immediately into effect; some go into effect in the near future; and some go into effect only in the distant or prophetic future. Examples of this will be given in the study of the covenants themselves.

A. The Abrahamic Covenant

1. Scripture

There are six different passages of Scripture which pertain to the Abrahamic Covenant. First is Genesis 12:1-3:

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Second, Genesis 12:7:

And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an alter unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.

Third, Genesis 13:14-17:

And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it.

The fourth and fifth passages dealing with the Abrahamic Covenant are Genesis 15:1-21 and Genesis 17:1-21; these more lengthy segments of Scripture, not quoted in this study, contain many of the covenant provisions. The emphasis of Genesis 15 is on the signing of the Abrahamic Covenant. God signs and seals the Abrahamic Covenant and spells out the exact borders of the Promised Land as extending from the River of Egypt in the south to the great river, Euphrates, in the north. The manner in which this covenant is signed and sealed rendered this covenant unconditional. There are similarities and dissimilarities with the ancient Near-Eastern covenant-making customs. The similarities are found in that animals were slaughtered so as to make it a blood covenant and then the animals were cut up and the pieces lined up in two parallel rows. Then the dissimilarities began. Normally, both parties making the covenant would walk together

between the pieces of the animals rendering the terms mandatory on both parties. If one failed to keep his terms, it would free the other from keeping his. In this way, the covenant was conditional. In this case, however, it was not God and Abraham who walked between the pieces of the animals, but God alone, binding only Himself to the terms of the covenant. This rendered the covenant unconditional. Its fulfillment is based purely on God's grace regardless of how often Abraham or his seed may fail.

The emphasis of Genesis 17 is on the token of the covenant: physical circumcision on the eighth day of the boy's life. Just as the rainbow was the token of the Noahic Covenant, circumcision is the token of the Abrahamic Covenant. This also rendered the covenant a blood covenant.

The sixth passage is Genesis 22:15-18:

And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

2. The Provisions of the Covenant

In these six passages, the persons involved are God and Abraham. In this covenant Abraham stood not for all humanity (as was the case with Adam in the Edenic and Adamic covenants and Noah in the Noahic Covenant), but for the whole Jewish nation; the representative head of the Jewish people. A list gleaned from these Genesis passages shows a total of fourteen provisions in this covenant. However, for this paper, only one concerns the topic; it is the promise of the Land: A great nation was to come out of Abraham, namely, the nation of Israel (12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:1-2, 7; 22:17b); and he was promised a land specifically, the Land of Canaan (12:1, 7; 13:14-15, 17; 15:17-21; 17:8).

These provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant can be categorized in three areas: to Abraham, to the Seed (Israel), and to the Gentiles. Concerning Abraham, the promises made to Abraham individually included possession of all of the Promised Land. Concerning the Seed (Israel), when the term seed was used as a collective singular, it was a reference to Israel, and promises made to the nation included the possession of all of the Promised Land. The fact that the promise of the Land was made to both Abraham and his seed shows that these blessings have not yet received a complete fulfillment but await the Messianic Kingdom.

3. The Reconfirmations of the Covenant

Abraham had eight sons by three different women. The question was: through which sons would the Abrahamic Covenant be confirmed? God revealed that it was to be through Sarah's son, Isaac, only (Genesis 26:2-5, 24). In the confirmation of the covenant to Isaac, the Land is promised to both Isaac and Isaac's seed (26:3b, 4b); the seed will be multiplied (26:4a, 24b);

Gentiles will someday be blessed through the Seed (26:4c); and, the basis of the confirmation is God's covenant with Abraham (26:3c, 5, 24c).

Isaac had two sons and God chose to confirm the covenant with Jacob only (Genesis 28:13-15). In the confirmation of the covenant to Jacob, one specific provision was made: The Land is promised to both Jacob and Jacob's seed (28:13, 15). After that, it was confirmed through all of Jacob's twelve sons who fathered the twelve Tribes of Israel (Gen. 49).

4. The Continuity of the Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant became the basis for the Dispensation of Promise. Because the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, it is still very much in effect though it has remained largely unfulfilled. The ultimate fulfillment will come during the Kingdom Age. The unconditional nature of the covenant is affirmed and reaffirmed a number of times. For example, although it is clear that Israel in Egypt and Israel in the Wilderness was not a righteous nation, since the majority constantly had a tendency to rebel and murmur, yet God rescued them and brought them into the Land on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant. Exodus 2:23-25 states:

And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them.

Exodus 6:2-8 reaffirms:

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God, who bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am Jehovah.

This is further reaffirmed in Nehemiah 9:7-8, I Chronicles 16:15-19, II Chronicles 20:7-8, and Psalm 105:7-12.

In conjunction with the choosing of Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, he was almost disqualified because of his failure to circumcise his son in Exodus 4:24-26:

And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Jehovah met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me. So he let him alone. Then she said, A bridegroom of blood art thou, because of the circumcision.

Moses endangered his life by failing to circumcise his son in keeping with the penalty of the Abrahamic Covenant contained in Genesis 17:14 for failure to circumcise meant being *cut off from among his people*.

It was on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant that God finally brought Israel into the Promised Land as God's last words to Moses made clear in Deuteronomy 34:4:

And Jehovah said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

Although Israel in the Land had a long history of disobedience and idolatry, and although God frequently disciplined the nation, yet He promised the nation would always survive on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant. On that basis, Moses pleaded with God to spare Israel from His divine wrath in Exodus 32:11-14:

And Moses besought Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, that thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people.

Another example of this is II Kings 13:22-23:

And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. But Jehovah was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

While God used the Syrians to punish Israel, Syrian damage could only go so far because of this covenant. Certainly God expected Israel to be obedient, but Israel's obedience did not condition God's fulfillment of His promises. This is exactly what Dispensationalism means by an unconditional covenant.

It was on the basis of this covenant that the Messiah came to bring redemption to Israel, according to Luke 1:54-55:

He hath given help to Israel his servant, That he might remember mercy (As he spake unto our fathers) Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.

And also according to Luke 1:68-73:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people, And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of his servant David (As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old), Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To show mercy towards our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware unto Abraham our father, . . .

It was on the basis of this covenant that Jesus taught the fact of the resurrection when confronted by Sadducees who did not believe in it (Matt. 22:23-33). Paul made the same point in Acts 26:6-8.

In Galatians 3:15-18, Paul drew a contrast between the Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants, pointing out that the Mosaic was temporary, while the Abrahamic was eternal.

The author of Hebrews 6:13-20 derived his assurance of salvation on the basis of this covenant.

Finally, it is on the basis of this covenant that the final restoration will occur, according to Leviticus 26:40-42:

And they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that, because they walked contrary unto me, I also walked contrary unto them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Just as God fulfilled His promises to Israel in the past, He will do so again in the future because of the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant, being an unconditional covenant, is still very much in effect. In history, it was the basis for the Dispensation of Promise.

