

THE PALESTINIAN COVENANT

THE SUMMARY OF THE COVENANT

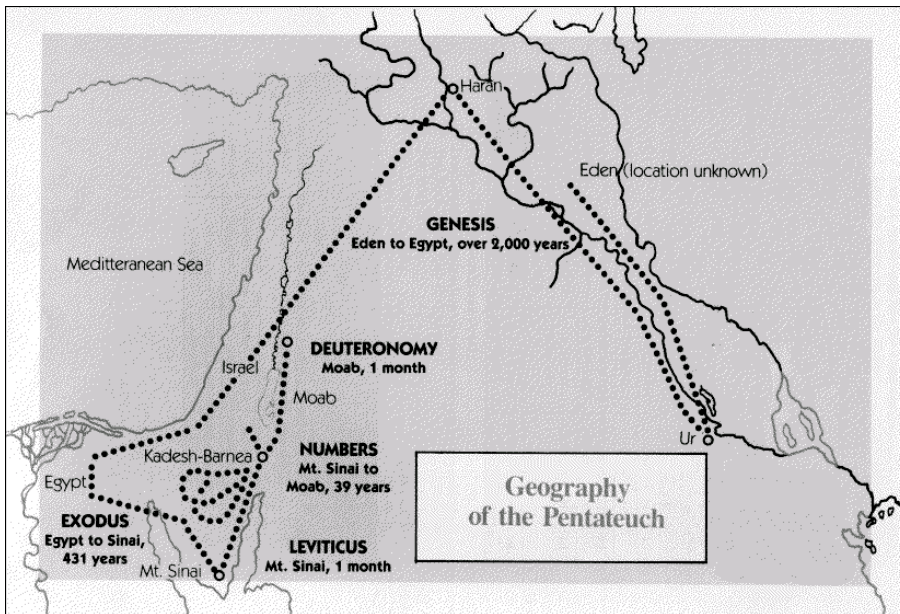
- This covenant, stated in Deuteronomy 29:1-29; 30:1-10, was made between God and Israel right before Moses died and Israel entered the Promised Land
- This covenant guarantees Israel's permanent right to the land...thus, it is also called the "Land Covenant" because many of the promises relate to Israel's possession of the land
- It is an unconditional, everlasting covenant which promises the ultimate return of Israel to the land in repentance and faith (30:2) in circumstances wherein God will prosper them (30:3)
- Although its blessings are conditioned upon obedience (30:8, 10), its fulfillment is guaranteed by the New Covenant
- This covenant will be fulfilled in the Millennium
- Some debate exists about whether this is a separate covenant or simply a renewal of the Mosaic covenant
- Although the Palestinian Covenant has many similarities to the Mosaic Covenant made at Mount Sinai, it is probably best to be taken as a separate and distinct covenant

Deuteronomy 29:1 ~ These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.

- Before making this covenant with Israel, God reminded them that if they obeyed the Mosaic Law, he would bless the nation abundantly and warned them that disobedience to the Law would result in his cursing the nation (Deut 28:1-68)

THE SETTING FOR THE COVENANT

- Because of the people's disobedience at Kadesh Barnea and their unwillingness to go into the land, God told them that all those 20 years old and older would perish in the desert (Num 13-14)...only Joshua and Caleb and the nation's sons would see and inherit the land
- The nation wandered for nearly 40 years in the desert and came up on the east side of the Dead Sea in anticipation of possessing the land
- The new generation of Israelites was ready to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land
- They needed to be reminded of their covenant obligations in order to enjoy and receive the blessings of dwelling in the Promised Land
- The covenant would serve this new generation of Israelites as a reminder of their special covenant relationship with God
- So, the purpose of Deuteronomy is to prevent a repetition of the tragic sin of the earlier generation and to prepare them for a life committed to God and his will in the land
- The necessity of obedience is emphasized throughout the entire book
- Moses recounts the statutes and judgments of God in order that the nation may live in and possess the land
- God intends to bless his people with the possession of the land if they would turn to him and listen to him



- The land is an important emphasis in the book...and the covenant itself (Deut 30:1-10) reaffirmed Israel's title deed to the land
- The land is an important emphasis in the book because it was an important emphasis in the Abrahamic Covenant...God guaranteed Abraham's descendants the land area of Canaan as an everlasting possession
- They would be the owner of the land of Canaan from the river of Egypt to the river of Euphrates

Genesis 12:7 ~ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."

