

Introduction to Covenants & the Abrahamic covenants

The idea of the covenant between individuals was dominant in the life of the ancient near East. It is often seen in the Old Testament.

Covenants made between men (Gen 21:32) between groups (1 Samuel 11:1); and between nations (Ex 23:32) were common. The covenant was an agreement between two parties that bound them together with a common interests and responsibilities. It was most serious and scared to enter into a covenant. And covenants usually included blessings and cursings, blessings upon the one who fulfilled his parts in the covenants and cursings on the one who broke his oath

When God made a covenant with Abraham, therefore it was not a strange or unusual event. One did not usually enter into a covenant with the Almighty God. But Abraham would be thoroughly familiar with the idea of a covenants and the making of a covenants. The record of covenant made with Abraham is found in Genesis 12:1-3; 17; 15; 22; and 22:18.

The basic provisions of the Abraham a covenants

Personal blessing for Abraham

God promised that Abraham would be the father of a great nation, have a multitude of descendants, and prosper materially (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:6). These promises to Abraham have been literally fulfilled.

Blessing to Abraham's Descendants

This aspect of the covenant does not apply to all of Abraham's physical descendants, but only to those who came through the line of Isaac and

Jacob. This covenant was passed on from Abraham to Isaac only and then to Jacob (Gen 6; 14; 12).

As with Abraham, these descendants all promised greatness as a nation (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5). Also, they were guaranteed the land of Canaan as their own (Gen 12:7; 17; 8; 17:8). The area was described generally in Genesis 15: 18 as extending from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

Universal blessing

The covenant also looked beyond of the line of Abraham to include all mankind: “and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3). It was not God's intention to isolate Israel from the nations, but rather that Israel would be worldwide blessing (Gen 18:18; 18; 4). The ultimate fulfillment of this part of the covenant with the in “the seed” of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). This aspect of the covenant has been, is being, and will be fulfilled.

Two Types of Covenants

There are two types of covenants in the Bible: conditional and unconditional. It is important to distinguish between these two types of covenants in order to have a clear picture of what the Bible teaches.

Conditional Covenants

A conditional covenant is a two-sided covenant in which a proposal of God to man is characterized by the formula: if you will, then I will, whereby God promises to grant special blessings to man providing man fulfills certain conditions contained in the covenant. Man's failure to do so often results in punishment. Thus one's response to the covenant agreement brings either blessings or cursings. The blessings are

secured by obedience and man must meet his conditions before God will meet His.

Unconditional Covenants

An unconditional covenant is a one-sided covenant and is a sovereign act of God whereby He unconditionally obligates Himself to bring to pass definite blessings and conditions for the covenanted people. This covenant is characterized by the formula: I will, which declares God's determination to do as He promises. Blessings are secured by the grace of God. There may be conditions in the covenant by which God requests the covenanted one to fulfill out of gratitude, but they are not themselves the basis of God's fulfilling His promises.

The nature of the Abraham a covenants

It is an everlasting covenant

Several times God declared that this covenant was to be everlasting (Gen 13:15; 8, 13, 19). No time limit was placed on this covenant relationship. Israel was to remain a nation forever and would remain in their relationship with the Lord (Jer 31:36).

It is an unconditional covenants

Nearly all covenants made between men or nation whether conditional and character, that is, certain conditions had to be fulfilled by one participant in the covenant before the other participant was obligated to do his part. For example, in the Mosaic covenant God promised to bless Israel, if she obeyed his commandments.

The Abrahamic covenant, however, was unconditional. God committed himself to do certain things for Abraham and the nation that would come from him. Failure or unbelief when Abraham's or Israel's part

would not sit aside this covenant. This is an extremely critical point in interpreting numerous passages of Scripture that have to do with Israel's position of the land of Canaan, her continuance as a nation, the reign of her Messiah on the Earth, and have future redemption. The unconditional character of this covenant is undoubtedly one of the most important keys in Bible interpretation.

As the Abrahamic covenant was repeated and enlarged, there were no conditions attached to it. After repeating the promise to Abraham in Genesis 13, God confirms to His promise in Genesis 15, when he alone passes between the pieces of the sacrificial animals. Later in Genesis 17 God commanded that circumcision be part of the covenant not as condition, but rather as a sign when the covenant was confirmed to Isaac and into Jacob, no conditions were attached. As time went on, even when Israel was unfaithful to the covenant, God remained faithful (Jer 31:36).

