

Jesus' Handling of Israel's Covenants: A Dispensational Study

Occasions When the Lord Jesus (and the Gospels) Affirmed, But Might Have Canceled God's Promises to Abraham, David, and Israel, and Instead of Cancelling, He Extended Some Covenant Benefits to the Gentile Church

The following survey of the life of Christ will seek to demonstrate two major points: (1) Jesus never canceled God's OT covenants with Israel. A decisive recognition of His unwavering faithfulness is necessary to remind covenantal and progressive dispensational friends that those covenants remain in effect as promises limited to Israel herself. These include the land promised in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1, 7; 13:14-15, 17; 15:17-21; 17:8), a promise that distinguishes Dispensationalism from Progressive Dispensationalism in particular.

(2) In response to Israel's rejection, Jesus extended certain benefits of those covenants to people outside ethnic Israel. This was new revelation that the apostles eventually grasped and implemented in more detail, following Jesus' initiative and based on His authority. Paul is specific in Rom 11:12, 15, 17-18a: "I say then, they [i.e., Israel] did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead? . . . But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. . . ." In other words, because of Israel's rejection, Jesus added non-Israeli beneficiaries of certain parts of the covenants, persons whom the OT excluded in its stated covenants, thereby extending the scope of the covenants.

In light of this dual purpose, emphasis will fall on the unchangeableness of God's covenants with Israel and new revelation related to those covenants, new revelation which does not alter the fact that only ethnic Israel can *fulfill* the covenants. To accomplish this purpose, one must view several crucial, chronologically sequenced scenes in the Gospels when Jesus elaborated on certain elements of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. The first ten scenes affirmed Israel's role as exclusive recipients of those promises.

Covenants Affirmed

Scene #1: The angel of the Lord’s promise to Joseph that Mary’s Son would save Israel from their sins (Matt 1:21)¹

In essence, this was an affirmation of the New Covenant’s anticipation of the day when God would “forgive their (i.e., Israel’s) iniquity” and remember “their sin . . . no more” (cf. Jer 31:34).

Scene #2: Genealogical reminders of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants (Matt 1:1-2, 6; Luke 3:32, 34)

Matthew through various literary devices puts special emphasis on the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants,² and Luke also includes both Abraham and David in his genealogy.

Scene #3: Gabriel’s enunciation to Mary (Luke 1:31-33)

This was a clear affirmation of God’s covenant with David.³

Scene #4: Mary’s song of joy in response to Elizabeth emphatically confirmed God’s covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:46-56)

Most clearly, she affirmed the promises that God made to Abraham when she said, “He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever” (Luke 1:55).⁴

¹“Jesus saves his people, beginning with Israel and extended out to all the world, from *their own* sins” (Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis: Concordia, 2006], 107 n. 47, emphasis in the original). Gibbs does not acknowledge that Jesus’ extending of the New Covenant benefit to non-Israelites did not come until later, after Israel’s rejection of her Messiah during His first advent.

²“Matthew proclaims Jesus as Son of David, and that more extensively than the other canonical Gospels. . . . As Matthew will make clear in his narrative, however, Jesus identity as the Son of David does not meet the expectations of the majority of the Jews or of their religious leadership. . . . Matthew proclaims Jesus as the one who comes in response to God’s promises to Israel” (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 76).

³“The Davidic throne is clearly a regal image drawn from the Davidic covenant’s promise of a son, a house, and an everlasting rule (2 Sam. 7:8-16, esp. vv. 13, 16. . . .)” (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 114).

⁴“That God should remember his commitment to Abraham is the theme of Exod 2:24; 32:13; Deut 9:27 and Ps 104[105]:8-11, 42” (John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 35A [Dallas: Word, 1989], 73).