Genesis 13:14-15 ~ The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

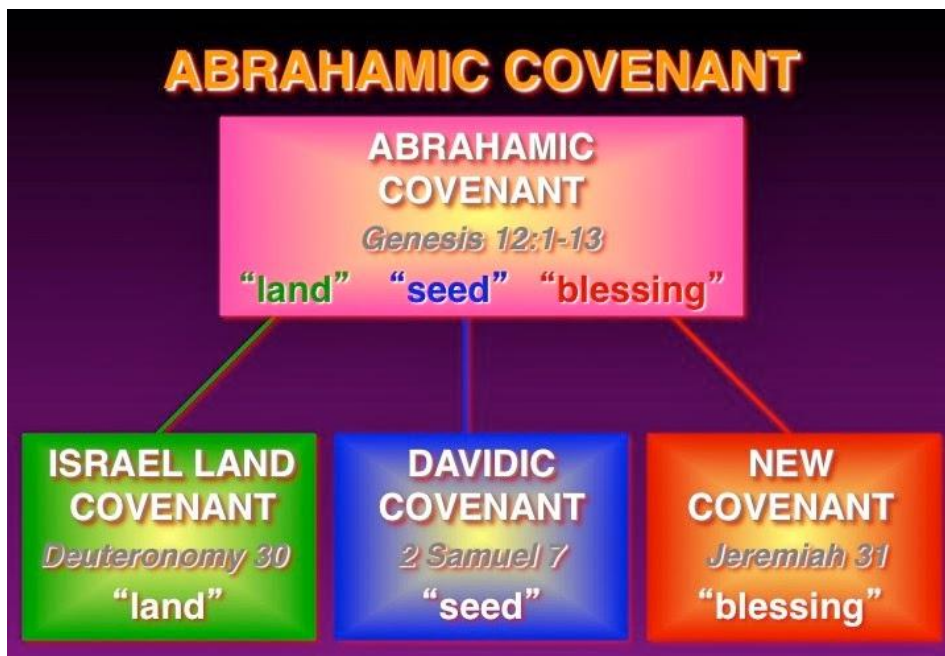
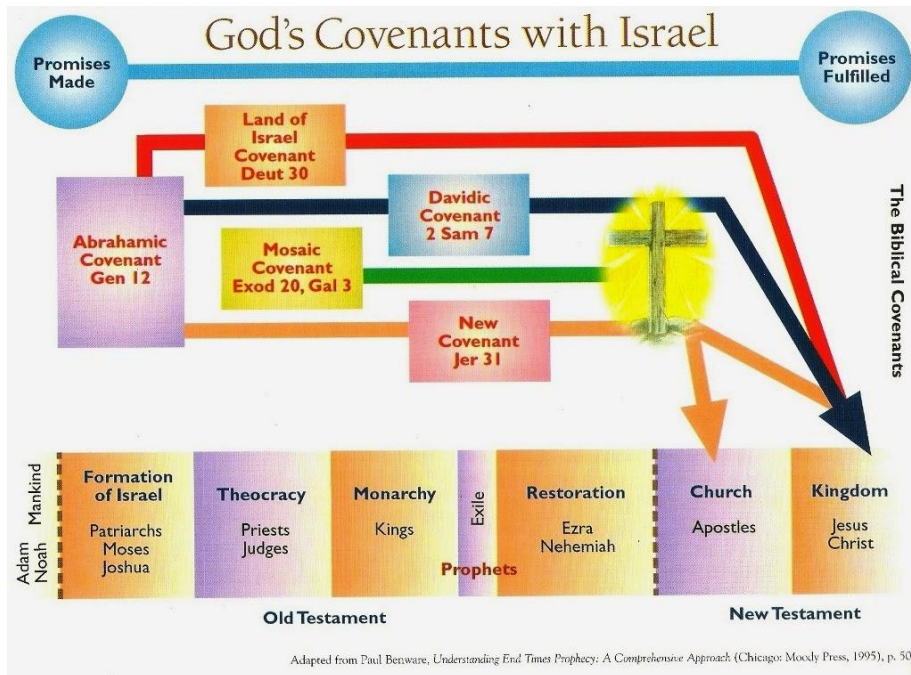
Genesis 15:18-21 ~ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

Genesis 17:7-8 ~ I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.



