

Who is Israel?

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[0 : 00] It's a great privilege for me to be back into the homeland of my fathers. Every time I cross the border from England into Scotland, the air seems to be a little bit purer, and fellowship with the Lord seems to be a little bit warmer.

This evening, the scripture reading is taken from two passages from the Old Testament, two passages from the prophecy of Isaiah.

Isaiah 1, chapter 19, beginning to read it, verse 19. Isaiah chapter 19, verse 19.

In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the Lord at its border.

It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, he will send them a Savior and Defender, and he will rescue them.

[1 : 16] So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will know the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings.

They will make vows to the Lord and keep them. The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague. He will strike them and heal them.

They will turn to the Lord and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria.

The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth.

The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people. Assyria, my handiwork.

[2 : 30] And Israel, my inheritance. Now again, secondly, from the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 66, the last of the prophecies of Isaiah.

Isaiah, beginning to read again at verse 19, Isaiah chapter 66, verse 19.

I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations, to Parsish, to the Libyans and Lydians, famous as archers, to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory.

They will proclaim my glory among the nations, and they will bring all your brothers from all the nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord, on horses and chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels, says the Lord.

They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the Lord in ceremonially clean vessels. And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites, says the Lord.

[4 : 13] May God bless to our hearts the reading and hearing of this portion of his holy, inspired, infallible, and inerrant word. Let us pray.

Shall we stand for prayer? O Lord our God, we thank you and praise you that you are the God of the whole of this world, and that you have shown your grace not only to the Jewish people, but also to the massive peoples of the Gentiles.

And we honor you as the God that has had a plan and purpose from before the foundation of the world to restore a fallen world so that it might worship you in spirit and in truth.

We thank you that even this day in a place distant from the land of our Lord Jesus, that we know that he, the risen one, is with us by his spirit, and that we have become, by his appointment, the holy temple of God.

We honor you for the great plan and purpose that you have had from before this world was ever made, and for your faithfulness to every word you have ever spoken.

[5 : 33] We honor you that we have this great privilege of being a part of the fulfillment of the words of the prophets, so that even today, as we gather in this worship service, we may present sacrifices well-pleasing to you through hearts of thanksgiving and praise.

For we offer our prayers as sacrifices in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. All hail the power of Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. This evening we wish to consider a rather simple question, but one that has profound significance, one that has had significance across the ages, one that has been often misinterpreted and misapplied, and one that, a question that even today has brought serious consequences among the nations of the world.

The question is simply, who is Israel? Who is Israel?

We know that in the scriptures of the Old Testament, Israel is used in a variety of ways. It was first used with respect to an individual, a man named Jacob, who came to be designated by God's grace, not because he deserved it by any means, for he was the supplanter.

[7 : 12] He came to be known as Yisrael, as prince with God. We know that this word also was used of a nation in the Old Covenant scriptures, the Israel of God, a national entity that was ordered by God for the purpose of manifesting to all the nations his grace that had come first through Abraham and then was to be a blessing among all the peoples of the earth.

Israel. We know also that this word Israel is used to designate a land, a geographical territory that can be located on a map and for a certain number of years, not that many, perhaps 500 years, it was known among the nations of the world, Israel.

Israel. From the time of David until the time of the exile of the people out of their land, there was that place that was known as Israel.

But over the centuries, there has been great disputes, even among the Jewish people themselves, as to who is Israel and what constitutes Israel.

And this particular question has brought great havoc among the nations of the world. It was, as a matter of fact, as you well know, the first cause of a general assembly of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts chapter 15.

[9 : 07] A great debate had occurred in the early church as to who could be regarded as a part of the Israel of God.

Here were these massive numbers of Gentiles that were being converted. How were they to be viewed? Were they a part of the people of God legitimately?

And some who were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ said, ah, if they're going to be a part of the people of God, they must first be circumcised.

They must become a part of the Jewish people if they are to be a part of the Israel of God. Others said, no, no.

There was a great dispute that ultimately had to be settled in a general assembly, the first general assembly of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. With respect to the localization of Israel as a land, you have over a period of a century or two a great debate and a great expenditure of blood in the days of the Christian crusades.

[10 : 36] It seems that the Muslim people, the infidels, had overrun that land that was known as the Holy Land.

