

# God's Everlasting Covenant

presents

## Study 4 – God's Special Identification with Israel

There is something that has happened since Jesus died 2000 years ago in the Gentile Christian church, something that is not right, and for which I believe, we need to repent. We have forgotten God's love for Israel. Perhaps this is not true of all of us, but most of us, at one time or another, have forgotten God's love for Israel. Misunderstanding the truths taught in Scripture, our early church fathers decided to remove all things Jewish from the church. In doing so, we have stolen all the promises of God along with His proclamations of undying and passionate love for His chosen people, Israel. Over time, we have applied these promises and declarations of love as truths for ourselves. This is not entirely wrong – they do apply to all those who come to believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and confess their love for Him through His Son, our Messiah, Jesus. But, they were originally given to Israel. And the fulfillment of these promises for our own lives can only be realized in the context of being part of His beloved Israel. We can't hijack these truths for the Church without recognizing that they were first given to Israel and belong to them. These truths were revealed by God for the purpose of saving all people, but the power of God for the salvation of everyone was delivered through the Jews to those who would believe -- "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (see **Romans 1:16**) We're going to get into Romans more later in our study. For now, let's try to understand more about why God loves Israel.

### I. Why does God love Israel?

The first time God declares His love to Israel is in **Deut. 7:6-8**. Let's read that. "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his **love** on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord **loved** you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (NASB)

Why does God love Israel? I don't think I could answer this question as well as Sandra Teplinsky does in her book *Why Care About Israel?* on page 61. "He says simply that *He loves Israel because He loved Israel.*"

Let's look more closely at the word "love" in these verses.

The first time "love" occurs is in verse 7. Here, "love" is the word "*chashaq*" or "*khashaq*" – it means to set affection upon, and this is the way the NIV translates it. It also means: "to cling," "to join," "to delight in." It literally means "to set in love." God is saying He has set Israel in His love.

The second time we see it is in verse 8, and it appears in the past tense “loved.” It is a different word in Hebrew. It is “*ahab*” or “*ahav*.” It also has a different meaning. It means “to have affection for”, but can mean in a more romantic, passionate way – the term implies the passion and desire one would have in sexual intimacy.

So, let’s add our Hebrew terms to the passage in Deuteronomy and read what Teplinsky writes:

“The Lord set His longing, clinging desire, delight and love on you because of his affectionate attachment, panting delight and love for you.” The point is the passion! God is absolutely amorous toward Israel. Israel is the object of a divine love affair, the longest romance on record – which never ends.” (p. 62)

Some of the clearest passages that depict God’s passionate love for Israel are in Ezekiel 16 and in the book of Hosea. In Ezekiel, God speaks of Himself as a compassionate and generous lover who has been spurned by Israel, who engaged in prostitution after He had lavished His love and affection on her. Hosea is similar, but it adds the dimension of a long-suffering husband, who keeps covenant with a nation who continually prostitutes herself by following other gods. God commands Hosea to marry a harlot named Gomer. And despite her unfaithfulness to him God commands Hosea to remain in covenant relationship with her. What anguish Hosea suffers! It is because he truly loves Gomer. He rescued her off the streets, clothed her in fine linen, gave her everything her heart could desire, and she returns to her prostitution. Hosea then forgives her and goes after her. We get a clear picture throughout the book of a jealous God who will do whatever He has to in order to win her back! Let’s read **Hosea 2:16-23**.

We cannot miss the heart of our God in this passage – a heart who longs for Israel to love Him and Him alone. He will not give up on her! Our God has the long-suffering heart of a husband. He has revealed the agony He suffers and the ecstasy He yearns and waits for to Hosea...and to us.

Teplinsky underscores to us this truth: If you want to have more of Jesus, if you want to know the heart of your God better, then you must be willing to become a Hosea, and carry the unceasing anguish of God’s heart for Israel. It won’t be easy. The anguish of our Father’s heart will burden your heart, and you will feel pain, pain that will, at times, overwhelm you. Teplinsky writes on p.69:

“If you give yourself wholly to the Most Holy, He will entrust you with a bittersweet secret of His heart: His unquenchable love for Israel. Embrace her as if she were your own Gomer. Let Him find in you a heart, like Hosea’s, willing to carry His burden for her. And don’t be afraid; He is not likely to tell you to marry a prostitute!”

“It has been said that the supreme fruit of the Christian life is loving the unlovable. Not many attain it, for such fruit is borne from the cross of long-suffering. Yet, it yields intimacy and joyful knowledge of the Perfect Lover obtainable in no other way. God is looking for prophetic intercessors for Israel so driven to know Him, they are undeterred by the fellowship of His long-suffering.”