- Land is an important part of God's kingdom purposes and is essential to any definition of dominion and nationhood
- The very creation of the heavens and earth was to provide a place in which the reigning purposes of God for mankind would be carried out
- Man was tasked with ruling over the earth in general and the land of the Garden of Eden in particular
- When man fell, the ground worked against him and he was expelled from the first geographical area he was called to work in
- But the fall of Adam did not remove the necessity of a geographical region as the foundation of man's functioning
- So as God's plans for redemption narrow on Abraham and Israel, land will be of great importance and will become the focus of God's reigning activity on the earth

- In that sense, the Palestinian Covenant is part of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant and an amplification of the land aspect of it
- This covenant reaffirmed God's commitment to give the land area to Israel



- Since this covenant is an elaboration of the AC, it is also unconditional
- "There are no conditions attached to its *ultimate* fulfillment. As with the unconditional Abrahamic covenant, disobedience and failure could well bring the loss of blessing but could never annul the covenant. The Old Testament clearly records Israel's sins that caused them to lose the right to live on the land. But...even these failures did not set the covenant aside. Any conditions related to the receiving or losing of blessing, not to ultimate fulfillment."¹

¹ Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, 52.

- This covenant is also an everlasting covenant in that the land is given as an everlasting possession to Abraham's descendants
- But, owning the land and actually living in the land and enjoying its blessings are significantly different
- "The title deed of Canaan was given to Abraham and thus to his descendants. They own the land. Because the covenant is an unconditional one, Israel will eventually live on all the land given under the covenant. That will occur when Messiah comes. In the meantime, however, the Jews can temporarily lose the privilege of actually dwelling in the land through disobedience. But their disobedience, as in the Old Testament, does not permanently set aside the provisions of the covenant."²

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COVENANT

- The structure of this covenant is similar to that of the Mosaic Covenant...in the form of a suzerain/vassal treaty:
 - Preamble (Deut 1:1-5)
 - Historical Prologue (Deut 1:6-4:49) – reviews the goodness of the king to his subjects
 - General Stipulations (Deut 5:1-11:32) – included the demands of the vassals in exchange for the good favor of the sovereign
 - Specific Stipulations (Deut 12:1-26:15) – Included the demands of the vassals in exchange for the good favor of the sovereign
 - Blessings and Curses (Deut 27:1-28:68)
 - Witnesses (Deut 30:19; 31:19)

The Historical Prologue (1:6-4:49)

- This section narrates Israel's journey from Sinai to the plains of Moab, especially noting instances of Israel's rebellion and God's righteous retribution
- The purpose of the section is to make clear God's claim on his people
- Despite their disobedience, God had not forsaken them and had brought them to the present time and place in order that he might reaffirm his covenant with them

The General Stipulations (5:1-11:32)

- This section spells out the principles that govern the relationship between the parties of the covenant
- It clarifies who the Great King is, what he has already done and will do for his people, and how the people are to respond

The 10 Commandments

- Repeated in Deuteronomy 5:1-21

The Great Shema

Deuteronomy 6:4 ~ Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

- This verse is known as the *shema* from the Hebrew word "hear" at the beginning of the sentence
- This is the foundational statement of the doctrine of monotheism found in the Hebrew religion

² Ibid.