5. The Timing of the Provisions of the Covenant

As stated earlier, while a covenant may be signed and sealed at a specific point of time, this does not mean that every provision goes immediately into effect. Three things happen. Some go into effect immediately, such as the changing of Abram's and Sarai's names and circumcision. Some go into effect in the near future, such as the birth of Isaac (25 years) and the Egyptian sojourn, enslavement, and the Exodus (400 years). Some go into effect in the distant future, such as the possession of all of the Promised Land by the patriarchs and their descendants.

6. The Unconditional Covenants in the Church Age

Covenant Theologians of all three schools insist to a lesser or greater degree that the biblical covenants are now being fulfilled in, by, or through the Church. Some believe that these covenants were made with the Church from the very beginning. Others admit that they were made with Israel, but have now been transferred to the Church. As for Israel, all that was promised either has already been fulfilled or has been forfeited through Jewish unbelief. Even Covenant Premillennialists, who do see a future for ethnic Israel, still insist that Israel is amalgamated into the Church.

Dispensationalists, though very clear as to how the unconditional covenants work out in relationship to Israel Past and Israel Future, have been far less clear with Israel Present. Chafer took the view that the Jewish covenants are now in "abeyance," and Pentecost failed to recognize the existence of the remnant today. No such view of the covenants is necessary or defensible. The fact is that all four unconditional covenants are not only still in effect, but also still operative at the present time. The Church does, indeed, have a relationship to these covenants, but it is not that described by Covenant Theology.

Again, however, a point of observation is in order. It must again be stressed that, although a covenant may be made at a specific point of time, it does not mean that all provisions of the covenant go immediately into effect. Some do, but some may not for centuries. The Abrahamic Covenant is a good example. Some of God's promises did go immediately into effect, such as providing for Abraham's physical needs in the Land, his change of name, and circumcision. Others were fulfilled only later. For example, Abraham was promised a son through Sarah, but had to wait twenty-five years before that promise was fulfilled. Other provisions were fulfilled only later in Jewish history, such as the deliverance from Egypt which was also part of the covenant. Finally, other provisions are still future never having been fulfilled, such as Abraham's ownership of the Land and Israel's settlement in all of the Promised Land. It is important to note that although a covenant is made, signed, and sealed at a certain point of history, this does not mean that all the promises or provisions go immediately into effect. It should come as no surprise that not all of the provisions of the unconditional Jewish covenants are presently being fulfilled to, in, or by Israel today. This is not necessary for the covenants to still be in force. Nor is this a valid reason to teach that the Church has taken over these covenants or that they are now being fulfilled to, in, or by the Church.

The Abrahamic Covenant promised a seed, land, and blessings among its many provisions. The seed was to develop into a nation, and so it did at the foot of Mount Sinai. Today, Israel is a scattered nation but still a nation. Just as Israel remained distinct in Egypt, the Jewish people have remained distinct throughout the Church Age. No other nation that lost its

national homeland and was dispersed for centuries survived as a distinct entity. On the contrary, where they scattered they intermarried and disappeared into a melting pot. Not so the Jews, whose distinctive history is easily traceable throughout the years of Jewish history. The fact that Jews have continued to survive as a people in spite of so many attempts to destroy them shows that this covenant has continued to operate.

As for the Land, within the confines of the Church Age there has been no real independent government in the Land since A.D. 70. The Land has been overrun many times and ruled by many people, but always ruled from somewhere else. It has been controlled by Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, and Britons. Even under Arab control, no independent Arab government was ever set up; it was ruled from somewhere else: Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Amman, etc. Though renamed "Palestine" by Hadrian, there never was a Palestinian state with a Palestinian government or a Palestinian flag. The first time an independent government was set up in the Land since A.D. 70 was in 1948 with the State of Israel. The history of the Land also shows that the Abrahamic Covenant continues to be fulfilled with the people of Israel.

7. The Church's Relationship to the Unconditional Covenants

It is at this point that some confusion has arisen as to the Church's relationship to the New Covenant because, according to Jeremiah, the covenant is made not with the Church, but with Israel. Nevertheless, a number of Scriptures connect the New Covenant with the Church (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:14-20; I Cor. 11:25; II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 7:22; 8:6-13; 9:15; 10:16, 29; 12:24; 13:20).

This is the point of confusion. Covenant Theologians try to solve the problem by a theology of replacement or transference. Dispensationalists, with their literal hermeneutics, are unable to do so; thus, some have tried to resolve the problem by the invention of two new covenants. The problem with this view is that there is no indication in Scripture that there are two covenants with the same name. Any mention of a new covenant would cause Jews to think only of the one in Jeremiah. Verses used by adherents of this view as speaking of the New Covenant for the Church still cite the Jeremiah passage which speaks of the New Covenant for Israel. A better solution, and quite consistent with Dispensationalism, is to remember that these covenants contained two types of promises: physical and spiritual. The physical promises were, and still are, limited to Israel and will be fulfilled only to, in, or by Israel. However, as early as Genesis 12:3, the first passage of the first covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, it was already promised that the spiritual blessings would extend to the Gentiles. Actually, the solution is not difficult since it is clearly explained in Ephesians 2:11-16 and 3:5-6:

Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in

himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

. . . which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, . . .

The point of this passage is that God made four unconditional covenants with Israel: the Abrahamic, the Land, the Davidic, and the New Covenants. Many of God's blessings, both physical and spiritual, are mediated by means of these four covenants. However, there was also a fifth covenant, the conditional Mosaic Covenant. This was the middle wall of partition. Essentially, it kept the Gentiles from enjoying the spiritual blessings of the four unconditional covenants. For a Gentile to receive the blessings of the unconditional covenants, he had to totally submit to the Mosaic Law, take upon himself the obligations of the law and, for all practical purposes, live as a son of Abraham. Only Gentiles as proselytes to Mosaic Judaism could enjoy the spiritual blessings. Gentiles as Gentiles were not able to enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants and hence were *strangers from the Commonwealth of Israel*. They did not receive any of the spiritual benefits contained in the covenants. However, when Messiah died, the Mosaic Law, the middle wall of partition, was broken down. Now Gentiles as Gentiles can by faith enjoy the spiritual blessings of the four unconditional covenants. That is why Gentiles today are partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings; they are not taker-overs.

The relationship of the Church to the New Covenant is the same as the Church's relationship to the Abrahamic, the Land, and the Davidic Covenants. The physical promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, as amplified by the Land and Davidic covenants, were promised exclusively to Israel. However, the blessing aspect amplified by the New Covenant was to include the Gentiles. The Church is enjoying the spiritual blessings of these covenants, not the material and physical benefits. The physical promises still belong to Israel and will be fulfilled exclusively with Israel, especially those involving the Land. However, all spiritual benefits are now being shared by the Church. This is the Church's relationship to these four unconditional covenants between God and Israel.

