

Israelology

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1. The Basic “Idea” of Israel

1) Israel’s Origin and Identity

- a. Israel began as a specific, unique culture and people when God called Abraham from Ur (Gen 12:1–3; 15:1–6).
- b. Israel became a political nation with the Exodus and the giving of the Law at Sinai (Exod 19:6)
- c. After the birth of the church Israel continues to exist (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:28; Rom 10:1, etc) and will continue to exist forever.
- d. The Bible makes clear that there is a group within ethnic Israel that is made up of believers (Rom 9:6).

2) Israel’s Purpose

- a. Israel is the only historical example in world history (so far!) of God’s civic and spiritual governments unified together
- b. All aspects of Israel’s life (called culture) and worship were thoroughly intertwined in the Mosaic Law. For anyone to try to separate one aspect of the Law from the other is impossible, akin to trying to remove one thread from a piece of embroidery or cross-stitch—it would destroy the entire piece.

3) Israel’s Destiny

- a. Presently Israel has been temporarily set aside (Rom 11:15, 20, 23, 25–29)
- b. Israel will be restored as a spiritual and civic nationality. It will stand at the head of the nations and be a “kingdom of priests” for the nations (see for example Isa 2:2–4; 60:11; 61:6)

2. The Essential Rites and Ceremonies of Israel

1) Circumcision

- a. One became a citizen of Israel by physical birth, and boys had to be circumcised (Gen 17:10–12; Lev 12:3).
- b. For one to be part of the “Israel of God” a Jewish man needed more than circumcision of the flesh—he needed the circumcision of the heart (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; 9:25–26; Acts 7:51).

2) Sacrifices

Right standing within Israel was maintained through sacrifices (this will be covered in more detail when we get to Leviticus).

3) Tithes, Feasts, and the Sabbath

These were special rites and ceremonies that Israel observed, thoroughly intertwined as both civic and spiritual. An Israelite paid his tithes, attended feasts, and observed the Sabbath as part of the national, political life of Israel *and at the same time* expressed love and loyalty to his God.

3. The Constitution of Israel: The Mosaic Law

1) The Jurisdiction of the Law: Who the Law Governed and had Authority Over

a. The Law was given to govern the nation of Israel

- Lev 26:46 “These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the Lord established *between Himself and the sons of Israel* through Moses at Mount Sinai.”
- Ps 147:19 “He declares His words to *Jacob*, His statutes and His ordinances to *Israel*.”
- Rom 9:4 “...*Israelites, to whom* belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises”

b. The Law was *not* given to govern the Gentiles

- Deut 4:8 “What great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”
- Ps 147:20 “He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His ordinances, they have not known them.”
- Rom 2:14 Gentiles “do not have the Law”

2) The Function of the Law

a. The primary purpose of the Law was to regulate the spiritual and theocratic life of the nation of Israel

b. Israelites who observed the Law would experience earthly blessing, success, and longevity (Josh 1:7–8)

c. Because the Law did not provide any means for perfect obedience, resulting in life, the Law only brought death, resulting in—

- (1) Knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20)
- (2) Guilt (Gal 3:19, 22)
- (3) Debt that was impossible to pay (Rom 5:20; 7:8–13)
- (4) Condemnation (Rom 3:19)

d. The Law served as a custodian for the faithful until Christ came (Gal 3:23–24; the Law as “tutor” was not “to lead us” but was a supervisory guardian until adulthood. The Law’s function had a time limit—once that limit arrived, its function ceased as a custodian/guardian, or jurisdictional authority).

4. The Covenants of Israel

The Meaning of “Covenant” – a relationship involving responsibilities. The idea seems to come from the practice of splitting sacrificial animals and walking between them, essentially saying, “may this happen to me if I fail to uphold my end of the covenant.” This “started” or enacted the relationship between the parties (see Gen 15:9–10, 17; Jer 34:18)

The OT tells us of five covenants. The first one God made with Noah and applies to all mankind. The other four belong to Israel, and are—

1) The Abrahamic Covenant—Genesis 15; 17:1–21

- a. In this covenant God promised Abraham and his descendants a seed (physical descendants), a land (extending from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates), and a blessing (personal, national, and universal).
- b. This was a unilateral covenant (only one party involved in the covenant responsibilities; only God passed between the animals, Gen 15:17) God made with Israel (see next paragraph) that is eternal in duration (Gen 13:15) and yet unfulfilled (Isa 61:9).

While other nations would benefit from this covenant (Gen 12:3) it was made only with Abraham and his physical descendants (Gen 12; 15; 22:15–18; 26:2–5; 28:13–14; 35:9–15; 1 Chron 16:16–17; Ps 105:9–10; Isa 41:8).

2) The Mosaic/Palestinian Covenant—Exodus 20–31 (esp. 24:1–8); Deut 28–30

- a. In this covenant, Israel would be a holy nation that God would rule through a mediator and the world through Israel, which would function as a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:5–6).
- b. This covenant was one which both parties swore to (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7) and was thoroughly Israelite.

3) The Davidic Covenant—2 Samuel 7:11–16; 1 Chronicles 17:7–14; Psalm 89

- a. This covenant promised David an everlasting dynasty (a king), kingdom (a realm which the king ruled), and throne (the right to rule).
- b. This was an unconditional, Israelite, eternal covenant God made with David and remains unfulfilled.

4) The New Covenant—Jeremiah 31:31–37; Ezek 36:1–38

- a. In this covenant Israel will receive a new heart; repent and become obedient; be forgiven; be re-gathered and dwell in the land; experience permanent, irreversible blessings (including animals, weather, and agriculture); and Gentiles will respond and stream to Israel.
- b. This covenant will be entered into by both Israel and God (Jer 31:33; 32:40; 50:4–5; Ezek 37:1–14). It is thoroughly Israelite, eternal, and remains unfulfilled.