

Faithful Sayings

Olsen Park Church of Christ

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Modern Day Israel

It is commonly taught in the religious world today (even among those who claim a belief in Jesus) that those of the modern day Jews and the physical nation of Israel still have a place reserved in God's purpose and grace. The prominent Southern Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell is quoted as having said - "God will deal with us as we deal with Israel." I believe much of this misunderstanding comes from falsely interpreting Romans 9-11. In these chapters Paul deals with his concern for his brethren (the Jews in the flesh) who had not accepted Jesus. Paul states four basic points: 1.) *God has allowed the Jews to turn away that the Gentiles might have access to salvation* (Romans 11:12,13 & 25). 2.) *If Jews do*

not persist in unbelief they can be accepted by God (Romans 11:23). 3.) *Not all the Jews rejected Jesus, a remnant accepted Him* (Romans 11:5). 4.) *All of the true spiritual Israel will be saved* (Romans 11:26).

Scripture makes it very clear that he who - "...Does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (II John 9). Any person who lives in this age whether he or she is a Jew (physically), a Gentile, black, white, rich or poor is called upon to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who do are "The Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

By Kyle Pope

Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.

Please come again.

The Spiritual Israel

If there is one man who typifies true faith, it is the Old Testament patriarch Abraham. Of his faith the Scripture states that God - "accounted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6). Such faith, and the relationship that developed between God & Abraham led the Lord to offer him some wonderful promises.

The Promises

Genesis 12:2,3 records for us one such promise. The text says - "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be

blessed" What a promise! We might especially note two things: 1.) "I will make you a GREAT NATION" (emphasis mine). & 2.) "In you ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH shall be blessed" (emphasis also mine).

The Lord expands upon these promises declaring to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as - "the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16) and as the - "stars if you are able to count them." (Genesis 15:5).

Land & Circumcision

Tied with these promises were two key ideas. First God promised Abraham - "...all the land which you see I

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Sunday: 9:30 a.m.
10:20 a.m.
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Elders:

Ken Ford
Charles Kelley
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Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Neil Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Fred Perez

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

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will give to your descendents (foot-note: Literally seed) **forever.**” (Genesis 13:15). Second, God established a covenant with Abraham and gave him the practice of circumcision as a sign of that covenant. God said – **“This is my covenant which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendents after you: every male child among you shall be circumcised”** (Genesis 17:10). God adds further – **“...And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant ”** (Genesis 17:13).

Concerning circumcision and the inheritance of the land of Canaan we are faced with some curious facts. It is evident from Scripture that this “great nation” which God raised up did not include all of Abraham’s physical descendents. Ishmael, Abraham’s son by Hagar and Abraham’s other children (born after Sarah’s death) were sent away from the land given to Isaac - the child of the promise (see Genesis 25:1-6,18& Galatians 4:28). Further, not even all of Isaac’s children would be heirs of this promise. Esau’s descendents would grow into the infamous nation of Edom which frequently fought against God’s people and was rebuked by God in the vision of Obadiah. Instead, Isaac’s son Jacob (or Israel) would have twelve sons, in whom the promises would be fulfilled.

What makes all this curious is the

fact that although the Lord promised them the land “forever” and that circumcision would be an “everlasting covenant,” both things were physically interrupted. Of the tribes of Jacob’s children that became the northern kingdom of Israel, in ca. 721 BC they were conquered by Assyria and dispersed abroad never again to be a nation. Further his descendents that became the southern kingdom of Judah were conquered and exiled in 597 BC by Babylon. Even though they returned between the years 535-458 BC their splendor and self-rule would never be the same. By the first century continued revolt would bring down upon the Jews the wrath of Rome. In 70 AD. the temple was destroyed and many of the Jews were killed or dispersed leaving the land in the hands of non-Jews for hundreds of years.

With respect to circumcision there were times in the history of God’s people when this practice was abandoned. In Joshua 5:2-5 we see that the children who had been born in the wilderness had not been circumcised as infants. In the New Testament it becomes clear that circumcision of the flesh was a covenant which was no longer binding upon God’s people. The Holy Spirit tells us - **“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God**

is what matters.” (I Corinthians 7:19). As a result, Christians in the New Testament abandoned the practice of physical circumcision (see Acts 15).

The Israel of God

The New Testament explains to us what was behind some of the promises made to Abraham. Romans 9:6 declares – **“...For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.”** If this were speaking of “Israel” as merely the physical descendents of Jacob (and thus Abraham) this statement would make no sense. What it is saying is that not all of the *physical descendents* of Jacob and Abraham are the true (or spiritual) Israel. Paul declares in Romans 2:28, 29 – **“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh;but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit (or spirit)...”** This indicates to us that the circumcision which identifies those in a covenant with God no longer concerns the flesh but the spirit. That is the willingness to “cut off” from one’s heart any hindrance to submission to God. We might remember Deuteronomy 10:16 – **“Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”**

Sons of Abraham

The New Testament tells us what truly makes a person a descendent of Abraham - *obedient faith*. Galatians 3:7 declares – **“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”** What a marvelous faith Abraham possessed. Whatever God told him to do he did without question. As James tells us concerning Abraham – **“...By works faith was made perfect (or complete)”** (James 2:22). In the same way those today who listen to God’s words in Scripture and fully trust and obey are descendents of Abraham. Those who exercise this spiritual circumcision and possess the faith of Abraham are – **“...blessed with believing Abraham”** (Galatians 3:9). In other words true believers are the “Israel” which is not of the physical Israel (see Romans 9:6). Listen to Paul’s declaration in Philippians 3:3 – **“For we are the circumcision* who worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.”** The point is that in the Christian age the true spiritual “Israel” is defined by those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ awaiting the promise of the eternal Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:2).

* In Scripture the Jews will sometimes be called simply **“The circumcision”** —see Acts 10:45, 11:2, Romans 3:30, 4:9, 12, 15:8, Galatians 2:7-9, 12, Ephesians 2:11, Col. 4:11 & Titus 1:10.