And the Christian community determined that they could not allow infidels to possess the Holy Land.

And so the crusades were launched in which many hundreds of people spent their lives, shed their blood, built their fortifications, entered into battle to drive out the infidels and reclaim the Holy Land, Israel, for the Christian community.

At one point, assuming that God was behind this movement and understanding the principles of faith that even children could be used of God to win his battles, they launched what was known as the Children's Crusade.

So hundreds of little children were gathered together and sent off to go and reclaim Israel, the Holy Land, from the infidels.

[12 : 04] Hundreds of little children who lost their lives pitifully because of a certain concept world. As to who is Israel.

Now today we could enter into a great dispute and debate as to what is happening in a land called Israel today. great tragedy is occurring there.

No one in their right minds, Christian or otherwise, could condone the awful things that are going on in that place that now is known as Israel.

And yet the identification of Israel both as a nation and as a land continues to be a matter of great dispute among the Christian community.

Who is Israel? Who is the Israel of God? Is that land to be identified as Israel?

[13:16] Or is that nation, that political entity, properly to bear the bearing, the nomenclature of the Israel of God?

So that is the simple question that we wish to look at this evening. And we know that in terms of our Scottish forefathers, in terms of Murray McChain, and from that point on, there has been great burden for the Jewish people.

And a great missionary effort sent appropriately to bring Jewish people to the point of professing Jesus to be their Christ and to be grafted in again into the Israel of God.

Even today, there are efforts being made by many Christian groups to bring the gospel to the Jewish people distinctively in assuming that the promise is correct, that always there will be from among the Jewish people those who are part of the true Israel of God.

But this evening we want to look in particular at this question, who then is Israel? And as you, if you have the outline in front of you, you will notice that we will be looking first of all that who was Israel in the past, who was Israel in terms of a person, a land, and a nation, who is Israel in the present day, and who will be, what is the expectation of the future with respect to Israel?

[15:10] Though the question may seem somewhat academic, it is, as a matter of fact, a question that affects every one of us, because either we are a part of Israel, or we are not a part of Israel.

Either Stornoway and this church at back is a part of the Israel of God, or it is not a part of the Israel of God. So we all have to deal with this question as to who is Israel.

So first of all, who was Israel in the past? And thinking of Israel as a people, we simply ask the question, not in terms of generalities, but in terms of particulars, with respect to particular people.

Were these particular people that we shall look at, four people, two men and two women, were these people Israel? Were they Jews? Jews? And the first question is, what about Abraham?

Certainly we should all be able to agree on this identification. Was Abraham a Jew? We have to think about this.

[16:28] Was Abraham a Jew? If you wrote down your answer on a piece of paper, would it be with three letters or two letters? Would it be, no, Abraham was not a Jew?

Or, yes, Abraham was a Jew? Well, it might prove to be something of a trick question, because we have to again consider this more carefully, and we need to recognize, first of all, no, Abraham was not a Jew.

Abraham was a Gentile. He was just another idol worshiper over on the other side of the river. As Joshua chapter 24 says, our forefathers, including Abraham, worshipped idols on the other side of the river.

Abraham was not a Jew, he was just another Gentile. Right? Yeah? Now, Abraham did become a Jew.

So, it was something of a trick question. The answer is no, and then yes. But, this truth of the word of God needs to sink down into our thinking.

[17:44] Abraham was a Gentile. He was Semitic, but there were hundreds of thousands of Semitic people, and even today, there are many Shemites, descendants of Shem, who would not be regarded as Jews, they are part of the Gentile community.

What then, we may ask, made Abraham, the Gentile, into a Jew? was it a blood transfusion? Did he get a new racial identity, and thereby become a Jew? Is that what makes a Jew? Racial identity? Did he become a part of a political party?

No. What made Abraham a Jew? The calling of God, and the response of faith? That is what made Abraham a Jew.

He was called of God while being a Gentile, leave your father and mother, and go to a land that I will show you, and I will make of you a great nation.

[18:55] And Abraham believed and responded in faith, and so he became the first Jew. Now there's an old saying, I suppose you have something like this in Gaelic, as we have been, by the way, I'm looking forward to hearing the music of heaven tomorrow in our worship services.