## II. A Jewish Messiah for a Gentile World

### A. *Who was the Messiah?*

We could describe Jesus in many ways. The Scriptures give Him many titles. I contend that since most believers in Yeshua are Gentile, we tend to 'gentilize' Him. We tend to view Him through a gentile lens, a gentile mind. We tend to forget that He was Jewish. But we believe in and worship a *Jewish* Messiah.

QUESTION: How Jewish was Jesus?

ANSWERS:

- He was born in Bethlehem (**Matthew 2:1**)
- His parents were Jewish - Mary & Joseph – Mary was likely a descendant of the tribe of Levi (see **Luke 1:5**) because her cousin, Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. Joseph was a descendant of David (**Luke 1:26**)
- He was from the tribe of Judah because King David was from the tribe of Judah
- He was raised in Nazareth
- He was bar mitzvah – although the scriptures don't say so directly, we read in Luke 2:42, that when he was twelve years old, they were in Jerusalem for the Passover. Passover was the first Jewish feast of the new year – and Jesus was left behind. When they went looking for him, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers. When his parents asked why he had done this, his answer was "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" In Hebrew tradition, a boy had 3 teachers – his mother, until he was weaned, his father until he was bar mitzvah, and the Torah from that point forward. Since Jesus was in the Temple, sitting with the teachers of the law, this likely implied he was already bar mitzvah, and his parents should have known where he would be when they couldn't find him. Also, you note in verse 41, it says every year his parents went to Jerusalem for Passover. Then it says when he was twelve years old, he went with them. This implies that he had not gone before. According to Jewish custom, Jews were required to go to Jerusalem for 3 feasts – Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) and Tabernacles (Succoth). They were required to go once they became a man (bar mitzvah). Since he was accompanying his parents, it is thought this is evidence that he already been bar mitzvah.
- He celebrated the Feasts – we see evidence that he went to Jerusalem for the Passover. We can surmise that he kept the other feasts as well.
- Jesus was called a Rabbi by his followers (**John 1:38, 49**), by Nicodemus (**John 3:2**) even by the Pharisees
- Jesus kept the Sabbath – In fact, He declared himself to be Lord of the Sabbath – (**Matt 12:1-8**) and he taught his disciples to do good on the Sabbath (**Matt 12:12**). In speaking of a future day when there would be great trouble for the Jewish nation, he instructed that they pray their flight would not take place on the Sabbath. (**Matt 24:20**).

- Jesus taught and followed Torah. The Passover lamb had to be perfect, without blemish – this is a picture of the Lamb of God, who would be without sin (blemish or imperfection). If He had not observed the Torah perfectly, He could not have been the Lamb of God – our perfect Passover Lamb.

There are many other evidences in the scriptures of Jesus' Jewishness, but for the sake of time, we need to move on.

#### *B. What did Messiah teach?*

Jesus taught from the Torah, but he taught differently than anyone else in His day – He taught the true spirit of Torah (God's instructions and teachings).

Let's open our Bibles to **Matthew 5-7**. This is one of His most robust teachings – where He really enlightened His listeners (and us) to the spirit behind the law. He expounded on it as no one had before Him. He taught Torah as a living law that had to be written on our hearts.

QUESTION: What are some of these eye-openers?

ANSWER:

1. You are blessed when people insult & persecute us because our reward in heaven is great.
2. You are the salt of the earth
3. You are the light of the world – I think the Jews had forgotten this – don't hide your light under a bushel. Let it shine so men can see God.
4. Murder takes place in the heart first.
5. Don't bring a gift to the altar when your brother has something against you. Go reconcile. The gift doesn't mean anything when there is division between you and your brother.
6. Lust (looking at a woman sexually that is not your wife) is adultery.
7. Turn the other cheek and go the extra mile.
8. Love your enemies and pray for them.
9. Give in secret.
10. Whatever you treasure will reveal your heart.
11. The eye is the lamp of the body.
12. Everyone is on a road, either narrow or wide. Enter through the narrow gate that leads to life rather than the wide gate that leads to destruction.

One of the most perplexing things Jesus said is in **Matthew 7:15-23**. Let's read it.

QUESTION: What is the focus of Jesus' teaching here?

ANSWER: His followers will be known (recognized) by their fruit. In other words, when you look at the fruit, you'll know which tree it was picked from.

QUESTION: Read again **Matt 7:21-23**. Why would Jesus say this right after he explains that you can know the tree by its fruit – whether it's a good tree or a bad tree.