Gen 12: 1-3 Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

History tells us that in the days of Abraham and before, when two parties joined efforts into the signing of a covenant, animals would be used as a witness to them and their adherence to that covenant. The two parties would gather a number of specific animals, sacrifice them and arrange their carcasses on the ground in some fashion, creating a

path through which both parties would pass together as they swore to uphold their end of the contract lest they receive the fate of these animals for any breach of that covenant for which they would be responsible..

In the case of Abraham, he prepared the animals and made a path, but when the moment came for God to ratify the covenant, the Lord put Abraham into a deep sleep; and only His glory went through the animals. Most of the fifteenth chapter of the book of Genesis speaks of this event:

Read Gen 15: 1-18

The second important aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant is the fact that since God was the only one to walk between the animal halves when He ratified the covenant with Abraham, and since God never changes His mind, the Abrahamic Covenant is eternal. It only depends on God fulfilling His part and not on Abraham.

From the introductory passage in Genesis 12:1-3 and subsequent passages listed above, we can deduce several clauses that are vital to the understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant.

- Abraham was to be the father of a great nation, and that is of course, the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:2; 15:5).
- He was promised a Land for his nation; specifically, the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1, 7; 15:18-21; 17:8).
- Abraham himself was to be greatly blessed (Gen. 12:2b).

- Abraham was to be a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2d).
- Those who bless Israel will be blessed (Gen. 12:3a).
- The one who curses Israel will be cursed (Gen.12:3b).
- In Abraham all will be blessed (Gen. 12:3c).
- Other nations in addition to Israel would come from Abraham (Gen. 17:3 4, 6)
- Circumcision was to be the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:9-14).

These clauses always fall into one of three categories regarding to whom they relate: Abraham, Israel as a whole, or the Gentiles.

Abraham is the father of a great nation (Israel). He was to possess ALL the Land promised to him by God. He would be greatly blessed and would be a blessing to others. To this day Abraham's name is greatly recognized by all three major world religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Israel as a nation was promised greatness and a myriad of descendants as well as the whole Promised Land. It is important to understand that the mere fact that some of the promises were made to BOTH Abraham and his descendants proves that some of these blessings have yet to be fulfilled, which points to fulfillment in the future age of the Messianic Kingdom.

The Gentiles were promised a blessing for blessing the Jewish people as well as a curse for cursing the Jewish people. We must note that the Abrahamic Covenant contains both physical and spiritual promises for the Jewish people; but as it pertains to the Gentiles, only the spiritual

promises apply. The physical promises such as the Land or circumcision apply only to the Jewish people.

Each covenant made by God calls us to consider any requirements or conditions attached to it.

Other Biblical Covenants

The first the covenants given all enlargements of the Abrahamic covenant, as such are also eternal and unconditional. These sub covenants further define the provision originally given to Abraham.

Noah Covenant (Unconditional)

Centuries before the time of Abraham, God made a covenant with Noah, assuring Noah that He would never again destroy the world by flood (Gen. 9). Noah lived at a time when the whole earth was filled with violence and corruption – yet Noah did not allow the evil standards of his day to rob him of fellowship with God. He stood out as the only one who "walked with God" (Gen. 6:9), as was also true of his great-grandfather Enoch (Gen. 5:22). "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9). The Lord singled out Noah from among all his contemporaries and chose him as the man to accomplish a great work.

When God saw the wickedness that prevailed in the world (Gen. 6:5), He told Noah of His intention to destroy the ancient world by a universal flood. God instructed Noah to build an ark (a large barge) in which he and his family would survive the universal deluge. Noah believed God and "according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Gen. 6:22).

Noah is listed among the heroes of faith. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7).

With steadfast confidence in God, Noah started building the ark. During this time, Noah continued to preach God's judgment and mercy, warning the ungodly of their approaching doom. Peter reminds us of how God "did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5).

Noah preached for 120 years, apparently without any converts. At the end of that time, "when ... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah ... eight souls were saved through water" (1 Pet. 3:20).

People continued in their evil ways and ignored his pleadings and warnings until the flood overtook them. When the ark was ready, Noah entered in with all kinds of animals "and the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7:16), cut off completely from the rest of mankind.

Noah was grateful to the Lord who had delivered him from the flood. After the flood, he built an altar to God (Gen. 8:20) and made a sacrifice, which was accepted graciously, for in it "the Lord smelled a soothing aroma" (Gen. 8:21). The Lord promised Noah and his descendants that He would never destroy the world again with a universal flood (Gen. 9:15). The Lord made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his descendants, establishing the rainbow as the sign of His promise (Gen. 9:1-17).