My mother tongue may come back to me. I don't believe in tongue speaking quite as some people do, but perhaps under certain circumstances you may learn a new language without realizing it. That would be a very exciting moment for me. I'm sure something will communicate at any rate. but we have a little saying that I'm sure you have something similar to this, like father, like son, a chip off the old block.

What's good enough for the father is good enough for the son. Now if Abraham, the Gentile, became a Jew by the calling of God and the response of faith, and you are a Gentile who has been called by God and has responded in faith, are you a Jew?

Well, you can think about that. Like father, like son. Yes, scripture would seem to indicate that for the past 4,000 years since the time of Abraham, the principle has been the same.

[20 : 32] Those who are called of God and respond in faith, whether their ethnic background, whether their racial background, whether their national background, be Scottish or Israeli or Palestinian, they become Jews.

They start as non-Jews. They become Jews by responding in faith to the calling of God. Now, what does it mean then to become a Jew?

What does it mean then to become a son of Abraham? What it means that you have become an heir, an inheritor of all the promises of God, all the promises of redemption, all the promises of restoration from that fallen condition of paradise.

That's yours. that's the meaning of being Israel, prince with God, though once you were Jacob, the deceiver, even as was Satan himself.

Well, we can look at these other individuals. If Abraham started as a Gentile, what about Sarah, the wife of Abraham? Was Sarah a Jew?

[21 : 49] today if you ask for a definition of a Jew, you will find that many times Jews get perplexed about this themselves.

And they basically fall back onto the principle that a Jew is someone that has a Jewish mother. Not a Jewish father, but a Jewish mother. Now, what then is a Jewish mother?

Well, it's someone that has a Jewish mother. But what is a Jewish mother? And did Sarah have a Jewish mother? No.

So what made Sarah, who was a Gentile worshiper of idols on the other side of the river, what made her into a Jew, the mother of all the Jews? The calling of God and the response of faith.

That is what defines a Jew. Now we look at a third individual and ask the question in the Old Testament with respect to their identity. What about Rahab the harlot?

[22 : 56] Was Rahab the Canaanite woman? A Jew? Hmm. You remember the curse was spoken over Canaan.

Cursed be Canaan. An expression of the judgment of God because of the perversity of that family. Cursed be Canaan.

And the Canaanites were put under the ban. They were to be annihilated, not because God was showing how war should be carried on, but because God was showing what hell would be like.

Hell will be a total devastation and destruction, a consumption of those who stand opposed to God and sink and sink and sink into depravity.

Now Rahab had drunk deeply of those polluted waters of Canaanitism. She was a harlot by trade. Was Rahab a Jew?

[24 : 01] Was she a part of the Israel of God? Well, of course, the first answer is no. And the second answer is yes.

She was not originally by race. She didn't, a Jew, she did not have a Jewish mother. She had a Canaanite mother. But if you read the Gospel of Matthew, you find that Rahab's name is in the line of descendency.

of the Jews. You find in the book of Joshua that Rahab testified that she knew that the God of Israel was the one, only living and true God who was going to take care, take domination over the land of Palestine.

And Rahab must have, we have presumed, married a Jewish man and became then the mother of Jewish people.

The calling of God, response of faith. The fourth individual would be King David himself.

[25 : 19] Now of course you would say, why of course David was a Jew, he was the king of the Jews, the greatest of the Jewish kings. And through him came the Messiah.

But if you look at the genealogy of David, there is Rahab the Canaanite, there is Ruth the Moabite. So, did David have a Jewish mother? Well, we might presume that his immediate father and mother were Jewish, but how much Gentile blood can flow in the streams of someone and they still be regarded as a Jew.

Yes, David was a Jew, but he was a Jew by the calling of God and by the response of faith. So, when we ask this question, who is a Jew, or who was a Jew, we need to look closely at the question.

Scripture makes it quite clear that any Gentile could become a Jew by professing the God of Israel and being circumcised.

[26 : 32] Then that Jew, or that new Jew, could participate in the highest privilege of Judaism, which was the Passover. meal. See Exodus chapter 12.

One Jewish commentator, a Jewish commentator of the book of Genesis, named Jacob, has this to say. He says, Indeed, differences of race have never been an obstacle to joining Israel, which did not know the concept of purity of blood.