- It is this statement that the Jewish worshipper wears on his body in prayer (in phylacteries) and places on the doorpost of his home – in obedience to the instruction of Deut 6:5-9
- This verse does not exclude the concept of the Trinity
 - The word used for “one” in this passage does not mean “singleness” but “unity”
 - The same word is used in Gen 2:24 where the husband and wife in marriage are said to be “one flesh”
 - In Numbers 13:23 it refers to one cluster of grapes – unity and diversity

The Priority of the Family

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 ~ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- Deuteronomy lays great stress not on the priests or other religious leaders, but on the parents as the ones responsible for their children’s spiritual education
- The starting point for passing on true spirituality to the next generation was for parents to have an all-consuming love for God themselves
- God’s people were responsible to meditate on these commandments, to keep them in their hearts
- This enabled them to understand the Law and to apply it correctly...then the parents were in a position to impress them on their children’s hearts also
- The moral and biblical education of the children was accomplished best not in a formal teaching period each day but when the parents made God and his Word the natural topic of a conversation throughout all of life

The Holy War

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 ~ When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, 2 and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

- The point of this command is that Israel was to destroy all the nations within the borders of Canaan
- Was this command to destroy them totally (men, women, and children) unethical for a loving God?
 1. They deserved to die for their sin...studies of their religion, literature, and archeological remains reveal that the Canaanites were one of the most morally corrupt peoples on the earth at that time
 2. They persisted in their hatred of God...had they repented, God would have spared them as he spared the Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah...yet repentance seemed to be out of the question for these people
 3. The Canaanites constituted a moral cancer (cf. 20:17-18; Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:12-13) and even one of them – even a child left alive – had the potential of introducing idolatry and immorality which would spread rapidly among the Israelites and bring about their downfall
 4. The command to engage in holy war is, not applicable today since at the present time God is not working through one nation to set up his kingdom on the earth

The Specific Stipulations (12:1-26:15)

- This section provides specific case laws that are grounded in the Shema and the commandments of the Decalogue and are intended to be applied to various situations in life

The Test for False Prophets

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 ~ If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

- Miraculous signs alone were never meant to be a test of truth because miracles happen in many religions because Satan uses false religions and false prophets to deceive the world
- Moses warns the people that the standard for truth must never be “a sign or a wonder”
- The standard must be the Word of God...if a prophet’s message contradicted God’s command (13:4), the people were to trust God and his Word rather than their experience of a miracle
- God was so serious about this sin that he required the death penalty as punishment (13:5)

Rules for Kings

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 ~ When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. 16 Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' 17 He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. 18 Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel

A KING’S “NO NO’S”	A KINGS “DO’S”
1) Don’t multiply horses	1) Write out God’s Word
2) Don’t multiply wives	2) Read God’s Word daily
3) Don’t multiply riches	3) Learn to fear the Lord
	4) Obey God’s commandments
	5) Be humble with other Israelites

Future Prophet “like me”

Deuteronomy 18:15 ~ The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

- The basis of the office is Israel’s request for a mediator at Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19; 20:19-21)...fearing to stand in God’s presence, the people asked Moses to go before the Lord and return God’s words to them
- The prophet was to be like Moses in that he would give God’s word to the people
- These verses have both a near and a far fulfillment: 1) The near fulfillment was in all the prophets of Israel (Isaiah-Malachi); 2) The ultimate fulfillment was in Jesus Christ

Regulations of Divorce and Remarriage

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ~ When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife, 3 and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, 4 then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

- Here Moses is placing restriction upon divorce and remarriage...he is not instituting divorce or even approving it...rather he is regulating it, trying to stop the rampant abuse of the practice
- The background of this command was widespread and frivolous divorce in the ancient Near East
- Regulations for this passage:
 - The man had to give his wife a certificate of divorce (v. 1)
 - If after being divorced she remarried (v. 2) and then her second husband divorced her or died (v. 3) her first husband was not permitted to remarry her
- The point: Illegitimate divorce proliferates adultery

Blessings and Cursings (27:1-28:68)

- This section provides promises of blessing for obedience to the covenant stipulations and promises of curses or punishments for covenant disloyalty
- It closely parallels Leviticus 26 in format
- The nature of the blessings is characterized by agricultural prosperity, fruitfulness in reproduction, and exaltation above the other nations
- Conversely, the nature of the curses is characterized by agricultural failure, lack of reproduction, disease, and constant dread of enemies...the ultimate curse would be exile from the land and separation from God (28:49-68)
- Notice that the cursings anticipated the dispersions by Assyria and Babylon (28:25, 32, 36, 48-52, 64)

THE STATEMENT OF THE COVENANT

- The cursings of Deut 28 set the stage for the Palestinian Covenant in chapters 29-30

Deuteronomy 29:1 ~ These are the words of the **covenant** which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.