Another part of the covenant involved the sanctity of human life, i.e., that "whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6). Every time we see a rainbow today we are reminded of that agreement -- this covenant has not been done away with. As long as God still sends rainbows after a storm, capital punishment will still be a part of God's law for the human race.

The Palestinian covenants

This covenant focused on Israel's right to the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that the land was his forever in (Genesis 13:15; 17:8). The Palestinian covenant confirmed that the title deed did belong to Israel. But it also made clear that even though they owned the land, they could be removed from it because of sin. The covenant also promised that, in the future, Israel would be converted and restored to the land. (Deut 10; Lev 26:14, 42; Num 12; Ezek 36:24-36).

The Davidic covenants

This covenant develops the original promises having to do with dynasty, nation, and the throne. The promises of the seed of Abraham were developed into the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 16; Ps 36; Jer 22)

David Covenant (Unconditional), 2 Sam 7:4-16; 1 Chron 17:3-15. God promised David an unending, royal lineage, throne, and kingdom. Though God reserved the right to interrupt the actual reign of David's sons for chastisement, the permanency of the covenant cannot be broken. The Abrahamic covenant guaranteed the nation and the land. The Davidic covenant guarantees an everlasting Throne, King and Kingdom connected to that people (the Jews) and the land. Jesus Christ, the Son of David, is the rightful heir of this promised Throne

(Matt 2:2; Lk. 1:32-33) and on it He will reign over this literal, promised, earthly, future Messianic Kingdom from Jerusalem at His second advent.

The new covenant

This covenant focuses on the spiritual blessing of redemption of Israel. It goes beyond Israel, however, it includes the Gentiles as well: "and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen12:3) (Jer 40; Luke 22:20; Heb 8:6-13.)

The Mosaic covenant

Mosaic Covenant (Conditional), Exodus. 20:1 – 31:18 The Israelites moved to Egypt during the time of Joseph. A new Pharaoh came upon the scene and turned the Israelites into common slaves. The people cried out to the God of their forefathers. "So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:24). After a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt, God brought the Israelites out "of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand" (Exodus 32:11).

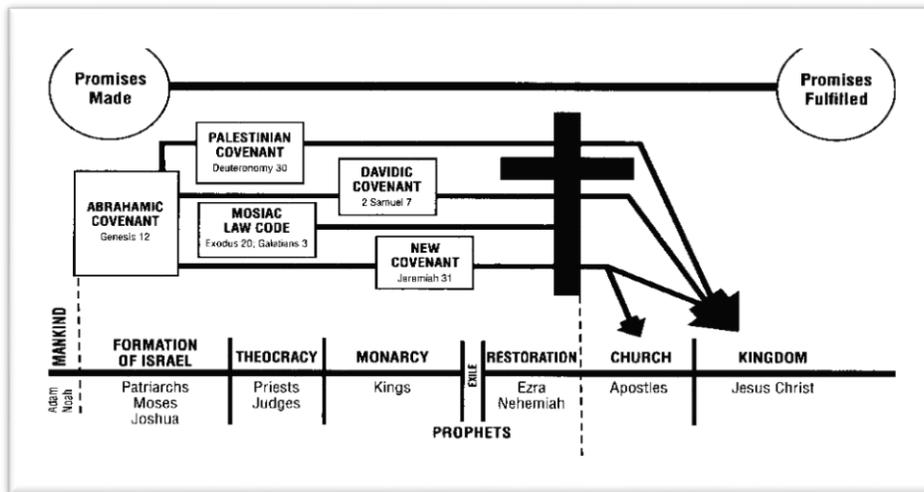
Three months after leaving the land of Egypt, the children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1). God promised to make a covenant with the Israelites (Exodus 19:3-6). Before they even knew the conditions of the contract, the people agreed to abide by whatever God said (Exodus 19:8).

This covenant was between God and the people of Israel -- you and I are not a party in this contract (and never have been). The Ten

Commandments are the foundation of the covenant, but they are not the entirety of it.

After giving the first ten commands, the people asked the Lord to speak no more (Exodus 20:18-20). Moses then drew near to the presence of God to hear the rest of the covenant (Exodus 20:21). After receiving the Law, Moses spoke the words of the covenant to all of the people, and the people agreed to obey (Exodus 24:4).