Circumcision turned a man of foreign origin into a Jew. Jew. This is what a Jew said. It was never purity of race.

Any Gentile could become a Jew by confessing the God of Israel by being circumcised.

Circumcision turned a man of foreign origin into an Israelite.

Jew. So, we move on to the next question with respect to who is a Jew. What about Israel as a land in the past?

[27 : 40] Israel as a nation in the past? It's not the Israel of God simply by race.

It is by faith in response to the calling of God. Israel as a land. The land of the Bible is commonly designated as the Holy Land.

Perhaps you've known some people who have gone to the Holy Land, made a Holy Land tour, and come back with some holy water from the Jordan, and maybe they even wanted to have a second baptism because they wanted that holy water that came from the Holy Land to do its special job of purifying them in baptism.

But that is not the biblical concept of the land of the Bible. Only by virtue of a distinctive manifestation of the Holy One himself will land become holy.

only by a distinctive manifestation of the Holy One will a particular land be holy.

[29 : 00] A place in the desert can be a holy land if God especially manifests himself there. So we have Moses on the backside of Mount Sinai, and he sees a bush burning that is not consumed, and he says, I've never seen anything like this before.

I've been shepherding for years, and I've seen lots of strange things out here, but I keep glancing over there, and there that bush is burning, but it's not burned up.

What's going on? I think I'll go over and see. So he goes, and God speaks to him out of the burning bush, which appears to be a symbol of God's identity with his people when they're in the furnace of fire of persecution, and God says to Moses, take your shoes from off your feet, for the place on which you're standing is holy.

Here is the holy land. The holy land is where God manifests his glory and his holiness in a distinctive way in this world.

Even a little spot out in the desert is the holy land, according to this teaching of scripture. Now, if you happen to be wandering along in the desert of Sinai someday when you had nothing else to do, and happen to walk over that place where that burning bush once was, would you be defaming holy ground?

[30 : 36] no. When the holy one is not manifesting himself in that place anymore, it's no longer a holy place.

It is only when God is especially manifesting his holiness in a place that it may be the holy land.

Now, for a while, for quite a few years, Israel was the holy land.

when Solomon built the temple, the glory of God came into that temple and so filled the temple that the priests could not come in and do their ministries. And then the glory withdrew into the holy of holies, the most holy place, and apparently there was some constant manifestation of the presence of God in a distinctive way in that most holy place in the temple of Solomon.

God. And so long as God's holy person resided in a distinctive way in that temple, that particular nation was, could not be defeated by any nation.

They were invulnerable. But then Ezekiel the prophet sees a day in which the glory of God removes, the glory of God is taken away from that holy place.

[32 : 07] Step by step, it moves out of the most holy place to the outer court of the temple, across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives, and there the holy of holies, or the God of holiness, has situated himself outside the temple.

as it were a witness to what then was going to happen to the temple. And what happens? Well, the Babylonians come, and Israel had thought and hoped and expected that just as in the days of Hezekiah some years before, when the Assyrian army was defeated right at the gates of Jerusalem, that the Babylonians would be defeated by God in the same way.

But no, the holiness of God had been removed. The land was no longer holy, it was just like any other land. The Babylonians came and they totally devastated Israel at that particular point, and carried the nation into exile.

Now, did the Shekinah glory return to the temple? Did it ever come back and dwell again in the temple that was restored?

We have no evidence whatsoever that that ever happened again. There was never a time indicated in which the holiness of God returned to the temple in Jerusalem.

[33 : 40] Some of the Jews thought and hoped and speculated that the glory of God the Shekinah did return. But there's no scriptural evidence that that is the fact.

There was a prophecy of Haggai, the post-exilic prophet, that one day the glory of this temple would be greater than the glory of the temple of Solomon, but it was never fulfilled in the days of Israel's restoration to the kingdom.

But when Jesus came into the world, we know that the glory of God dwelt in this individual and the holiness of God, the Shekinah glory tabernacled, not in the temple, but in the body of Jesus.

And we know where that body of Jesus is today. So in terms of a place, it would be rather stretching it to suggest that land anymore.

So long as God is not manifesting his glory there, it's not the holy land. So we should not think in terms of that land over there as somehow being Israel in the distinctive sense of being the place of God's blessing and special residence in this world.