Scene #5: Zechariah’s prophetic song incorporates specific confirmation of God’s covenants with Israel

(Luke 1:67- 79)

In confirming God’s covenants with Israel, Zechariah referred to how the God of Israel “has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant” (Luke 1:68b-69; cf. 2 Sam 7:8-16; Ps 89:3-4), has “remember[ed] His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father” (Luke 1:72b-73; Gen 12:2-3,7; 15:7-21), and has “give[n] to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins” (Luke 1:77; Jer 31:31-34). Clearly, Zechariah had in mind Israel’s heritage in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants.⁵

Scene #6: With assurance, Anna the prophetess spoke to Israelites who were awaiting “the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38)

Along with Simeon, Anna was looking for “the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25). When the infant Jesus came to the Temple, both Simeon and Anna through the Holy Spirit confirmed to Israel her God-given promises of consolation and redemption.⁶ These actions carried implications of the land promises given to Abraham.

Scene #7: In keeping with the land promises included in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, the angel of the Lord instructed Joseph to take the child Jesus back into the land of Israel (Matt 2:20-21).

In spite of danger under the Roman-appointed rulers, it was appropriate that the person who was to lay the foundation for and implement Israel’s covenants should spend His life and ministry in the land that God had promised to the nation.⁷

⁵Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 86, 87, 89.

⁶*Ibid.*, 118, 123.

⁷“Rather, Hosea described a past *history* that was incomplete—the story of a people who failed to achieve the purpose for which God had called them out of Egypt. . . . The second and greater end-time exodus, by the saving power of God, will take place through God’s perfect Son, on behalf of God’s fallen and sinful ‘son’” (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 142, emphasis in the original).

Scene #8: Negative response to John the Baptist's call for repentance.

Old Testament covenants and prophecies brought a two-pronged expectation into the NT regarding the Jewish Messiah, that He would bring worldwide blessing by some day sitting on David's throne, ruling from Jerusalem over a worldwide kingdom (e.g., 2 Samuel 7:8-16; Psalm 89:3-4) and that He would be rejected by His people and eventually suffer death for their sins (e.g., Isa 52:13–53:12). John the Baptist preached two messages that featured the twofold expectation: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2),⁸ confirming the Davidic Covenant, and “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), confirming Israel's rejection of her Messiah and laying the foundation for the New Covenant.⁹ Israelites on earth at the time of the Messiah's first coming did not understand how those seemingly contradictory lines of prophecy would be fulfilled. The Baptist himself illustrated their confusion when he asked Jesus, “Are You the Coming One, or shall we look for someone else?” (Matt 11:3). John expected a conquering Messiah, but at that particular moment was languishing in prison because of his proclamation of Jesus and the coming Davidic kingdom (Matt 11:2).

In preparing the way for the King, John encountered resistance to his cry for repentance, a resistance mounted in particular by the leaders of the Jewish nation at that time. He refused to baptize them because they lacked evidence of the repentance needed in preparation for the King. “But when he [i.e., John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to

⁸Unfortunately, progressive dispensationalist Turner characterizes John's use of βασιλεία as referring to a dynamic rule rather than a concrete realm (David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 43, 107), an amillennialist position. Such a conclusion forces him to give the term two different connotations in the beatitudes of Matt 5:3-10 (“realm” in 5:3, 10 and “kingdom in 5:3-9) (ibid., 43). Giving the term the idea of any present βασιλεία before Jesus during His Galilean ministry began His parabolic ministry ignores the historic setting of the word's usage, when Jesus' listeners were thinking only of a future Davidic kingdom as described in the OT. Bruner is closer to the truth than Turner when he writes, “‘Kingdom’ indicates that God is about to do a big world event and not just a big *individual* event—a cosmic thing and not just a heart thing. What happens when *God* comes is not going to be grapeshot; it is going to be nuclear, a kind of explosion, a reshaping of the earth” (Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary, Volume 1: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 87).

⁹Brown finds in the “lamb of God” designation of Jesus references to both the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and the paschal lamb used in the Jewish Passover (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i–xii)*, Anchor Bible [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966], 60-63). From usage elsewhere in John's Gospel, his conclusion appears to be correct.

yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt 3:7-10). No unrepentant Israelite can benefit from the Abrahamic Covenant. Here was an early hint that fulfillment of prophecies about a suffering Messiah might precede those predicting a reigning Messiah. How could the King come to a people whose leaders stood in rebellion against Him?

