

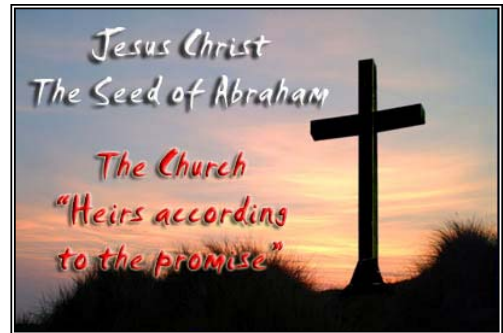
# Understanding Israel

[Acts 1:6](#)



**W**e began our study of the book of Acts last week and I said that the theme of Acts is, “The Resurrection of Israel.” This doesn’t really make sense unless you understand what I mean by “resurrection and what I mean by “Israel.” So this morning I want to explain how I am using these two words.

A principle of hermeneutics is: *Determine carefully the meaning of words.* Whatever else the Bible is, it is a book which communicates information verbally. That means that it is filled with words. Thoughts are expressed through relationships of those words. Each individual word contributes something to the whole of the content expressed. The better understanding we have of the individual words used in biblical statements the better we will be able to understand the total message of Scripture. Accurate communication and clear understanding are difficult when words are used imprecisely or ambiguously. Misuses of words and misunderstanding go hand in hand.



Let’s look at the word “resurrection” first. I said that the book of Acts was about Israel’s resurrection and as we read Acts we see that Paul clearly taught that the resurrection was the hope of Israel:

*But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" (Acts 23:6 NASB)*

*"And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers;<sup>7</sup> the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.<sup>8</sup> "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead? (Acts 26:6-8 NASB)*

It is clear from this last verse that Paul sees the resurrection of the dead as that which fulfills “*the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers.*”

The word “resurrection” does not appear in the First Testament, but the concept does:

*"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2 NASB)*

*"But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age." (Daniel 12:13 NASB)*

According to this verse when is the resurrection to take place? It is to take place at, “the end of the age.” The end of what age? It must be at the end of the Old Covenant age because the New Covenant has no end. Notice carefully what Paul says in:

*"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets;<sup>15</sup> having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Acts 24:14-15 NASB)*

The word “shall” here is the Greek word “[mello](#)” [meɪll | w], which means: “*about to be*” (see Thayer, Arndt &

Gingrich, New Englishman's Greek Concordance). Paul says, "There is about to be a resurrection." Please keep in mind that Paul said this in the first century.

Other First Testament references to resurrection are:

***Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight. (Hosea 13:14 NASB)***

***But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; For He will receive me. Selah. (Psalms 49:15 NASB)***

This verse expresses hope that God will provide salvation beyond the grave, one of the few First Testament references to life after death. This verse anticipates the clear New Testament teaching of life after death, and eternal life, and salvation from God.

It may surprise you to know that the Bible never uses the terms "*resurrected body*," "*resurrection of the body*," or "*physical resurrection*." Churchianity uses those term quite often, but the Bible never does. The phrases that the Bible does use are "*the resurrection of the dead*" and "*the resurrection from the dead*." What is the big difference between these phrases? The first three that the Bible doesn't use are all dealing with the physical. The ones the Bible does use do not use the word "physical" or "body." The resurrection is not a physical thing—it is spiritual.

Because of his sin, man was separated from God. He was dead in trespasses and sins. The focus of God's plan of redemption is to restore through Jesus Christ what man had lost in Adam. The Bible is God's book, about His plan to restore the spiritual union of His creation. Resurrection is not about bringing physical bodies out of the graves, it is about restoring man into the presence of God. This is a very brief definition of resurrection for more detail go to our web site and do a search for the word "resurrection."

**What about the word "Israel."** What does it mean? Let's first look at the etymology: Israel is a compound of two words: *sarah* [hr#] (meaning: "*fight*," "*struggle*," or "*rule*") and *el* [l ] (meaning: "*God*"). Some have taken the name Israel to mean, "*He who struggles with God*" or "*He who rules with God*." But in Hebrew names, sometimes God is not the object of the verb, but the subject. *Daniel* means: "*God judges*" not "*he judges God*." So this principle shows us **Israel** means: "*God rules*."