The blood of the Messiah is the basis of salvation in the New Covenant and this was shed at the cross. The blood of the Messiah ratified, signed, and sealed the New Covenant (Heb. 8:1-10:18). The provisions of the New Covenant cannot be fulfilled in, by, or through the Church, but have to be fulfilled in, by, and through Israel. It is true that the Covenant is not now being fulfilled with Israel, but this does not mean it is therefore being fulfilled with the Church. Again, not all provisions go immediately into effect. The Church is related to the New Covenant only insofar as receiving the spiritual benefits of the Covenant (salvation benefit), but the Church is not fulfilling it. The Church has become a *partaker* of Jewish spiritual blessings, but the Church is not a "taker-over" of the Jewish covenants. The Church partakes of the spiritual blessings and promises, but not the material or physical promises or blessings.

8. The Possession of the Land

a. The Basis: The Abrahamic Covenant

One facet of the final restoration of Israel is the possession of the Land encompassing two aspects: its total boundaries and its productivity. The basis for this facet is the Abrahamic Covenant as found in various passages of the Book of Genesis. The first passage to deal with the Land aspect is Genesis 12:1-3. At the time the covenant was initially made, Abram was simply told to leave for a land that God would show him. When he arrived in the Land, God again revealed Himself to Abram in Genesis 12:7. In this verse, the promise is stated in such a way that it is Abram's seed that is to possess the Land. From this passage alone, it might be concluded that Abram himself was never to possess the Land. That is not the case, however, as another passage on the Abrahamic Covenant makes clear, Genesis 13:14-17. Although for the time being the area of grazing was divided between Abram and Lot, ultimately all the Land that Abram could see is to be possessed by him (vv. 14-15). The promise is clearly made that the Land is to be possessed by Abram personally as well as by Abram's seed. Since Abram's seed is to possess the Land as well, the population of Israel will greatly increase at that time (v. 16). Abram was then directed to walk throughout the Land in order to get to know it well, for someday he will possess it (v. 17). Thus far, Abram was only told that all the Land he could possibly see would be possessed by him, but no exact boundaries were given. Later however, as God confirmed the covenant, the exact boundaries were given in Genesis 15:12-21. At the time of the signing and the sealing of the Abrahamic Covenant, God spelled out the future history of Abram's seed prior to their initial possession of the Land (vv. 12-16). Then God signed and sealed the covenant (v. 17) and declared what the boundaries of the Land will be (vv. 18-21). The borders are to extend from the Euphrates River in the north to the River of Egypt in the south. Yet, Abram died having never possessed any part of the Land except for a few wells and a burial cave which he had to purchase. In order for God to fulfill His promise to Abram, two things have to occur. Abram must be resurrected, and the Land must be restored to Israel.

After Abraham, the covenant was reconfirmed to and through Isaac, in Genesis 26:2-5. Isaac is commanded to stay in the Land and not leave it (v. 2), for it is to Isaac and Isaac's seed that the Land will be given (v. 3). It should be noted that the promise of possession of the Land is not merely to Isaac's descendants, but to Isaac himself, requiring Isaac's future resurrection and possession of the Land. As for Isaac's seed, it will be greatly increased in number (v. 4). It is to Isaac, and not Ishmael, that the Abrahamic Covenant is reconfirmed (v. 5).

After Isaac, the Abrahamic Covenant is reconfirmed to and through Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15. It is to Jacob, and not to Esau, that the covenant is now reconfirmed (v. 13a). The promise is made that the Land will be given to both Jacob and to Jacob's seed (v. 13b). Again, the possession of the Land is not a promise to the seed only, but to the individual, Jacob, as well. For this reason Jacob must also be resurrected and possess the Land. As previously, the seed will be greatly multiplied at that time (v. 14). As for Jacob himself, who was now departing from the Land, God will bring him back in his own lifetime (v. 15).

So then, it is on the Abrahamic Covenant, which is reconfirmed through Isaac and Jacob and then to all of Jacob's descendants (Gen. 49), that Israel's final restoration and possession of the Land is based.

b. The Prophetic Development

The possession of the Land was further developed in both the law and the prophets. As far as the law is concerned, it is found in Leviticus 26:40-45. Following the regeneration of Israel (vv. 40-41), God will fully carry out the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant concerning the Land (v. 42). On the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant, He will restore to them the Land that has laid desolate for so long (vv. 43-45).

The prophets of Israel developed this facet even further in both the Major and Minor Prophets. One passage is Isaiah 27:12. In this passage, the first aspect (the borders of the land), is brought out. The northern (Euphrates River) and the southern (the Brook of Egypt) boundaries are possessed for the first time in all of Israel's history. Israel will be able to settle in all of the Promised Land. In another passage, Isaiah 30:23-26, the second aspect (increased productivity of the land) of the third facet is stressed. The Land will be well watered and will produce abundant food both for men and animals (vv. 23-25). Furthermore, there will be a tremendous increase of light with the moon shining as brightly as the sun, while the light of the sun will be increased seven times what it is today. As for the deserts of Israel, Isaiah 35:1-2 states:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God.

Isaiah later brought out the productivity aspect again in 65:21-24. With the possession of the Land of Israel, not only will the Jews be able to build houses and plant vineyards and crops (v. 21), but they will also enjoy the work of their hands, for no enemy will take it from them (vv. 22-23). They will enjoy it until a ripe old age (v. 24).

Another major prophet, Jeremiah, also stressed the greater productivity of the Land in the final restoration. According to Jeremiah 31:1-6, because of God's everlasting love for His people (vv. 1-3), He intends to restore and build them again (v. 4). Once again for Israel there will be a time of plenty (v. 5), and the hills of Ephraim will echo with the call to come and worship God in Jerusalem (v. 6). Later, in the same passage, Jeremiah returned to the theme in 31:11-14. After the redemption of Israel (v. 11), they will be restored to the Land which will produce an abundance (v. 12), giving joy to all the inhabitants of the Land (vv. 13-14).

After Jeremiah, the next major prophet, Ezekiel, picked up the motif of the possession of the Land in Ezekiel 20:42-44. Israel is to be brought back into their Land in accordance with the promises of God to the forefathers in the Abrahamic Covenant (v. 42). Israel will turn away from her sins of the past and will detest them (v. 43) and now serve God alone (v. 44). Later, in Ezekiel 28:25-26, following her regeneration and regathering, Israel will then possess the Land in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant (v. 25). The security in which Israel will live and enjoy the works of her hands is then emphasized (v. 26). The security aspect, along with the element of increased productivity, is the theme of Ezekiel 34:25-31. Since there will no longer be any wild beasts in the Land, Israel will be able to enjoy the Land in total security (v. 25). The rains will come in their proper time and in proper amounts (v. 26) increasing the productivity

(v. 27a). Not only is Israel to be secure from the wild beasts, but also from all her enemies of the past (vv. 27b-28). None will come to destroy the crops (v. 29). In every way Israel will be rightly related to God and will be His peculiar possession (vv. 30-31). Nor is this the end of the subject as the prophet continued in Ezekiel 36:8-15. In spite of years of desolation, the Land is to be tilled again (vv. 8-9) and populated; that is, the inhabitants of the Land will be greatly increased (vv. 10-11). Israel will again possess the Land (v. 12), and the production of the Land will be tremendous (vv. 13-15). Later in this passage, the prophet further elaborated in Ezekiel 36:28-38. Ezekiel declared that Israel will again possess the Land (v. 28) as a result of her regeneration (v. 29). The reproach of Israel will be removed (v. 30), and Israel will detest her past sins (v. 31). It is not for Israel's glory (v. 32) that the regeneration (v. 33), possession (v. 34) and the rebuilding of the Land (v. 35) will occur, but it is for God's own glory among the nations (v. 36). As for Israel, the population will increase and the desolate places will be rebuilt (vv. 37-38).

