

Replacement Theology

Was the Land Given to Israel Forever?

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Is Replacement Theology a false doctrine that denies Scripture?

In a previous article in this series on Replacement Theology, we shared with you how one of the fundamental doctrines of Dispensationalism is that God gave promises to Israel and then, He gave promises to the Gentiles, but, those were not and are not the same promises. This Jew -v- Gentile distinction is manifested in the Dispensational literature in a variety of ways.

Now, one thing does need to be set forth here and that is that *God did not promise the Gentiles the land of Palestine*. That promise was indeed to Israel and to Israel alone. With this noted, the Dispensationalists will, of course, say, “There, you see! This is a fatal admission because God gave the land to Israel forever. That means that Israel – distinct from the Gentiles – has promises that are still valid today and will always remain valid.

There are three issues here that we will address briefly.

1. The “eternal” land promise to Israel.
2. The land promise and circumcision. I have mentioned this above, but, it must be kept in mind.
3. The typological nature of the land. We have already discussed this above, so I will not repeat it here. But remember how important that issue is.

We will develop the first point in this installment. In our next installment we will examine “the times of the Gentiles” since Dispensationalists insist that this term refers to the time since either the Babylonian captivity or the time since AD 70. We are told that “the times of the Gentiles” will end at Christ’s second coming. At that time, Israel will be fully restored – in the land as promised. I think the reader will be amazed at the material I will present in response to this claim.

Replacement Theology and the “forever” land promise

So, in this installment, let me examine the issue of God giving the land to Israel “forever.” Dispensationalists emphasize this point over and over again. There is no question that the word “forever” is used in relationship to the land promise. When Jehovah spoke to Abraham, He told him, “all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever” (Genesis 13:15). Thus, there is no question that Jehovah did give the land to Israel forever.

The question is, and this will sound strange to the western mind, what does forever mean in the Hebrew Bible?



The word translated as forever is the Hebrew word Olam, (Strong's Concordance reference #5769), and is translated as forever, everlasting, perpetual, and other corollary terms. Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldea Lexicon of the Old Testament, coded to Strong's #5769, says that Olam means, "what is hidden; specially hidden time, long; the beginning or end of which is either uncertain or else undefined, eternity, perpetuity." (Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldea Lexicon of the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1979)612). He then proceeds to illustrate that the word does not inherently mean forever, in the sense of endlessness as Western oriented minds tend to think.

It must be realized that in the Tanakh, YHVH spoke of many things as enduring "forever" or being "everlasting" that not even the most ardent Dispensationalists would affirm continue. I will give a few examples from book, Israel 1948: Countdown to No Where. See that book for a more in-depth study.

1. Genesis 17:13– Circumcision was to be an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel. Yet, Paul said that circumcision now means nothing, and, to be circumcised for a religious reason is to lose the benefit of Christ's work (Galatians 5:1-6). Thus, circumcision, though everlasting, has ceased as a theologically significant practice.
2. Exodus 12:14– Jehovah instituted the Passover as an "everlasting ordinance" (Exodus 12:14). Is the Passover binding today? Not if we accept the New Testament teaching. For the Christian "Christ is our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Furthermore, he commanded Gentile Christians not to be judged in regard to the Jewish feast days, because they were, "shadows of good things that are about to come" (Colossians 2:14f). The Old Covenant Passover has ceased as a mandate of Jehovah because what it typified, the deliverance from sin, death, and bondage has become a reality in Christ.
3. Exodus 27:21– The statute concerning the care for the lamp stand that stood in the Holy Place was to be "a statute forever to their generations." The term, "throughout their generations" is the key term here. The idea is that the ordinance would stand as long as Jehovah intended for it to stand.
4. Exodus 29:9– The Lord promised that the priesthood would belong to the Aaronic family "for a perpetual statute." Yet, the New Testament is abundantly clear that the Aaronic priesthood has been superseded by Christ's superior priesthood, and that in fact, the promise of the Levitical priesthood is now "annulled" (Hebrews 7:12-18).

We could give many more examples of where "forever" cannot be pressed to mean "unending." When we consider that from the very beginning, the land promises to Israel were conditioned on their obedience – and specifically on their obedience to the Law of Moses – this forbids us from pressing the "eternal land promises" in some woodenly literal manner. Israel was given the land "forever" if, and only if, they were obedient to the Law of Moses. But, there is a huge problem that I will only mention briefly:

Israel's possession of the land would be forever, but, conditioned on their obedience to the Law of Moses– Leviticus 26 / Deuteronomy 30.

But, YHVH Himself has removed and annulled – through fulfillment – the Law of Moses. As we have documented, even the Dispensationalists admit that the Law of Moses has been forever fulfilled and removed, per Thomas Ice. This is a fatal admission!

Therefore, the Law of Moses – being annulled – can no longer be the condition for Israel's possession of the Land.

This is devastating to the Dispensational paradigm. If, as the Dispensationalist agree, the Law of Moses has been taken away, annulled, then it does not matter if Israel of today tried to obey it, God would not honor that so-called "obedience" (and the Dispensationalists agree that Israel today is comprised – in the majority – of atheists, agnostics and unbelievers!) because Torah is no longer God's law for the Jews! You simply must catch the power of this reality!

But, look a little deeper at this word "forever."

It has always struck me as "convenient" that Dispensationalists emphasize, with zeal, that the land was given to Israel "forever." And yet, those same people ignore not only what we have just presented, but, they ignore how God said He would curse Israel "forever"! Look at the following material from my 1948 book:

What many well intentioned people do not realize when they make the argument that Israel must still be God's chosen people forever, is that God also cast them off forever. However, not only did Jehovah cast Israel off forever, He did so in the Babylonian Captivity. (For brevity, we cannot develop this idea here. See my book *Who Is This Babylon?* for a fuller discussion. In short, Jehovah promised that when Israel had filled the measure of her sin by shedding the blood of the innocent, He would destroy her and create a new people, with a new name, in the new creation (Isaiah 2-4; 65-66). In short, God was going to finally cast off Israel, endlessly).

In Jeremiah 23:39-40, Jehovah threatened Israel with destruction at the hands of the Babylonians: "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten." God threatened to make Israel a perpetual (olam) shame and reproach. Not only did He threaten her with perpetual shame, He also said that their sin had kindled His fury, and it would burn against them, against Jerusalem, "forever" (Jeremiah 17:4).

In other words, God's anger was going to burn against Jerusalem forever, and, what this means therefore, if you press the endless definition, is that Israel would have to be in bondage endlessly. The expression of God's fury was destruction and captivity (cf. Ezra 10:14). Thus, when Jeremiah said that Jehovah's wrath was going to burn against Jerusalem "forever," that meant they would be in captivity forever– that is, if one presses the literal definition of "perpetual" and everlasting.

So, in our study of Replacement Theology, the issue of the land promises plays a major role. God did promise Israel the land, but, He did not promise it to them unconditionally. In fact, He would give the Land to the Gentile, pagan nations, if and when Israel violated the Law of Moses! This is an incredibly important point that is most commonly overlooked or ignored!

When YHVH promised to give the land to Israel forever, the word translated "forever" does not mean unendingly. It means that God would give the land to Israel until such time as His promises and His purposes for Israel were fulfilled. And that land was to typify and foreshadow the coming of Christ and his New Creation. The charge of **Replacement Theology** is used pejoratively against non-Dispensationalists, yet, it fails to consider the Biblical evidence.