There is a great disagreement within Christendom as to who "Israel" is. Does this refer to the nation Israel or to the Church of Jesus Christ? How you answer this question is **very** important. If you are going to understand the Bible and its promises, you must understand who "Israel" is. What we believe influences how we behave. What Christian leaders teach about the Jews and Arabs influences how Christians view the events unfolding in the Middle East. I also believe that there is a direct connection between the church's view of Israel and terrorism. I say this because I believe that our view of Israel has affected our foreign policy.

It is my belief that a wrong view of who Israel is affected all Americans on September 11, 2001. I believe that the attack on the twin towers in New York City and all the lives that were lost that day were a result of a faulty view of Israel.

It seems that Osama Bin Laden agrees with me that our view of Israel is connected to terrorism. Listen to what he said: "*Our terrorism is a good accepted terrorism, because it's against America, it's for the purpose of defeating oppression so America would stop supporting Israel, who is killing our children.*"

So Bin Laden says that terrorism is connected to America's support of Israel. And I say that America's support of Israel is tied to a faulty theology. Because of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, MOST American Christians believe that we have a biblical mandate to stand with and protect the nation Israel.

The Dispensationalist, as well as the Zionist, believes that the nation of Israel is *God's chosen people*, the sole inheritors of God's promises, and that to be a part of Israel, one must be of the proper lineage and nationality.

**Zionism** is a political movement built on the belief that the Jewish people deserve by right to possess the land of Palestine as their own. **Christian Zionism** is essentially a Christian prophetic support for Zionism; seeing the modern state of Israel as the equivalent of the biblical Israel.

Let me give you a couple illustrations of the Zionest mindset. An advertisement appeared in the New York Times entitled "[Open Letter to Evangelical Christians from Jews for Jesus.](#)" In it they called upon evangelicals to show solidarity with the State of Israel: *Now is the time to stand with Israel. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, our hearts are heavy as we watch the images of violence and bloodshed in the Middle East... Christian friends, "The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). So must our support for the survival of Israel in this dark hour be irrevocable. Now is the time for Christians to stand by Israel.*

At the [Third International Christian Zionist Congress](#) held in Jerusalem in February, 1996 under the auspices of [International Christian Embassy Jerusalem](#), some 1,500 delegates from over 40 countries unanimously affirmed a proclamation and affirmation of Christian Zionism including the following beliefs: *The Lord in His zealous love for Israel and the Jewish People blesses and curses peoples and judges nations based upon their treatment of the Chosen People of Israel... According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.*

In 1997 the ICEJ gave support to a full page advertisement placed in the New York Times entitled "[Christians Call for a United Jerusalem](#)" signed by 10 evangelical leaders including **Pat Robertson**, chairman of Christian Broadcasting Network and president of the Christian Coalition; **Oral Roberts**, founder and chancellor of Oral Roberts University; **Jerry Falwell**, founder of Moral Majority; **Ed McAteer**, President of the Religious Roundtable; and **David Allen Lewis**, President of Christians United for Israel: *We, the undersigned Christian spiritual leaders, communicating weekly to more than 100 million Christian Americans, are proud to join together in supporting the continued sovereignty of the State of Israel over the holy city of Jerusalem. We support Israel's efforts to reach reconciliation with its Arab neighbors, but we believe that Jerusalem or any portion of it shall not be negotiable in the peace process. Jerusalem must remain undivided as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.*

Readers were invited to:

*Join us in our holy mission to ensure that Jerusalem will remain the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. The battle for Jerusalem has begun, and it is time for believers in Christ to support our Jewish brethren and the State of Israel. The time for unity with the Jewish people is now.*