The possession of the Land is also promised in the Minor Prophets, such as in Joel 2:18-27. God will be jealous for His Land (v. 18), and this burning jealousy will bring about a great productivity in the Land (v. 19). The Land will be secure from any further invasions (v. 20), and it will produce abundantly (vv. 21-22). The rains will come at the proper seasons and in proper amounts (v. 23), causing a tremendous amount of surplus in their storage (v. 24), recuperating all previous losses due to pestilences (v. 25). Israel will never again be shamed (v. 26), but will have a special relationship to God (v. 27). Later, in Joel 3:18, the prophet declared that there will be an abundance of water in the Land. The increased productivity of the Land is again pointed out in Amos 9:13.

To summarize, for the first time in Israel's history, she will possess all of the Promised Land while the Land itself will greatly increase in its productivity and be well watered, all on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant.

B. The Land Covenant

For lack of a better name, the second covenant is known as the Palestinian Covenant for it largely concerns the Land known for centuries as Palestine. This is now an unfortunate term for two reasons. First, it was a name given to the Land by the Roman Emperor Hadrian after the Second Jewish Revolt under Bar Cochba (A.D. 132-135) for the purpose of erasing any Jewish remembrance of the Land as part of his policy to "de-judaize" the Land. Second, due to the historical events in the Middle East since 1948, the name is associated more with Arabs than with Jews. A better title to use now is "the Land Covenant" since "Palestine" is not a biblical designation anyway.

The content of the Land Covenant is found in Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20. Although this covenant is within the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy 29:1 clearly shows that the Land Covenant is distinct from the Mosaic Covenant:

These are the words of the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 states the key provisions of the Land Covenant. Verses 5-10 of this passage relate some of the Lord's promises to His people, Israel:

. . . and Jehovah thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And Jehovah thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And Jehovah thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, that persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of Jehovah, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day. And Jehovah thy God will make thee plenteous in all the work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, for good: for Jehovah will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers; if thou shalt obey the voice of Jehovah thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law; if thou turn unto Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.

The covenant was made between God and Israel. Eight provisions can be gleaned from it. First, Moses prophetically spoke of Israel's coming disobedience to the Mosaic Law and subsequent scattering over all the world (29:2-30:1). All remaining provisions speak of various facets of Israel's final restoration. Second, Israel will repent (30:2). Third, Messiah will return (30:3). Fourth, Israel will be regathered (30:3-4). Fifth, Israel will possess the Promised Land (30:5). Sixth, Israel will be regenerated (30:6). Seventh, the enemies of Israel will be judged (30:7). Eighth, Israel will receive full blessing, specifically the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (30:8-10).

1. Its Importance

The special importance of the Land Covenant is that it reaffirmed Israel's title deed to the Land. Although she would prove unfaithful and disobedient, the right to the Land would never be taken from her. While her enjoyment of the Land is conditioned on obedience, ownership of the Land is unconditional. Furthermore, it shows that the conditional Mosaic Covenant did not lay aside the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. It might be taken by some that the Mosaic Covenant displaced the Abrahamic Covenant, but the Land Covenant shows that this is not true. The Land Covenant is an enlargement of the original Abrahamic Covenant. It amplifies the Land aspect and emphasizes the promise of the Land to God's people in spite of unbelief.

2. Its Reconfirmation

The Land Covenant received its confirmation centuries later in Ezekiel 16:1-63. In this very important passage concerning God's relationship to Israel, God recounts His love of Israel in her infancy (vv. 1-7). Israel was chosen by God and became related to Jehovah by marriage and hence became known as the Wife of Jehovah (vv. 8-14). Israel, however, played the harlot (vv. 15-34); therefore, it was necessary to punish Israel by means of dispersion (vv. 35-52). Yet this dispersion is not final, for there will be a future restoration on the basis of the Land Covenant (vv. 53-63).

The Land Covenant, being an unconditional covenant, is still very much in effect.

3. Has the Land Covenant Been Fulfilled?

The Land Covenant promised a final world-wide regathering following a world-wide dispersion. While the final regathering is still future, the world-wide scattering is a present fact and has been so since A.D. 70. Furthermore, it promised that the Jews would suffer persecution in the dispersion and the Land would become desolate over the centuries. The fact that all these promises have and are being fulfilled shows that this covenant is still working itself out.

A key point of the Land Covenant was to teach that while Israel's enjoyment of the Land was based on obedience, her ownership or title deed to the Land was not. The failure of all other occupiers of the Land to set up an independent government again shows that this covenant continues to operate.

Many Covenant Theologians insist that God's promises to Israel concerning the Land have already been fulfilled and use passages such as Joshua 11:23 as evidence:

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Jehovah spake unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land had rest from war.

However, this verse, like all verses of Scripture, must be kept in context and must be viewed within the Book of Joshua as a whole. Keeping in mind that originally the Book of Joshua did not have chapter divisions, the verse simply states a fact which is then followed by exceptions to the fact. Joshua 11:23 is followed immediately by chapter 12 which lists the Canaanite kings killed by Israel. Joshua 13:1-6 shows that a great deal of territory did not fall into the hands of the Israelites and is a sizable exception to the statement of Joshua 11:23. Nor did much of this territory fall into Jewish hands in the immediate future following Joshua. Jerusalem remained under Jebusite control (Josh. 15:63) until David (II Sam. 5:6-9), and the city of Gezer was held by the Canaanites (Josh. 16:10) until Solomon (I Kings 9:16). The Tribe of Dan had to move because they could not take their territory from the Philistines. While David and Solomon extended Jewish control close to the borders of the Promised Land, it was not total since Phoenicia (Lebanon) retained its independence to the very end. Even if Phoenicia had fallen, it would not have fulfilled the covenant promises for, under David and Solomon, most of the non-Jewish territory, such as Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, etc., was merely under military control and they had to pay tribute (I Kings 4:21). This is hardly a fulfillment of a promise which concerned actual possession and settlement in the Land and not merely military control. This did not happen under Joshua as the context of 11:23 clearly shows. The first chapter of Judges, recording events which took place after the death of Joshua (1:1), records how various tribes failed to take the territory allotted to them (1:19, 21, 27, 29, 30, 31-32, 33, 34-36). Never in Old Testament history did Israel possess, dwell, and settle in all of the Promised Land. Nor did it ever happen in Jewish history since. However, the Land Covenant guarantees that some day it will.