Moses then wrote the conditions of the covenant down, offered sacrifices to God, and then sprinkled both the book and the people with blood to seal the covenant (Exodus 24:8). This covenant between God and the people of Israel was temporary – God promised a day when He would make a new covenant, not only with Israel but also with all mankind. "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:31-34).



God's Covenants with Israel

Stand up for the truth

Winston Churchill would caution us that "acts of appeasement today will have to be remedied at far greater cost and remorse tomorrow."

A strong, secure Israel is in the national interest of the United States politically, militarily, economically, socially, and spiritually. It is important politically as Israel is the only democratic state in the Middle East. It is important militarily as a front line defense against radical Islamic fundamentalism. It is important economically because a strong Israel deters Arab aggression which stabilizes oil prices. It is important socially as it shares our values of freedom and the sanctity of human life. It is important spiritually in regard to Judeo-Christian ethics that serve as the foundation of Western culture

If Israel succumbs to radical, Islamic fundamentalism, American Judeo-Christian culture, synagogues and churches will be threatened. Today, it's Joseph's tomb that is desecrated. Tomorrow, it's our synagogues and churches. For these reasons, it is important that America stand for a strong, secure Israel with Jerusalem as its undivided capital.

American citizens, both Jews and Christians, need to enlist as soldiers in the battle for truth regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. This conflict is spiritual in nature, and the final outcome is clear. The God of the Bible made an everlasting covenant with the Jewish people, and He is a faithful covenant-keeping God (Genesis 17).

Yet, a famous passage in the Bible says to "pray for [actively seek the peace of] Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6). Christian and Jewish supporters of Israel are not anti-Arab. The battle for truth is not against the Arab people. God loves all people the same, but He has different plans and purposes for different people groups.

The root cause of the conflict in the Middle East is due to the fact that radical Islamic Arab leaders are seeking to establish and extend themselves beyond the limits God has set for them. When they recognize God's divine order for Israel and the nations, there will be peace.

David Ben-Gurion expressed the motivation and expectation for joining this battle for truth in his statement on November 29, 1947 regarding the United Nations partition of Palestine. He said, "I know that God promised all of Palestine to the children of Israel. I do not know what borders He set. I believe they are wider than the ones proposed. If God will keep His promise in His own time, our business as poor humans who live in a difficult age is to save as much as we can of the remnants of Israel."

British military officer Captain Orde Wingate played an important role in the establishment of the state of Israel. When asked by his Jewish friends why he supported them, he said, "There is only one important book on the subject, the Bible, and I have read it thoroughly. This is the

cause of your survival. I count it as my privilege to help you fight your battle. To that purpose I want to devote my life . I shall fight with you against any of these influences. But remember that it is your battle. My part, which I say I feel to be a privilege, is only to help you."

As "people of the Book," Jews and Christians must look to the Bible as the standard of truth regarding this conflict. And the Bible clearly promises the land to the Jewish people with Jerusalem as their eternal and undivided capital. If one reads the Bible for the plain sense of its meaning, there is no way to misunderstand what it says. We can be confident that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will keep His promise in His own time and way to save the remnant of Israel. Until then, Jews and Christians must join the army of the battle for truth.

There are THREE MAIN FEATURES to the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

(A) First, God promised Abraham LAND. (v.1)

¹ Now the Lord had said to Abram, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that

I will show you. God reiterates this promise of land in Genesis 13:14-18.

And in **Genesis 15:18-21** we find the actual dimensions and boundaries of the land God was giving to Abraham. Even greater detail is given with regards to the boundaries of the land in **Deuteronomy 30:1-10**.

(B) Second, God promised Abraham DESCENDANTS (v.2)

² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing.

Remember at the time God made this covenant with Abraham he was seventy five years old and childless, and yet God promised Abraham He would bless him with many descendants. In **Genesis 17:6** God even promised Abraham that nations and kings would descend from his bloodline.

(C) And third, God promised Abraham that all the nations of the EARTH would be BLESSED through his SEED. (v. 3)

³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Of course the blessing GOD promised ABRAHAM here was that in time JESUS CHRIST, THE MESSIAH, would be born through Abraham’s bloodline and bring salvation throughout the world.

II. The Prophecies Regarding Israel

1. Prophetically speaking, Israel has a predominant role in the prophecies associated with the end of time. It is **absolutely** amazing that many of these prophecies, some of which were given thousands of years ago, have been fulfilled or are being fulfilled in our lifetime.