Given so much teaching like this, you can understand why so many Christians believe that we are to be supportive of national Israel. Where do these Christian leaders get the idea that Christians are to stand with and protect Israel? Well, the whole First Testament is filled with promises that God made to Israel. The nation was uniquely chosen by God to be blessed and to be a source of blessing to the whole world:

*"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."<sup>7</sup> "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,<sup>8</sup> but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 7:6-8 NASB)*

It was to Israel that God revealed himself; it was Israel that received the Messianic promises. To mess with Israel is to mess with God himself according to:

***For thus says the LORD of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye." (Zechariah 2:8 NASB)***

They were God's chosen people:

***Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup> "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:1-2 NASB)***

The word "chosen" indicates an intimate relationship. Out of all the families of the earth, God chose Israel. They had a very privileged position. Now, with privilege comes responsibility. Look at the last part of the verse in Amos 3:2. This seems to be something many Christians miss: ***"Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."*** With great privilege comes great responsibility. Israel became proud and missed the true end of all they had; the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to atone for their sins.

After ministering among the Judahites for over three years, Christ declared to the nation:

***"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. (Matthew 21:43 NASB)***

What did He mean? Did Christ really take away from the "Jews" the national blessings of a Messianic kingdom? And to whom was the kingdom of God given? First of all, we can confirm that the inheritance was taken away from the nation of Israel after the flesh:

***But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; <sup>7</sup> neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." <sup>8</sup> That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. (Romans 9:6-8 NASB)***

These verses confirm that something has been taken away... and that not everyone that is a racial part of national Israel are the true Israel, nor are they the children of God. What we are discovering when we try to relate the Old Covenant nation of Israel to the New Covenant is that the fleshly nation was but a **shadow** of the heavenly nation of the spiritual Israel, which can only be entered into by Spirit, not by the flesh. Therefore, physical Israelites, could, from then on, have no place in the nation of Israel (which is after the Spirit) except on the basis of personal salvation, through their faith in Christ Jesus.

Most Christians don't seem to realize that because of Israel's disobedience, God is finished with national Israel. Let's look at what Jesus had to say to the nation of Israel:

***Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry. <sup>19</sup> And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered. (Matthew 21:18-19 NASB)***

I believe that the fig tree is used here as a figure for the nation Israel. Throughout Israel's history, God constantly hungered for His people to bring forth fruit. The gospel writers spoke of the physical hunger of Jesus Christ as symbolic of God's hunger for fruit from His people. Jesus pronounces a curse on Israel because of their failure to bear fruit and their ultimate rejection of Him. Many of Jesus' parables referred to Israel's rejection and thus their destruction:

***"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. (Matthew 21:33 NASB)***

Who is the vineyard? According to Isaiah 5, it is Israel. Now keep this in mind as we continue in Matthew 21:

***"And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce.  
35 "And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36  
"Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37  
"But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the  
vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize  
his inheritance.' 39 "And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. (Matthew  
21:34-39 NASB)***

Jesus is prophesying what the Jews will do to Him:

***"Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" 41 They  
said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other  
vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Did you  
never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME  
THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS  
IN OUR EYES'? 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be  
given to a nation producing the fruit of it. (Matthew 21:40-43 NASB)***

Jesus tells them very clearly that because of their rejection of Him, the kingdom of God will be taken from them. Let's look at another parable:

***And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be  
compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 "And he sent out his slaves to call those  
who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. (Matthew 22:1-3 NASB)***

The King is God, the son is Christ, and those invited are the nation Israel:

***"Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared  
my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the  
wedding feast."' 5 "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his  
business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 "But the king was  
enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire. (Matthew  
22:4-7 NASB)***

Verse 7 is a very clear prediction of the [A.D. 70 judgment of Jerusalem](#). National Israel lost its privilege.