ANSWER: It would seem that these people who say "Lord, Lord" and who say "we prophesied in your name, drove out demons and performed miracles" did not produce "good fruit". He says, "Depart from me, I never knew you." And He calls them

evildoers. He says in verse 21, "...but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven [will enter the kingdom of heaven].

QUESTION: So what is the distinction? They were evidently doing good things. They thought they were producing good fruit that would lead them into the Kingdom. Yet He says, "I never knew you. Depart from me..." What was missing?

ANSWER: They were evidently not doing the will of His Father.

So, what is the will of the Father? Let's read **John 14:15, 23-24, 15:10, 14.**

QUESTION: What is the Father's will as revealed by Jesus?

ANSWER: Keep His commandments.

In John 14-15, Jesus says to keep His commandments, obey what He commands, those who obey are His friends, those who obey will remain in His love, just as He has obeyed His Father's commands, we are to obey. Which commandments? All of them – the Law, the Torah. The Torah teaches us how to LOVE. The law has not been abolished, it has pointed to Jesus, and if we obey what He commands, we will remain in His love. We are to do what He does. He is the living Torah.

There's another aspect of what He has commanded that we need to visit. Let's turn to **Matthew 25:31-46.** I'm going to read this, but please listen carefully.

QUESTION: What was the difference between the sheep and goats.

ANSWER:

- The sheep were invited to come with Him and take their inheritance. The goats were cursed and told to depart from him and go to the eternal fire.
- The sheep fed Him when He was hungry, gave Him drink when He was thirsty, invited Him in when He was a stranger, clothed Him, looked after Him when He was sick, and came to visit Him in prison. The goats did not.

QUESTION: Who was surprised by this pronouncement?

ANSWER: Both the sheep and the goats were surprised.

QUESTION: Why?

ANSWER: Because they didn't realize that Jesus equated doing those things to the least of "these brothers of mine" meant they were doing it to Him.

QUESTION: Who are the least of Jesus' brothers? Who is He talking about?

ANSWER: I believe they are the Jewish people. I'm going to share what I believe is the evidence of this.

- In Scripture, the "nations" are always gentiles. Israel was never considered part of the "nations". They were separated from the "nations" of the world. These people who come from all the gentile nations of the world were separated based upon certain criteria. The criteria was meeting the needs of the "least of these brothers of mine." These brothers are the Jews.
- Jesus said in Matthew 15:24 "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." He was talking to Jewish people. I suggest that He could only have been referring to the Jewish people, His brothers.
- A wider meaning could certainly be applied because in Matthew 12:48, Jesus says that "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Certainly, His brothers could be gentiles also. But in Matthew 25, he says "the least" of my brothers. The meaning here is the smallest in size or

dignity. If there has ever been a people who have been treated as if they were nothing, and have been robbed of their dignity multiple times, it is the Jewish people.

- Jesus is saying here that He identifies with the most needy of the needy, the “least” of His brothers. So much so that whatever you do or don’t do to them, you have done it to Him.

### *C. Messiah’s identification with the Jewish people*

Have you ever noticed that He suffered as they suffered. Many Jewish people today say that Isaiah 53 is talking about Israel. Indeed, if one reads it in that light, there are some remarkable similarities in the way Israel has suffered. Of course, we know it is about our Messiah, Jesus. But let’s go down the list and see the similarities:

- He had no beauty or majesty to attract us; Israel had no beauty or majesty to attract the world
- He was despised and rejected as they were despised and rejected
- He was oppressed and afflicted, they were oppressed and afflicted
- He did not open His mouth, they did not open their mouths. One of the most remarkable things about the Holocaust that has been written is that when the Jews were found or taken from their homes, they didn’t protest. They were silent
- He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and they have been led like a lamb to the slaughter
- He was cut off from the land of the living, and they have been cut off

We could go on and on. Throughout history, the Jews have been the Scapegoat. They have been the most hated people on earth, and even today, anti-Semitism is increasing at levels not seen since just before the Holocaust. Teplinsky writes:

“The mystery of Israel’s suffering, though comprehensible this side of eternity only in part, points ultimately to the existence of evil and Satan himself. The devil despises and opposes who and what God loves and does.” (p. 89)

First Satan tried to keep the Messiah from coming to the world by destroying the Jewish people. He didn’t succeed, so now he is trying to destroy Israel so that Messiah cannot return and set up His Kingdom on the earth. He knows his time is short. My dear friends, Israel is a test of love – As Teplinsky says, “Israel draws out the best and worst in us. The Jewish nation is designed to test and expose the hearts of humanity. Like a threshing floor, she sifts our souls.” (p. 21) If we really love our Jewish Messiah, we will do what He commands, and love the least of His brothers.