4. The Prophetic Development

The regathering of Israel, following the regeneration, is another high point of prophetic revelation to be found in many of the prophets. In Isaiah 11:11-12:6, the final regathering is described as the second of the world-wide regatherings of Israel. The first regathering is the one in unbelief prior to the Great Tribulation in preparation for judgment. The regathering described in this passage is the second one (v. 11a), in faith and in preparation for the millennial blessings. This regathering is not merely local from the nations of the Middle East (v. 11b), but from all over the world (v. 12). Isaiah then goes on to develop certain characteristics of Israel's final regathering. First of all, the unity between Israel and Judah will be restored (vv. 13-14). Second, the final regathering will be accompanied by miracles (vv. 15-16): The tongue of the Egyptian Sea, the Gulf of Suez, will dry up while the Euphrates will be smitten and split up into seven smaller streams so as to make the regathering that much easier. As a highway was made for Israel at the Exodus, there will likewise be one again in the final regathering. This will result in songs of praise (vv. 1-6). Later, in Isaiah 27:12-13, the prophet emphasized the totality of the regathering, for every Jew one-by-one will be brought back into the Land of Israel. The magnitude of the final regathering of Israel is described in Isaiah 43:5-7. As far as locality is concerned, the regathering will be worldwide and, to emphasize the fact, all four points of the compass are mentioned (vv. 5-6). The magnitude is then illustrated by the usage of three words: created, formed, and made (v. 7). These three words are used interchangeably in the creation account of Genesis 1-2. Hence, from God's perspective, the final regathering will be on the magnitude of the original creation.

The comparative magnitude of the final regathering with previous works of God is something Jeremiah also pointed out. In Jeremiah 16:14-15 it is compared with the Exodus. Throughout Jewish history, the Exodus has been considered the high point of Jewish history, but after the final regathering this will change (v. 14). In the future it will be the final regathering of the Jews that will become the high point of Jewish history (v. 15). Later, in Jeremiah 23:3-4, the prophet stated that from all over the world the Jews are to be regathered into the Land where they will produce much fruit (v. 3). Furthermore, God will provide righteous leaders who will feed the people with righteousness, justice, and understanding (v. 4). Then there is another comparison with the Exodus in Jeremiah 23:7-8. One other passage in Jeremiah that speaks of the regathering is found in 31:7-10. Following the regeneration of Israel (v. 7), all the Jews will be regathered, regardless of their state of health and regardless of their location (v. 8). There will be no hindrances whatsoever to the regathering (v. 9), for the same One who was able to scatter them will also be able to regather them (v. 10).

Ezekiel picked up the same motif in 11:14-18. The same God who scattered Israel (vv. 14-16) has every intention of regathering them back into their own Land (v. 17) so that regenerate Israel can cleanse the Land of all pollution (v. 18). Later, the prophet restated this doctrine in Ezekiel 36:24.

The Minor Prophets were not remiss in speaking of the regathering. One such prophecy is in Amos 9:14-15. The emphasis of Amos is on permanency. Israel is to be regathered in order to rebuild the Land (v. 14). In the final regathering, God will plant them in the Land so that they will never again be uprooted and dispersed out of the Land (v. 15). The prophet Zephaniah,

whose whole theme was one of judgment, closed his book with a promise of the final regathering in Zephaniah 3:18-20. The judgment meted out against Israel is the result of her sins (v. 18-19). These judgments will not have a destructive effect, but a corrective one. Once correction takes place, the regathering will indeed occur, and the final regathering will cause Israel to be a name and a praise among the Gentile nations (v. 20). The final prophet of the Old Testament to speak of the regathering is Zechariah in 10:8-12. As Zechariah portrayed the final regathering, he saw it in terms of “hissing,” which is the call of a shepherd for his scattered sheep (v. 8a). The regathering will be a result of the redemption and regeneration of Israel (vv. 8b-9). While the regathering is to occur from around the world, there will be a special emphasis upon the Middle East nations (vv. 10-11). Once all the Jews are regathered, they will never again depart from the Lord (v. 12).

In the New Testament, the final regathering revealed by the Old Testament prophets is summarized in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27. In this passage, Jesus stated that the angels will be involved in the final regathering and they will bring the Jews back into the Land. As to locality, the emphasis is on the world-wide regathering. The two passages are a simple summary of all that the prophets had to say about the second facet of Israel's final restoration. The Matthew passage is based on Isaiah 27:12-13 and the Mark passage is based on Deuteronomy 30:4. Its purpose was to make clear that the world-wide regathering predicted by the prophets will be fulfilled only after the second coming.

II. A RESPONSE TO STEPHEN SIZER

In England, on March 18, 1997, a debate was held on the topic of “Whose Promised Land: Israel and Biblical Prophecy.” Stephen Sizer essentially argued in favor of Replacement Theology. The purpose of this section is to note the argument that he used and respond to them. Some arguments have already been dealt with in the earlier part of the paper, and those will be summarized here while more detail will be given to other arguments.

While Sizer affirms that Israel does have the right to exist “within secure but internationally recognized borders,” he relegates that to being strictly a “political question” rather than a theological one. He states that he opposes anti-Semitism, but then states, “remembering that the Arabs are a Semitic race also.” That is a new tactic taken by people who are anti-Semitic but are not actually affirming it. The assumption is that if they are pro-Arab they are not anti-Semitic. However, the person who first coined the phrase “anti-Semitism” made it clear that he was applying it only to Jews and not to other Semitic groups such as Arabs. Historically the term is applicable only to Jews.

Furthermore, concerning Israel's right to exist at the present time, it is not purely a “political question.” It must be recognized that the Bible speaks of two different worldwide regatherings to the Promised Land. The second worldwide regathering is in faith in preparation for the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom, and this was discussed earlier in the paper. However, the first worldwide regathering is in unbelief in preparation for the judgment and tribulation, and this was spoken of in passages such as Ezekiel 20:33-38; 22:17-22; Zephaniah 2:1-2; *et al.* Israel's present place in the Land is indeed not purely a political issue but is very much a theological issue as well. Whether there will be a temporary Palestinian State set up in

the near future is something only God knows. At the present time, leaders of the major parties in Israel are in favor of it. But, that is a political question. However, Israel's right to the Land whether now or in the future is a theological issue and is not purely political.

Nor is the issue about Palestinians having "fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Yet, if the Palestinians were willing to live in peace with Israel, they would have all of these rights even now. As long as their aim is to destroy Israel as it exists, whether it is the present borders or the pre-1967 borders, they have to be treated as enemies and cannot be given total freedom.

The way Sizer presents the case is as follows:

The central theological question is this: Does possession of the Land by Jewish people today, and existence of the State of Israel, have any theological significance in terms of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy within the purposes of God? Or should we believe that this understanding of the Land is inconsistent with the Gospel proclaimed by, and summed up in, Jesus Christ? The question is whether we have good biblical and theological reasons for giving whole-hearted support to the Zionist vision? Or do we find in Scripture grounds for criticising and rejecting this ideology as sub-Christian or heretical?

Sizer goes on to present seven propositions, and his citations are from people who come from an Amillennial perspective.