[35 : 08] What did Jesus say to the Samaritan woman? He said, the Shekinah, the presence of God, is going to be in Stornoway.

It's going to be in the Longway, Malawi. It's going to be in Jackson, Mississippi. He said, the time is coming when people will not worship in your temple in Samaria.

They will not worship in Jerusalem. Jerusalem. God is a spirit. And wherever the spirit of God is, there is the holy place.

As Paul the apostle wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, as they were wrestling with their identity as a new covenant people of God, he said, you Corinthians, a thousand miles away from Jerusalem, you are the temple of God.

That's where God is dwelling. He's dwelling wherever and whenever the people of God assemble together. Here is the holy place.

[36 : 24] Here is where the Shekinah dwells. It can also dwell in portions of Israel. When Messianic Jews who worship Jesus as their Messiah come together in Palestine or in Israel there, the Messiah is present with them by his spirit and there is a holy place.

Whenever Arab Christians, and they are such a thing as Arab Christians, assemble in Palestine, in Bethlehem, in Hebron, as they do regularly, that is a holy place where they assemble.

Israel because God is a spirit and wherever the spirit of God is, there is the holy place. Not a geopolitical identity for the holy place, but an identity of people where the spirit of God dwells.

Now that's Israel in the land of the past. Now what about a person of Israel in the past? We know that Jacob was that one person that was identified as the Israel of God.

God says, you'll no longer be known as Jacob, the supplanter, the overturner, the cheat, but by my grace you'll be known as Yisrael, as Israel, the prince with God.

[37 : 56] God. Now in Jacob you can see the plan of God to have a people descended from him that would be known as the Israel of God, as Israel.

From Jacob came the twelve tribes of Israel. But when you look at the life of Jacob as an individual, as one who in his loins contained all that would be later formed into the twelve tribes of Israel, when you look at his life pattern you have to say, well, he wasn't exactly the paragon of virtue.

Even when Esau, his brother, comes and tries to make peace with him, Jacob is manipulating and maneuvering in every way possible to make his own way.

And even in his last actions, you remember he reverses his hands and makes the elder of Ephraim and Manasseh to be less blessed than the younger.

He's still got something of that Jacob type attitude within him. He was never the perfection that would be expected of the one that would be the father of the people of God.

[39 : 19] He was an image, a type, of that one who would embody in himself the true people of God. But he was by no means the perfect image.

So that's Israel in the past. When you consider Israel as a people in the past, you have to say, well, it was a people that was made up of those who are called by God and respond in faith, whether they're Jews or Gentiles.

When you think of the land, well, it was a holy land, it was the Israel of God, so long as God's glory dwelt there. But once the glory of God is removed, it's no longer the holy place.

And when you look at Israel as a person, the person of Jacob, you say, well, yes, he was the Israel of God, he was a prince with God, and yet he was by no means a perfect prince. There are limitations in every one of these images.

So now we want to look secondly at what is perhaps a more controversial question, the question of who is Israel? Not who was Israel in the past, but who is Israel right now in the present?

[40 : 30] How can we identify Israel today as a people, as a land, and as a person? First of all, Israel as a people in the present.

And here, shall we start with the negative rather than the positive? negative. Sometimes by negating certain things, you can arrive at the clearest definition of what something really is. Scriptural testimony makes it very plain that he is not a Jew. That's what Paul says in Romans chapter 2, 28.

He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly according to the flesh. In Romans chapter 9, verse 6, he says, not all Israel is Israel.

That's definition by negation. What is Paul saying? He's talking about the Jewish people, but he says, he is not a Jew that is one outwardly.

[41 : 46] And circumcision is no circumcision that is outward in the flesh. And in Romans chapter 9, he says, not all Israel is Israel.

I think we do not do the Jewish people a favor. If we love them in Christ, if we want to see them saved, by communicating to them somehow the idea that they are special in the sight of God in the sense that they are the elect of God and they will be saved somehow, even if they continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah.

Messiah, we do not do them a favor in that way. We confine them and consign them to eternal damnation.

If we communicate to them that apart from repentance of their sin and faith in Jesus and Jesus alone as their Messiah, that they are not the elect of God.