The Bible clearly speaks of Israel's total destruction as a judgment of God. Yet most Christians still believe they are God's chosen people. Listen to what God says to Israel:

***"The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you  
are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have  
forsaken Me. 21 "The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the  
land, where you are entering to possess it. (Deuteronomy 28:20-21 NASB)***

The assertion, therefore, that the modern State of Israel has God's blessing is totally without foundation in Scripture. Jesus predicted that the Temple would be destroyed and the Jews exiled from the land as God's judgement for their failure to recognize Him as the Messiah:

*And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it,<sup>42</sup> saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes."<sup>43</sup> "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side,<sup>44</sup> and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44 NASB)*

In A.D. 70 the lights went out in Israel for good. When the tribulation was over, physical Israel ceased to exist. And because national Israel ceased to exist it must be understood that **THERE IS NO JEWISH RACE TODAY**. If that sounds shocking to you look at what the Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem says about a Jewish race:

*It is a common assumption, and one that sometimes seems ineradicable even in the face of evidence to the contrary, that the Jews of today constitute a race, a homogeneous entity easily recognizable. From the preceding discussion of the origin and early history of the Jews, it should be clear that in the course of their formation as a people and a nation they had already assimilated a variety of racial strains from people moving into the general area they occupied. This had taken place by interbreeding and then by conversion to Judaism of a considerable number of communities. . . .*

*Thus, the diversity of the racial and genetic attributes of various Jewish colonies of today renders any unified racial classification of them a contradiction in terms. Despite this, many people readily accept the notion that they are a distinct race. This is probably reinforced by the fact that some Jews are recognizably different in appearance from the surrounding population. That many cannot be easily identified is overlooked and the stereotype for some is extended to all - a not uncommon phenomenon" (Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem, 1971, vol. 3, p. 50).*

Today, being a Jew simply means that one is of the Judaistic religion or a convert to it, or else in a "brotherhood" of those who are. Being a Jew today is like being Catholic, being a Jew has nothing to do with race. We are familiar with a number of notable figures, such as Sammy Davis, Jr., Elizabeth Taylor, and Tom Arnold, in fact, who became Jews by conversion to the religion of Judaism.

What about all the promises that God made to Israel? The whole First Testament was simply packed with promises that God made to Israel. Promises of a land, and a temple, and peace and victory. Now, if the nation Israel was destroyed then what happens to all the promises God made to Israel? Has God's word failed? No! We know that God is faithful, and that He always keeps His word.

In Romans 9 Paul shows his readers, first century Romans, and us today, that Israel's rejection is not inconsistent with the promises of God. To say that the nation is accursed is not to say that God's promises have failed:

***But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; (Romans 9:6 NASB)***

***"For they are not all Israel who are of Israel"***– What does that mean? God never promised unconditionally covenantal blessings to each offspring of Abraham. God never intended that all of the nation Israel would be redeemed. Within national Israel is "true Israel," or "spiritual Israel." He is telling them not to count on their physical descent. The true Israel is the Israel of faith, not birth. This view has been called "replacement theology"—it is said that the Church replaced Israel. But a much better term would be "fulfillment theology"—the promises of God made to Old Covenant Israel are "fulfilled" in the church of Jesus Christ:

***Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NASB)***

Paul is saying that the primary recipients of the Abrahamic covenant were Abraham and Christ. This, of course, would include all who are in Christ—believers. So ALL BELIEVERS are recipients of the Abrahamic covenant!

This promise is not realized in the Jews, but Christians. Apart from Paul's divinely inspired commentary, how many of us would have understood that Abraham's seed was Christ?

We talked two weeks ago about the need to know the First Testament if we are ever going to understand the New Testament. The writers of the Second Testament all suppose that their readers understood the First Testament.

Please get this: ***When the New Testament authors comment on a First Testament passage, they do not give an interpretation, but THE interpretation.*** The New Testament interprets the Old. The Old Covenant was a veiled representation of the New Covenant.

It is in the New Testament that we learn that the material things of the Old Covenant were types and shadows of spiritual counterparts found in the New Covenant. We are to interpret the First Testament through the lens of the New Testament. We must understand that the last 27 books are a divinely inspired commentary on the first 39 books.

Milton S. Terry, in his book [Biblical Hermeneutics](#) writes: *"It is of the first importance to observe that, from a Christian point of view, the Old Testament cannot be fully apprehended without the help of the New"* (p. 18).