His first proposition is "The Relationship of the Old Covenant to the New Covenant." In this section the author claims that certain passages show that the latter "fulfills and annuls the former." He goes on to claim that we should "read the Scriptures with Christian eyes, and that we interpret the Old Covenant in the light of the New Covenant, not the other way round." The passages he presents include Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:1-6; and 10:1. However, none of these passages say that the covenantal passages discussed earlier have been annulled. The only covenant that has been rendered inoperative by Messiah's death is the Mosaic Covenant, but as has been shown earlier, this does not apply to the other Jewish covenants, particularly the Abrahamic and Land Covenants. If Deuteronomy 29 has been literally fulfilled with the worldwide dispersion of the Jews, equally chapter 30 should also be fulfilled, which calls for the final restoration of the Jewish people back into the Land. Proving that the Mosaic Covenant has come to an end does not prove Steven Sizer's point since the Land Promises were given in the Abrahamic and Land Covenants and not in the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant declared that the enjoyment of the Land was conditional on obedience but did not negate ownership of the Land due to disobedience. Furthermore, it is incorrect to say that the Old Testament should be interpreted by the New Testament because if that is the case, the Old Testament had no meaning and seemed to be irrelevant to the ones to whom it was spoken. On the contrary, the validity of the New Testament is seen by how it conforms to what was already revealed in the Old Testament. The Book of Mormon and other books by cultic groups fail to stand because they contradict the New Testament. By the same token, if the New Testament contradicts the Old Testament, it cannot stand. It is one thing to see fulfillment in the New Testament, but it is quite another to see the New Testament so totally reinterpret the Old Testament that what the Old

Testament says carries no meaning at all. That is Sizer's fallacy. He states, "The question is not whether the promises of the covenant are to be understood literally or spiritually. It is instead a question of whether they should be understood in terms of Old Covenant shadow or in terms of New Covenant reality. This is the basic hermeneutical assumption I will make." However, this is a faulty hermeneutical principle. Rather than deriving his hermeneutics from Scripture, he imposes his hermeneutic on the Scripture. Whether he admits it or not, he does favor a spiritual hermeneutic in place of a literal one. Sizer does point out correctly that the New Testament shows that Jesus did fulfill various facets of the Old Testament such as the sacrificial system, the manna from Heaven, the water from the rock, and the serpent on the pole. All of these are typologies and he can prove this very easily since the New Testament makes these very specific designations. However, the New Testament nowhere says that the Land Promise has already been fulfilled, and as has been shown earlier, the New Testament assumes that the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled yet in the future (i.e., Matthew 24:31).

Sizer's second proposition is "The Meaning of the Abrahamic Covenant." As the author begins to deal with the Abrahamic Covenant he makes the statement, "We must begin our consideration of the Abrahamic Covenant not in Genesis 12 but Genesis 2." He does this to try to show that the Garden of Eden is the first place there is a mention of land, and of course, Adam and Eve lost that with the fall. He states, "This land of paradise was lost in the Fall but a foretaste of heaven is reflected in the imagery of the promise made to Abraham." In trying to interpret Genesis 12 by Genesis 2, the author can do away with a physical land and simply see images of Heaven. That is his own connection and the Bible itself never makes this connection. Never in the Abrahamic Covenant is there any illusion to the Garden of Eden. When he deals with the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant and how God defined the Land to Moses, he focuses on the Land filled with milk and honey. He goes on to say that "These images are paradigms. The land of the Bible is not and never did flow with milk and honey." That again allows him to move into a symbolic and allegorical interpretation and not a literal one. However, what he ignores is that even the ten spies who said such bad things about the Land agreed that it was a land filled with milk and honey. That was simply a figure of speech meaning the Land was a good land for grazing cattle (milk) and growing products (dates and honey). The fact that this figure of speech was used to describe the Land did not take away from the literal Land. To claim that the literal Land was not God's focus is quite a stretch, especially since the specific borders are given. The author states, "The land in the Old Covenant was not an end in itself," and this is true, however, it plays a major role in God's prophetic program. He also makes the point, correctly, "The tabernacle, the place of worship in the Old Covenant was never intended to have a settled location in God's plan of redemption. It pointed to Christ who would tabernacle among His people in the incarnation..." This is all true, but it is also a smoke screen because it does not deal with the specific issue of the Land of promise. Yes, the New Testament does say that the death of Jesus fulfilled the function of the tabernacle. But, the New Testament does not say the death of Jesus fulfilled the promise of the Land. Because of his Amillennial approach, the author sees only the heavenly cities as being what God promised to Abraham, and then states, "This is the only legitimate interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant." How could that be "the only legitimate interpretation" if it ignores the obvious statements that the Jews were to possess all of the Promised Land from the Euphrates River in the north and the River of Egypt in the south? The fact that Abraham's son was to possess this Land is not fulfilled by his mere entry into Heaven. What God told Abraham to do in Genesis 13:17 was to walk through the whole Land

because everywhere he walked he would someday own it. This walk becomes meaningless if all God was promising Abraham was Heaven. While the author keeps denying that he is resorting to an allegorical interpretation that is exactly what he is doing. The writer goes on to make another correct statement with a faulty conclusion, “One more thing about the Land. The Land never belongs to Israel in the Torah.” True enough, the Land belongs to God, but God keeps saying over and over again that He will give the Land to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to the descendants of the Patriarchs. Again, he is using a true statement to make a smokescreen while ignoring other Scriptures that would negate what he is saying. The writer then uses the passage in Joshua, which was dealt with earlier, to prove that the Land Promise has already been fulfilled. This has already been dealt with earlier in the paper.

Sizer’s third proposition is “The Promise of Exile and Return.” In this section, unlike other Replacement Theologians, he admits that the Jewish people never possessed all of the Promised Land and not even in the days of Solomon did they possess all of the Promised Land, commenting that their slipping into idolatry kept it from happening. He goes on to admit that there were prophecies of a more glorious future after the return from Babylon, but goes on to state:

But God’s prophets were not distracted from their vision of the greatness of God’s redemptive work. In fact they paint a picture of restoration so glorious that it cannot be contained within the boundaries of the Old Covenant form of realization. Haggai and Zechariah, for example give us a picture of what is to come to God’s people that breaks all the bonds of the Old Covenant shadow forms. Zechariah 2 says that Jerusalem shall be a city without walls, so expansive it cannot be measured. Instead it would have a wall of fire around it. The reconstructed temple would manifest a greater glory than Solomon’s magnificent structure.