That's what Paul is saying here. he is not a Jew. And we need to stop right there and put a period and think about it. He is not a Jew.

[43 : 10] That is one outwardly according to the flag. Not all Israel is Israel.

Today, when you see the Jewish people assemble in the land of Israel, you are very tempted to say, ah, here are the elect of God.

Here are the fulfillment of the promises of God. Here is the fulfillment of the prophecies of God. But if you read those promises and read those prophecies carefully in the Old Testament, you will find that never is Israel described as being restored to their land apart from the forgiveness of their sins. Never is Israel restored to the land apart from new life by the Spirit coming in them.

Apart from those experiences of the forgiveness of their sins and of new life in the Holy Spirit, they are not Israel.

[44 : 21] They are not princes with God. They are not the elect of God. And we do not do them a favor. And we do not do our evangelism of the Jews a favor.

If we truly love them, we will make them understand what Paul here says. He is not, you're not a Jew. Even though you're in the land of Israel, even though you speak the land of the Bible, even though you can trace your heritage by race to Abraham, you're not a Jew.

if you're only a Jew outwardly. It is a Jew who is one who has been circumcised in the heart.

Contrary-wise, in the present day, and listen carefully to this because I think this is one of the most important teachings of Scripture for us to understand.

One of the most vivid, if not the most vivid display in the history of the world of salvation by grace through faith alone, is the fact that hundreds of thousands of Gentiles are inheritors of the blessings promised to Israel without ever becoming Jews.

[45 : 45] Christians, there is no greater sign that salvation is by grace through faith alone, than you right here.

The Christians in Malawi that David Livingston first began to minister to over a hundred years ago, that those Christians in Malawi are Jews.

They are inheritors of the blessings of God. Did you hear what Isaiah said in his prophecies? Isaiah said in his prophecies, the day will come in which the Assyrians will go down to worship in the land of Egypt, and the Egyptians in Africa will go up into Asia to worship the Lord, and they'll just completely bypass Jerusalem.

The day will come, says Isaiah, in which from the far countries of the world, I will gather together your brothers. He's talking about Gentiles.

He's talking to the Jews. I will gather your brothers from all the nations of the world. and I will make some of them priests and Levites in my temple.

[47 : 22] Is that not what you are? You are a priest, a Levite, the highest rank of Jew in the kingdom of God.

There is no greater demonstration that salvation is by grace through faith alone than what we see right here. What we see in Malawi, what has transpired over the past 2,000 years in church history, that constantly from all the nations of the world, from all the languages of the world, people have become inheritors Jews.

of the promises given to Abraham without ever becoming Jews. You know, we Gentiles, we didn't have the law.

We live like pagans. Some of us were drunkards, some of us were adulterers, some of us were murderers, some of us were polygamists, either polygamists in which we have many wives at once, or polygamists in which we have many wives one after the other.

We just lived in debauchery and drunkenness. And you look at the Pharisaic Jews and they lived in such righteousness compared to the Gentile world, worshipping idols, superstitious, going after all sorts of magic in their worship.

[48 : 54] And you look at the Jewish worship and it is so pure and so legally centered about the law of God. And yet look at us. By faith and by faith alone, in response to the calling of God, we have become Jews, inheritors of all the promises of God.

God. And on the other side of the question, any suggestion whatsoever that any people will get special salvational favors because of their race or their worship practices is the anti-gospel.

to say that somehow Jews will be saved because they are Jews is the anti-gospel. It is saying that there is some value in race or religion and it is the anti-gospel.

it is the very opposite of saying salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. And if we encourage anyone to think that they may be saved because of their race or because of their religion we are contradicting Christ and the whole reason of his coming into the world and we are crucifying Christ afresh.