As we shall see, the interpretations that the New Testament authors provide are often very different than the prevailing teachings of today. For example, let's look at a First Testament prophecy and its New Testament fulfillment:

***"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. (Malachi 4:5 NASB)***

Without the New Testament, we would understand this to refer to a second coming of Elijah before the second coming of Christ. This is how the disciples saw it. As they had experienced the vision on the Mount of transfiguration, they asked Jesus:

***And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Matthew 17:10 NASB)***

They understood that Elijah was to show up before the [parousia](#) of the Lord. But according to Jesus, they missed his coming:

***And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things;<sup>12</sup> but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (Matthew 17:11-12 NASB)***

The disciples knew the prophecy about Elijah, but they didn't understand that Elijah was a type that saw its fulfillment in John the Baptist. The prophecy of Malachi was **actually** fulfilled, but it was not **physically** fulfilled. John came in the Spirit of Elijah. Speaking to Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, the angel said:

***"And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17 NASB)***

Jesus is telling them that if they want to understand the second coming of Elijah, they have got to look at the spiritual.

*"For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.<sup>14</sup> "And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come. (Matthew 11:13-14 NASB)*

So we see that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming of Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. If Christ had not taught us that John was the Elijah to come we would still be looking for the fulfillment of [Malachi 4:5](#).

When Paul says in [Galatians 3:16](#): *"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed, that is, Christ,"* he is giving us the divinely inspired commentary of the Abrahamic covenant. The importance of this verse cannot be overstressed.

We read some of these promises in:

*And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3 NASB)*

The promises were made to Abraham and Christ, and the only way any others can become a part of this covenant is through Jesus Christ. This is because Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant by the shedding of His blood, which is the giving of the New Covenant. No one was ever saved by the law, and no one ever inherited the eternal promises of inheritance by the flesh.

*Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. (Galatians 3:7 NASB)*

Abraham's sons are not his physical biological descendants; his sons are those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:26-29 NASB)*

When Galatians 3:29 teaches, *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,"* it is referring not only to who "God's Chosen People" are, but also to whom the inheritance belongs.

*Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?<sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.<sup>23</sup> But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.<sup>24</sup> This is allegorically speaking: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.<sup>25</sup> Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.<sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. (Galatians 4:21-26 NASB)*

The allegory thus declares that **earthly Israel** (the twelve tribes) is to be regarded as Ishmael, because they are in bondage to the law and not free. The true Church of Gentile and Jew (in which all distinctions of race, degree, and privilege are abolished) is the [true Israel](#) to whom the promises made to Abraham apply.

Any Jew would have been offended by the suggestion that he was a son of Hagar. Yet, that is exactly what Paul stated. Yes, physically they descended from Sarah, but **spiritually**, apart from faith in Christ, they descended from



Hagar. The true sons of Sarah, “like Isaac, are children of promise.”

If you by faith belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise. It doesn't matter whose blood you have in your veins, but whose faith you have in your heart. It is covenant, not race, that makes one a child of God.

We inherit all the promises made to Abraham through Christ. Everything we are and have is by virtue of our union with Christ, which only comes by faith. Listen carefully: the Abrahamic Covenant was a promise made to Abraham and to Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham, which he would be made great, and the father of many nations, and that in him would all the nations of the earth be blessed. This promise was fulfilled physically in Abraham, and spiritually and ultimately in Christ.

The promise was always to the spiritual descendants of Abraham, the Church. The Church is not a temporary interruption in God's prophetic program for Israel as the dispensationalists teach. The Church is the prophetic fulfillment of that program, because **the Church is true Israel**. Covenant, not race, has always been the defining mark of the true Israel.

So when I say that the book of Acts is about the “resurrection of Israel” I am saying that it is about God fulfilling His promises to “true Israel” in bringing them into His presence through Jesus Christ. As we study Acts we will see that God keeps His word, He fulfills His promises! This book is about the faithfulness of God!

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