Having said all of this, he does not take these Scriptures literally but takes them allegorically while he still claims that the issue is not a difference between a literal and an allegorical interpretation. Because the focus is on spiritual redemption and not adding to it the promise of physical redemption, he really does miss the point. Therefore, all of it is allegorized as having already been fulfilled with the New Covenant with no future fulfillment to be expected. He interprets this as follows, “This vision found its fulfilment (sic) only in the days of the New Covenant since when people worship not in Jerusalem or Samaria but everywhere since the shekinah glory of God is present with every child of God. So, according to the irreversible fulfilment (sic) values of the New Covenant, it is the Jerusalem above not the Jerusalem below that is the mother of us all.” For him, that is the totality of the fulfillment, but that is hardly anywhere near as glorious as what is originally described. Even Hebrews 12:22 is allegorized when he says, “whenever we assemble for worship, we are meeting in the presence of the angels in the real Jerusalem.” But the author of Hebrews was describing that passage as something that was taking place in Heaven not here on earth. Sizer then concludes that once we have achieved what we have through Christ, “never again would the revelation from God suggest that his people should aspire to the paradigms of the Old Covenant.” What he fails to answer is the question of where in the Old Testament does it say that those prophecies will not be fulfilled in the future? Proving that the function of the tabernacle was fulfilled by the Messiah’s death is not

the same as proving that the Land Promise was fulfilled by His death. Furthermore, the tabernacle was a literal structure with a known sacrifice of animal blood, and the death of Christ was a literal death with Messiah's blood. Why allegorize away so much that can be taken at face value? Again, his method seems to be that if you prove point one then you have automatically proven point two. But, that does not follow. Yes, he has proven point one, the tabernacle and temple were fulfilled with the death of Christ, but he has not proven that the Land Promise was fulfilled in the same way. He is trying to prove things by analogy and not by exegesis. Where passages do contradict him, he simply allegorizes it away.

His fourth proposition is "The Ethical Requirements of the Covenant Relationship." His opening paragraph here is, "The promise of land was never an unconditional right, but always a conditional gift." What this shows is a lack of reading the text in a careful manner. In fact the promise of the Land was unconditional. It was the enjoyment of the Land that was conditional. The prophecy is clearly stated that if Israel is disobedient there will be exile from the Land and they will be scattered throughout the world. The same prophecies (and there is no need to allegorize them away) go on to state that someday there will be a national repentance and God will bring them back to "their land." Here again, he tries to prove point two by proving point one. He proved correctly that Israel had been disobedient, but he does not prove that therefore, there is no restoration. He tries to assert that Israel in its previous disobedience has rendered null and void any possible future promises. Yet, the promise is made in many passages that someday there will be a national repentance and then there will be a final restoration. Again, there is no question that Israel's national salvation is the prerequisite to Israel's final restoration, which will occur before the second worldwide regathering. That will certainly fulfill the ethical requirements of the covenantal relationship. At the same time, he totally ignores the prophecies that speak of a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment. But, even that regathering is something God accomplishes. He keeps quoting verses that state the requirement of Israel's righteous living, but the point he misses is that the prophecies state that someday Israel will attain that righteousness when they turn to God in faith. The author asserts from Deuteronomy 30:1-5 that "repentance is always a condition of return." Again, that is correct as far as the final return in faith in preparation for the blessings of the Kingdom, and that will not come until Israel turns away from rejecting the Messiah to accepting Him. Here again, that was not the condition of the regathering in unbelief. He states, "The assertion that the events subsequent to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 indicate God's blessing on the Jewish people is totally without foundation in Scripture." He would be correct if he was only asserting that it does not fulfill the promises of Israel's final restoration. But, he is incorrect in asserting that Israel has no right to exist because he ignores the prophecies of their regathering in unbelief, and more to the point, he ignores the clear statements of Scripture that Israel's ownership of the Land is eternal and unconditional. His article continues to confuse the difference between ownership of the Land and enjoyment of the Land. He keeps asserting that Israel has no right to the Land apart from "faith and obedience." However, that was not the basis for the promise of ownership of the Land, which was strictly unconditional. The issue was the enjoyment of the Land either by exile out of the Land, or living in the Land in peace. His place of confusion can be seen in the following paragraph:

My question to Christian Zionists is therefore this. If you appeal to Genesis to claim the promise of the Land, what about Exodus and the commandments not to

steal, kill and covet? If you believe in the predictive element of prophecy, what about the prophetic demand for justice? Isn't the present Israeli governments (sic) policy of forcibly Judaizing occupied East Jerusalem a 20th century parallel to Ahab stealing Naboth's vineyard? Where are the Elijah's (sic) among the Christian Zionist's (sic) who, out of love for the Jewish people, are prepared to speak a prophetic warning to the Ahab's (sic) in the government of Israel today? I believe we have every right to insist, that the stronger the claim to the Land is made allegedly on the basis of scripture, the more Christian Zionists must expect and indeed invite the whole world to judge what the Jews have done in the Land by the moral standards of those same Scriptures.

It should be noticed that the author makes it an either/or proposition instead of making it both/and. One can appeal to the promises of Scripture that the Land belongs to Israel and at the same time insist that Israel maintain religious standards and equal rights for all of its citizens. (Palestinians, except for Israeli Arabs, do not have Israeli citizenship nor do they want it.) Here again, the author makes this aspect of the Mosaic Law a condition for ownership of the Land, but that never occurs. Moses describes Israel as both being driven from "their Land" and being brought back to "their Land." In other words, it is always Israel's Land given to them unconditionally. However, the enjoyment of the Land is conditioned on obedience. Therefore, they might be in the Land but experiencing conflict, which is the case at the present time. They might also be exiled from the Land as happened in AD 70. To live in the Land in total peace would require a national regeneration, and the prophecies clearly state that this will someday occur. Furthermore, the author has been clearly victimized by press reports and seems to totally ignore the Israeli side of the equation even from a purely human standpoint.

The fifth proposition is "The Land in the Teaching of Jesus." His opening paragraph states, "Teaching about the Land is conspicuous by its absence in the teaching of Jesus." He does go on in a subsequent paragraph to state, "There are less than five explicit references to the Land in the Gospels and these are indirect." Then he goes on to deny the literal impact. The author is guilty of a double fallacy. First, based upon the assumption that the Land is not mentioned or is barely mentioned in the New Testament, it therefore proves that the Land promise no longer applies. That is a fallacy. A second fallacy is that the lack of mention proves that Jesus already fulfilled the Land Promise and, yet, the New Testament never makes that statement as it does with the other facets that He did fulfill. It has already been shown earlier in the paper that while the New Testament does not say as much about the Land as the Old Testament, it does have some things to say that clearly parallel the Old Testament prophecies. Furthermore, the New Testament does not have to mention something specific from the Old Testament to maintain that the Old Testament promise is ongoing. What the author needs is a clear statement that says all the Land Promises have been fulfilled in at least a spiritual way, but this does not exist in the New Testament. Again, proving point one does not prove point two. He is trying to include a lot of conclusions based upon an argument from silence but it is no more than that: an argument from silence. While he states that in Luke 19:41-44, Jesus promised the judgment upon the Jewish people, but "did not promise there would be another return to the Land," on the other hand the author does not deal with Luke 21:20-24 that goes on to say the Jews will be scattered until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. That clearly implies that following the Times of the Gentiles there will be a restoration.