Nevertheless, Jesus picked up and continued John’s message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17). The Davidic kingdom prophecies had not been cancelled by first-century Israel’s refusal to repent. They were still valid.

Scene #9: Sabbath controversies with Judaism’s leaders.

Jesus encountered the same problems with Jewish leadership of His day as John the Baptist did. He discovered corruption in Temple worship early in His ministry, and had to use force to cleanse the Temple from such practices (John 2:14-16). He had to engage Jewish leaders in three Sabbath controversies because of their superficial observances of the Sabbath (John 5:1-18; Matt 12:1-8 = Mark 2:23-28 = Luke 6:1-5; Matt 12:9-14 = Mark 3:1-6 = Luke 6:6-11). His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) dwelled on the failures of scribal and Pharisaic righteousness: “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). That sermon gave prerequisites for entering the future kingdom; the leaders did not meet those prerequisites. Even at that point, it must have been evident to the more discerning students of OT prophecy that the Davidic kingdom could not come until Israel’s leaders were ready. Since they refused to repent, the Messiah would probably have to suffer before He could reign.

Yet in that sermon Jesus told the listeners to pray, “Your kingdom come” (Matt 6:10a), and instructed them, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). The corruption in Judaism’s leadership did not terminate promises God had made to Abraham and David. In Jesus’ program, Israel’s promised kingdom was still a confirmed prospect.

Scene #10: Absence of centurion-like faith in Israel.

Shortly after He delivered the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used a Gentile centurion to illustrate the type of response He wanted in Israel. The centurion was convinced of Jesus' authority, and told Jesus so. Commenting on the centurion's conviction, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 8:10-12).

As promised to Abraham, Jesus reiterated that Gentiles along with Abraham's descendants would have a role in the future kingdom. But unbelieving Israelites of His day would not participate. His naming of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continued the verification that, in accord with the Abrahamic promises, Israel will still have a leading role in that future period. Believing national Israel has a place reserved for her in the coming kingdom, but not unbelieving Israelites of Jesus' day or of any day. Thus far, Jesus' contemporary Israelites had not passed the test and would be excluded, but not so with national Israel of the future. A future people of that lineage will respond positively to Jesus' Messiahship and inherit the promises made to Abraham.

Covenants Affirmed and Extended

From a certain point forward in His extensive Galilean ministry, Jesus' teaching took on a new dimension. He added new revelation to the existing covenants that came as a surprise even to His loyal disciples. He began adding truth that related to the well-known promises of God to ethnic Israel.

Scene #11: The unpardonable sin and new light on the Davidic Covenant.

Following His harsh words regarding the exclusion of His contemporaries from the kingdom came another of Jesus' confrontations with scribes and Pharisees, a confrontation occasioned by His healing of a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb. This time, the encounter reached a new level of intensity because the crowds were considering the possibility that Jesus might be the promised Son of David (Matt 12:23). The occasion was more significant because scribes had come all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee to entrap Jesus (Mark 3:22) and were

forced to respond to the crowds.¹⁰ They suggested that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebul and that the ruler of the demons gave Him power to cast out demons (Matt 12:24; Mark 3:23).

In responding to the outlandish accusations of the leaders, Jesus included the claim, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). In 1 Thess 2:16 Paul used the same ἔφθασεν ἐπί combination to refer to arrival in a positional or potential sense of the future eschatological wrath associated with the return of the Messiah (also cf. Luke 11:20).¹¹ A similar observation is appropriate regarding the arrival of the kingdom in conjunction with the personal presence of the King. In some sense the kingdom in a potential or positional sense was already present as Jesus’ parables were about to attest.¹²

At least two factors on this occasion marked the encounter as a turning point in Jesus’ ministry to Israel. (1) One factor was the way He labeled the scribes’ blasphemy as an unforgivable and eternal sin (Matt 12:32; Mark 3:29). They were beyond the reaches of Israel’s New Covenant because they lacked repentance. His contemporary Israelites had failed the test of repentance necessary for those who desired to enter the promised kingdom of David, necessitating an interim period of Israel’s rejection until Israel on earth would repent of her rejection. The following parables tell what the kingdom will look like during the period of Israel’s rejection.