Let’s consider a few of these

(A) PROPHECY: *Israel would be restored as a NATION.*

Ezekiel 37:10-14 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 593-571 B.C.)

¹⁰So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’

¹¹Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.

¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the Lord.”

Isaiah 43:5; 6 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 701-681 B.C.)

⁵ Fear not, for I *am* with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west;

⁶ I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not keep them back!’ Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth—**FULFILLMENT** The fulfillment of this prophecy began on May 14, 1948 when Jewish leader, David Ben-Gurion signed a Declaration of Independence, which set the stage for Israel to become a sovereign nation for the first time in nearly 2,500 years. Only by the hand of Almighty God could something so incredible happen.

(B) PROPHECY: Israel will prevail over its ENEMIES.

Leviticus 26:7, 8 (NKJV) (prophesied over 1,400 years ago)

⁷ You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.

Isaiah 41:12-14 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 701-681 B.C.)

¹²You shall seek them and not find them—those who contended with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing.

¹³For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'

¹⁴"Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you," says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

FULFILLMENT: Since 1948, when Israel was re-established as a nation, she has been attacked many times by much larger and much more powerful countries, and yet Israel has prevailed in each attack.

Since becoming a nation, Israel and the United States have been very strong allies. In recent years America is showing signs of pulling away from Israel. Prophetically speaking, Israel will survive with or without America's help. The LORD is Israel's greatest ally.

(C) PROPHECY: TREES would once again flourish in Israel.

Isaiah 41:18-20 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 701-681 B.C.)

¹⁸I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

¹⁹I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree *and* the pine And the box tree together,

²⁰That they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.

FULFILLMENT Perhaps you are wondering, “*What’s the big deal about trees flourishing in Israel.*” Actually it is a big deal!

During the 2,500 years the Jewish people were out of the land of promise, the land became very desolate and unproductive. Rain was scarce and the natural water supply in the land was depleted. The number of trees was few and far between.

In the early 1900’s when many Jews began returning to their homeland they began construction on an elaborate irrigation system that brought an abundant water supply throughout the land. During the past one hundred years more than 200 million trees have been planted in Israel. In fact Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a NET GAIN in the number of trees.

(D) PROPHECY: Israel’s deserts would become like the GARDEN of EDEN.

Isaiah 51:3 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 701-681 B.C.)

3 For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

FULFILLMENT Much of this is connected with the construction of the irrigation system mentioned earlier. For decades now, the Jewish people have been irrigating, cultivating and reconditioning their desolate land. Water from the Mediterranean Sea allowed

some of the desert regions of Israel to blossom into beautiful tropical oases.

(E) PROPHECY: Israel's PROSPERITY would surpass that of Israel of old. Ezekiel 36:11 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 593-571 B.C.)

11 I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better *for you* than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord.

FULFILLMENT Today Israel has one of the most thriving economies in the world. In a time when the economy of many nations is very unstable, including America's, the economy of Israel seems to be thriving.

Since Israel became a nation in 1948 her exports have increased by nearly 15,000%. In 1948 Israel's exports totaled \$6 million. Last year their exports jumped to \$90 billion.

It is interesting that Israel's economy is more prosperous and stable than all the nations around her who have some of the largest oil reserves in the world.

(F) PROPHECY: The HEBREW language would be restored.

Zephaniah 3:9 (NKJV) (Prophesied between 640-609 B.C.)

9 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord.

FULFILLMENT The predominant language in Israel today is Hebrew, with Arabic being a second language. Why is this important?

Consider the Jewish people were out of their homeland for nearly 2,500 years. As time passed the Hebrew language became all but

extinct as the Jews picked up the languages of the various nations they scattered to.

After nearly 2,500 years the Hebrew language has been revived and spoken fluently among the Jewish people of today.

Now that's absolutely amazing!

CONCLUSION

What does all this mean? It means the future has arrived! The future is now upon us!

Dr. David Regan of Lamb and Lion Ministries puts it this way

“What we are witnessing is much more than “stage-setting.” God is clearly fulfilling promises He made thousands of years ago to the Jewish people. Jesus is coming soon! The signs of the times attest to that fact. God expects us to take these signs seriously because He is about to pour out His wrath upon this world in the Great Tribulation, and He does not desire that any should perish.”

The fulfillment of prophecy all around us today is God's way of waking us up to the fact that we are living on borrowed time, and we need to use the remaining time to commit ourselves to holiness and evangelism.

Tonight I leave you with the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke, chapter **twenty one and verse twenty eight**

28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