His sixth proposition is “The Land in the Teaching of the Apostles.” In response to the question raised by the Disciples in Acts 1:6 as to whether He will at this time restore the kingdom to Israel, the author states, “Jesus’ reply shows him correcting not only their concept of time but also their view of ministry.” And yet, the response of Jesus only stated it was not for them to know “the times and seasons” when the kingdom would be restored to Israel. The timing of that event is in the Father’s hand. Their responsibility now is to perform a ministry, but this ministry is not in place of Israel’s final restoration but in addition to Israel’s final restoration. His claim, “They are sent out into the world but never told to return,” reads too much into the verse. They are never told not to return either. But, they are to make sure the Gospel gets out to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Throughout this segment, all the Land Promises are simply allegorized away claiming that “Land in the New Covenant context has now come to fulfillment in the purposes of God.” For him, the Land Promises have been fulfilled with the Great Commission: “The limitations of the land type under the Old Covenant has been broken so that it stretches as far as the Great Commission to the uttermost ends of the earth.” He derives all of this from the answer of Jesus to the Disciples. But, a reading of the passage shows it simply states that it was not for them to know the timing of the restoration of the kingdom for Israel, but their function will be to do the work they are commissioned to do in the Book of Acts. The thrust of the passage is that sometime in the future God will restore the kingdom to Israel. While the author resorts to Paul’s type of allegorical usage in Galatians 4:20-31, he makes a false application from it. True, Paul did use a type of logical and/or allegorical interpretation, but it was for the purpose of illustrating a point, not for the purpose of denying a literal truth. For example, he in no way denies there was a literal Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Hagar, Rebecca, and Jerusalem. These were obviously literal persons and events in the Old Testament and they typify certain truths in the New Testament. That is far from saying that these people never existed. What the author does in his allegory is to use this to justify saying that the Land Promises are not to be fulfilled literally. It is one thing to use the Land to typify a spiritual truth, but it is quite another to say that the Land will never literally be returned to Israel. Just as Paul’s examples were all literal people that typified spiritual truth, by the same token, the Land is literal land that can also typify spiritual truth. The author concludes this segment stating, “There is no suggestion that the Apostles believed that the Jewish people still have a divine right to the Land, or that the Jewish possession of the Land would be an important let alone central aspect of God’s plan for the world. In the Christological logic of Paul, the Land, like the Law, both particular and provisional had now become quite irrelevant.” However, the very question the Apostles raised in Acts 1:6 shows they still saw the Land as important and still looked forward to a future time when the Kingdom would be restored to Israel. They had simply come to realize that it would not happen in their lifetime, but they realized it would someday indeed happen. Note again that the author tries to compare the Land and the Law as being in the same category. Again, he tries to prove point two by proving point one. Yes, it is correct that the Law has been rendered inoperative with the Messiah’s death. A number of passages teach this. But, where is there one passage in the New Testament that teaches that the promise of the Land has also been rendered inoperative? In spite of his dogmatic assertion, he has not actually produced a single verse to establish his claim and he ignores all of the passages noted in this paper that showed the opposite. Furthermore, the Land Promise is not based on the Mosaic Law but on the Abrahamic Covenant, which Paul taught was ongoing.

His seventh proposition is “The Future of the Jewish People.” While he admits that “Paul looks forward to a more glorious future for the Jewish people (Romans 9-11),” he insists that this does not include the Land. He quotes Romans 9:4-5 and points out that “Paul omits only one blessing, the Land.” What he ignores is that Paul mentions *the covenants*, and as was shown in the beginning of the paper, the Land Promise is a major facet of the covenants. If you take away the covenants, you can take away the Land: but, since the author includes the covenants, you cannot take away the Land. There again, he issues an argument purely from silence: “Paul’s silence about the Land does not suggest that he still held on to a Jewish theology of the Land, rather that he had modified it very considerably.” On the contrary, Paul’s silence shows that the issue of the Land was not something that was a point of debate but was a foregone conclusion that God will bring the Jews back into the Land. This is implied in Romans 11:25-27. The fact that Paul never says that the death of Jesus fulfilled all of the Land Promises in some spiritual way is evidence enough that it did not happen. The author desperately needs such a statement, but he does not have it and has to resort to a faulty argument from silence.

These are the seven propositions the author makes, and furthermore, they will stand or fall determined by the rejection or acceptance of his hermeneutical principle that one must interpret the Old Testament by the New Testament. It is more correct to interpret the New Testament by the Old Testament since that came first. But, more to the point, every passage must be interpreted within its own context and the meaning must be determined by what it means in that context. Since no Scripture will contradict another, then it can be seen how the promise extends further down. If the Old Testament in its own context promised a worldwide dispersion followed by a worldwide restoration, both parts of that prophecy must be seen to be fulfilled in the same way: literally. The Jews were dispersed throughout the world and they must someday be regathered from all parts of the world. The author raises this question towards Christian Zionists: “What difference did the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus make to the traditional Jewish hopes and expectations about the Land and People?” This is not the way to ask the question. The proper way to ask the question is, “What difference did the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus make to the prophecies of the Old Testament?” Can these prophecies be rendered null and void? In so far as the First Coming prophecies, they were all literally fulfilled. By the same token the prophecies of the future Israel must also be literally fulfilled. Whatever else will be gained by the coming of the Messiah, it cannot be the rendering of God’s previous promises null and void.

The author goes on to state, “We cannot interpret the Old Covenant as if the coming of Jesus made little or no difference to these particular aspects of the hopes of first century Judaism.” Here again, he is stating the issue the wrong way. The issue is not how it affected “the hopes of first century Judaism,” but how it affects the totality of the messianic concept of the Old Testament. If the Jews in the first century had some wrong conclusions, those could easily be rendered null and void. That is a far cry from saying that the actual prophecies of the Old Testament would be rendered null and void. That is the kind of false logic the author makes.

The author draws a conclusion claiming we have only two options to choose from: “The choice before us is ultimately a choice between two theologies. One based primarily on the shadows of the Old Covenant and one based on the reality of the New Covenant.” Here again is a very faulty presentation. The issue is not two theologies because there is only one biblical

theology that permeates both testaments. The real issue is a choice between taking all of these prophecies literally, unless the text tells us otherwise, or taking them allegorically when there is no objective reason to do so.

That is the essence of his argument although he closes with some statements that Israel cannot have peace in the “Occupied Territories” until “she acts with justice and reciprocity toward the Palestinians.” This is more political than biblical, but I can say this much. First, he ignores the actual reason why Israel has occupied these territories since 1967. She has done this because masses of armies were gathering along the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Border, the Syrian Border, and the West Bank with the intent to destroy Israel. Israel defeated this threat in the Six Day War. Second, the Palestinians have consistently rejected all peace efforts by Israel, both before and after that conflict. Even when Barak offered them over 95% of the territory they wanted, he was turned down with no counteroffer. What the author is ignoring is that, thus far, the Arab aim has not been to merely establish a Palestinian State that will live side by side with Israel but the attempt to destroy Israel as a State. No true Koran-believing Moslem could ever accept Israel’s right to exist. As long as the Palestinians refuse to recognize Israel’s right to exist, refuse every peace offer, and insist on terrorist attacks (even having their own children blow themselves up just for the sake of killing Jews), there cannot be peace. Israel is not totally innocent in all of her actions, but the author has blamed everything on Israel. In spite of his claim that Israel has a right to exist, he has not extended a single blame on what the Arab side has done. This is selective reading of the political news. But for us, the final issue is not what is politically expedient, but what is biblical.