And so we ask this question. In Israel today there are many Palestinian believers in Bethlehem that is now being occupied by Israeli tanks there is the Bethlehem Bible College a wonderful group of evangelical Christians I've taught in that college I've met with those men I know their devotion to Christ they are humble Christian believers are Arab Palestinian believers Jews Jews today yes they are Jews he is not a Jew which is one outwardly he is a

[51 : 38] Jew who is one who has been circumcised in the heart who has repented of his sins and cried out to Christ who has had the Holy Spirit move him to that point of repentance already he is born again he is a new creature in Christ he is a Gentile just as Abraham that has received the calling of God and responded in faith and what is the significance of the fact that he is a Jew an Arab Palestinian what's the significance of that fact that he is an Israelite well it means that he inherits all the promises of God there is not a promise of God that is denied him I try so hard to communicate this fact to the Christian Africans in Malawi if Abraham was a Gentile and received the promises of God that made his life so different you are no different from Abraham if God has called you and you've responded in faith every promise that you read in the

Bible without any exclusion whatsoever is yours you know how the African Christians respond you know the African Christians they have such a sense of hopelessness they see the gap between the western world and the third world getting larger and larger they don't know how they can ever catch up economically politically socially in any way they will never say that but they live with such a sense of despair and then you come and tell them the good news you know what the good news is God took that one man Abraham and he made him a great nation and he made him to be a blessing to all the nations of the world and that is God's same promise to you now we read from Isaiah this wonderful promise about the inclusion of the

Gentiles but you know the one thing that the church through all the ages beginning with Peter the apostle the leader of the apostles has had most difficulty grasping you know the one truth that the Christian church has had the most difficulty grasping it is the truth that the Gentiles are fellow heirs fellow inheritors fellow participants with the Jews that's what he says in Ephesians chapter 3 read it carefully or you just have to read it not carefully and it will be obvious to you this is what Paul says here is the mystery that was hid in ages past and you might say how could he talk about the inclusion of the Gentiles in the blessings of Israel being something that was hid from the prophets because it's so obvious every prophet in the Old Testament talks about the inclusion of the Gentiles well the mystery is not the inclusion of the Gentiles the mystery that has not been grasped by the church is that the Gentiles and Paul uses three words one consecutively one after the other to drive home this truth that the Gentiles are fellow inheritors fellow participants fellow recipients of the blessings of Israel there's no distinction whatever promises that God has given to quote the Jews unquote are for every Gentile believer to claim for himself by faith you are fellow heirs fellow inheritors fellow participants and God has given you the great blessing right here in Stornoway of being a blessing to all the nations of the world because that was the promise to

Abraham and he's given you the promise of the land so what does that mean does that mean that every Christian owns a little territory in Palestine or Israel today if so I think I'll take my territory down along the Gulf of a lot talk about nice beach area nice place for snorkeling beautiful beautiful territory I've never even been there but I hear it's wonderful so I'll take that part as mine no because you see today the land has changed as well that's no longer the holy land that's no longer the land of promise Romans chapter 4 verse 13 says God promised Abraham that he would be heir of the cosmos heir of the world you by living here as a

[57 : 16] Christian in this area are claiming the promises of God concerning the possession of the land if the promise of the land were related today specifically to Palestine or to the land that is now known as Israel then every Arab Palestinian Christian would have an equal right to that territory as every Jewish messianic Christian and no unconverted Israeli would have any right of possession of that territory at all but Paul the apostle tells us to look beyond that look beyond the microcosm to the macrocosm look at what God has intended from the beginning from the time of man's fall into the world and in the world and even before that God has had this great plan of restoring the whole of the universe and that's what we have to look forward to to a new heavens and a new earth already we are inheritors of the cosmos but someday in the future we shall experience in its fullness the restoration of the whole universe when our bodies are changed when the new heavens and the new earth are created and when we for eternity live as the Israel of God let us pray how marvelous oh Lord our

God are your plans and purposes how far beyond anything that any human being could comprehend or consider your determinations made before the foundation of the world what a privilege it is for us Gentiles today to be known as the Israel of God grant your great mercy we pray you oh gracious father to those Jews of the world today who are still in bondage in Jerusalem open their darkened eyes push back Satan and his ways that they may see Jesus in all his glory be with our Palestinian brothers who suffer so much today grant heavenly father that those Palestinian Christian brothers may have their hearts lifted up as they claim the promises that you have given to them help us we ask you oh lord to understand the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God that passes knowledge and give to us the joy of knowing that we are fellow heirs fellow participants in all the promises of Christ bless this community of believers oh lord lift up their minds their hearts and their eyes to see the blessing that God has given them and give to us a unity across the world with all of those Jews and Gentiles that are believers in Christ for we ask in his name amen amen