Deuteronomy 29:9 ~ So keep the words of **this covenant** to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

Deuteronomy 29:10, 12, 14 ~ You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel...12 that you may enter into the **covenant** with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today...14 Now not with you alone am I making this **covenant** and this oath,

- When all the calamities associated with Israel's disobedience have taken place, God promises that Israel will once again possess the land...promises found within the Palestinian Covenant

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 ~ So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God **will** restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and **will** gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God **will** gather you, and from there He **will** bring you back. 5 The LORD your God **will** bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He **will** prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 Moreover the LORD your God **will** circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. 7 The LORD your God **will** inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8 And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. 9 Then the LORD your God **will** prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; 10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

- The unconditional nature of this covenant is evident in the frequent use of "will" in this passage

- Notice the special promises God makes to Israel in this covenant:
 - God promised to gather the scattered Israelites from all over the world (vv. 3-4)
 - God promised to bring them back into the land he had promised to their ancestors (v. 5)
 - God promised to regenerate the Israelites of that time and their descendants by circumcising their hearts so that they would love him totally (v. 6)
 - God promised to judge Israel's enemies (v. 7)
 - God promised that the Israelites would obey God and that God would prosper them in their obedience (vv. 8-9)
- These unconditional promises of God to Israel demonstrate that the ultimate outcome of this covenant does not depend on Israel and its obedience, but instead it depends on God and his faithfulness
- The Palestinian Covenant focuses on what God is going to do more than what Israel is supposed to do
- While Israel's prosperity is closely tied to her obedience to God's commands, and they will still be punished for their disobedience to God, there is coming a day when God will return them to the land (the full extent of the land as outlined in Genesis 15:18-21), and they will possess it, and God will bless them forever
- Thus, this covenant is again reaffirming the Abrahamic Covenant in that someday the seed of Abraham will possess the Promised Land forever

THE SATISFACTION OF THE COVENANT

- A significant question pertaining to the Palestinian Covenant is: Has it been fulfilled already?
- Many amillenialists say it has already been fulfilled in that they believe that the land promises given to Abraham's physical descendants were literally fulfilled in the OT
- Also some amillenialists believe that there is a future fulfillment of this covenant; however, they spiritualize many OT passages and say that the fulfillment is in heaven, not on the earth...in the form of a "better country – a heavenly one" (Heb 11:8-16) (an approach that sets aside the literal interpretation and employs a spiritual interpretation of prophecy)
- But a literal understanding of the promises in the Palestinian Covenant argues that there is a future possessing of the land by the nation of Israel
- Thus, the Palestinian Covenant was not fulfilled at any time in the OT and is, therefore, a future eschatological event finding fulfillment in Israel's appropriation of the land in the millennial kingdom
- A number of reasons exist for this:
 1. The promised restoration of Israel to the land would not happen until all the blessings and curses promised them were fulfilled (Deut 30:1) and we know that Israel as a nation rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah and was once again cursed and cut off from the land when the Romans conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 2. Second, one of the promises in this covenant is that God would circumcise their hearts (Deut 30:6) so that they and their descendants would obey him (Deut 30:8)...these same promises are repeated in Jeremiah 32:36-44 and Ezekiel 36:22-38 and are part of the blessings and promises of the New Covenant, but they have not come to a place of repentance and knowledge of Messiah yet.
 3. "This covenant foretold the worldwide dispersion of Israel, their eventual restoration back to the land that was given to their fathers, and their conversion as a nation. The nation that would be dispersed throughout the world because of their disobedience is the same nation that would be regathered back to the land as a redeemed people. That nation is Israel. Literal Israel will someday turn in faith to the Lord, and He will save them and fulfill completely and literally His covenant commitments."³

³ Ibid., 57.