

The Israel Story

Chapter 3 – Commitment And Identity

“In this episode, we are going to see through the eyes of a psalmist and a prophet how deeply God is committed to doing these things. We are also going to look at how deeply He has identified Himself with both this people and their land.”
(Myers)

1. Read Psalm 105:5-11. These verses confirm the commitment that God has made with His people, Israel. In the first few verses, whose God is He? He is the God of Israel or “*the descendants of Abraham, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob*”. What was Jacob’s name changed to? Israel (Genesis 35:10)
2. The psalmist used several words including covenant to describe God’s commitment to Israel. What words of God’s commitment can you find in these verses? Covenant, oath, promise and decree.
3. What is the lifespan of God’s covenant in verse 8? Forever. How long will His promise last? 1000 generations. To whom did God give the land? Israel. Where was/is the land? Land of Canaan.
4. Jeremiah 31:35–37 says, “*It is the Lord who provides the sun to light the day and the moon and stars to light the night, and who stirs the sea into roaring waves. His name is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, and this is what he says: 36 “I am as likely to reject my people Israel as I am to abolish the laws of nature!” 37 This is what the Lord says: “Just as the heavens cannot be measured and the foundations of the earth cannot be explored, so I will not consider casting them away for the evil they have done. I, the Lord, have spoken!”* Through the prophet, God is sharing the commitment of God for His people Israel. In verse 36, He says that there is a better chance that God will dump the laws of nature. In verse 37, the depth of God’s commitment to Israel cannot be measured.
5. Those that believe Replacement Theology believe that the church has replaced the Jewish people in God’s heart. Based on these verses, how likely was this to

happen? Impossible. In verse 37, God gives us three impossibilities. First, it will be impossible for the heavens to be measured. Second, the entirety of the Earth cannot be explored and third, He will never toss Israel away.

6. A well-known idiom says, "It takes two generations for people to forget their cultural identities." Judges 2:10 says, "*After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.*" This saying always makes me think of King Josiah. When he was king, they were doing a renovation of the Temple and they found the Book of the Law. Duh! It shows that they had forgotten everything about God.
7. Consider that from 70 A.D. to 1948, the Jews were dispersed all over the world. Without God, the Jewish faith would have died. "By May 1948, when Israel declared independence, it already had a population of around 600,000 Jews in Israel." (Google AI) Even with the genocide by Hitler and Nazi Germany, God kept a remnant to come back to Israel. Just as God promised in Ezekiel 36:24 "*For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.*"

"Most people lose their cultural identities after two generations of living in a different country among different people. Two generations ago my father's family moved to the United States from Germany and my mother's family did the same from Russia. Now, two generations later, there is nothing German or Russian about me. Considering Israel's dispersion from their land and scattering among all nations for almost two millennia, the continuation of the Jewish people's unique identity is miraculous." (John Myers)

8. This is not to say that God did not have good reason to dump them and start over with another nation. When I read the story of the exodus out of Egypt, I think, "Come on God, it is time to start over." When I read numerous times in the books of Kings, "This king did evil in the sight of the Lord". Why God did you stay with Israel? 2 Peter 3:9 states, "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*" Thank God, for He has been patient with me and didn't just start over with someone else.

9. Exodus 3:4-6 says, *“4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” 5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.”* In verse 6, God points out that He is *“the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”* God essentially is saying that He is the God of Abraham and his descendants. He doesn’t go any other direction, like the God of Abraham, Ishmael and Esau. Three times in the Bible, God is referred to this way.
10. In case you don’t remember, there were two sects of Jews in the New Testament. The Sadducees did not believe in angels or resurrection. (So they were Sad you see.) The Pharisees believed.
11. Matthew 22:23-34 records an interaction between Jesus and some Sadducees. They were trying to trap Jesus with a question on something that they didn’t even believe in. If a married woman’s husband dies, in those days one of his brothers was to marry her. The Sadducees carried it further and the woman ended up marrying seven brothers in all because in their example each brother died. Their question was “If they were resurrected, then who would the woman be married to in heaven?”
12. Jesus’ answer was *“29 You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”* But this is only part of His response. This part takes care of who the woman would be married to in heaven but Jesus goes further.
13. In Matthew 22:31-32, Jesus says, *“31 But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”* Jesus was proving that there is an afterlife that we will be resurrected but He is also pointing out that God is the God of the Old Testament and the

New Testament. Some believe that there is a difference between the God of the OT and the NT. Jesus says “No way!”

14. God is still the “*God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*”, even today. He is still identified with the fathers of Israel. When we worship God the Father, we are worshipping the same God that Abraham, David and the apostle Paul did.
15. Deuteronomy 12:10–11b says, “*10 But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. 11 Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name.*” God gave the Hebrew nation a specific land for them to live and worship Him. God considered it a place to hang His hat or in this case put His Name. It was not a temporary place but a place for Him to abide with His people, Israel, forever. The specific place was chosen by God.
16. Unfortunately things began to unravel on the human side when Solomon took wives who did not have the same faith in God. God did not want His people to intermarry because His people would be drawn to other religions and false gods. Even then God wanted a personal relationship with His people.
17. God did not punish Solomon and his people until Solomon’s son Rehoboam became king. The punishment was the dividing of Israel into two parts. The northern kingdom was ruled by Jeroboam and Judah was ruled by the line of David. Even before it happened God spoke through the prophet Ahijah. 1 Kings 11:35–36 says, “*35 I will take the kingdom from his son’s hands and give you ten tribes. 36 I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name.*” You can hear the positive way that God speaks of King David and Jerusalem. There is only love and no condemnation in His words. Whose name did God put on Jerusalem? God’s name.

“What does it mean that God has put His name in Jerusalem to abide there forever? Will an archaeologist one day find the letters of God's name in some archaeological

excavation? No, it means that God has not only identified His name with the people group He created, but also with the Land and the city that He gave to them.”
(Myers)

18. John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the whole world and is the God of all people, He has uniquely identified Himself and His name with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, the Jewish people.

Discussion Question:

God has identified Himself and His name with the Jewish people and the Land He promised them. We’re going to answer the following question in the next episode, but before we do, what do you think is the relevance of God doing this? In other words, so what? Consider your last name.