(2) The other factor came later in the same day when Jesus initiated a ministry of teaching the crowds through parables (Mark 3:23; cf. Matt 13:1-3a; Mark 4:1-2; Luke 8:4). Though some evangelical historical-critical approaches question the Gospels’ placement of these parables,¹³ the Gospel of Matthew indicates that His parabolic

¹⁰Hagner, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E.B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 2:335.

¹¹Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” *Expositors’ Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 397-98.

¹²Progressive Dispensationalists call this statement in Matt 12:28 “Matthew’s strongest statement of the presence of the kingdom” (e.g., Turner, *Matthew*, 321), through their failure to grasp the *potential* connotation of ἔφθασεν ἐπί. They go on to indict traditional dispensationalism as “mistaken in its attempt to understand the parables as referring primarily to the future millennium or as teaching the ‘mystery’ of the offered, rejected and postponed kingdom,” stating that “[t]he kingdom is already inaugurated in Matthew” (ibid., 334). Because the kingdom is currently, but present only in a potential sense, Jesus could say later to His Pharisaic opponents, “The kingdom is in your midst” (Luke 17:21).

¹³E.g., Bock says that whether or not anthologies of the parables existed, chronological placement of the parables in Jesus’ ministry is difficult (*Luke 1:1–9:50*, 718). For him anthological groupings of parables make it impossible to assign a distinct setting for each parable (ibid., 742-43). Yet Matthew, contra Bock, places the parables during the Galilean ministry of the Lord, on the same day as the

ministry followed and was triggered by the Jewish leaders' rejection earlier in the same day as when Jesus gave the parables.¹⁴ That parabolic teaching allowed Him to impart new truth to His disciples without casting His pearl before swine, and to hide the new truth from His adversaries plus taking away whatever understanding the adversaries already possessed (Matt 13:11-12; Mark 3:11, 25; Luke 8:10, 18).

Those who may doubt that this was a major turning point in Jesus' incarnate ministry should note His citation of all or portions of Isa 6:9-10 (Matt 13:14-15 = Mark 4:12 = Luke 8:10).¹⁵ The major function of the first five parables, the ones given to the crowds, was to hide or withdraw true understanding of the new truths from the unreceptive. They had committed the unpardonable, eternal sin earlier in the day and needed to be excluded from any benefits that the parables might communicate.

Jesus called the new truths taught through parables "mysteries" ("secrets" in NIV; Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10).¹⁶ In what way were the truths kept secret previously? His listeners expected a kingdom with ideal conditions, including a righteous reign of the promised Messiah, but the parables for the first time presented a new

unpardonable sin (cf. Matt 13:1 with Matt 12:31, 38, and 46).

¹⁴Turner rejects the idea that parabolic teaching about the kingdom was a turning point in Jesus' ministry: "Although Matt. 13 describes something of a turning point, there is no change in the meaning of the kingdom" (ibid., 339). He adds, "Matthew 13 does mark a transition in Jesus' ministry, but it is not abrupt" (ibid.). In response, unbiased observers will note that Jesus' message about the kingdom in the parables differs substantially from what His message about the kingdom has been up to this point in His extended Galilean ministry. Turner's allusion to earlier parabolic teachings by Christ in Matt 7:24-27; 9:15-17; 11:16-19; 12:29, 33 43-45 (ibid) is misguided. His cited examples of earlier parabolic teachings miss completely the uniqueness of the parables of the discourse in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. Neither does either of the Gospel writers apply the term "parable" to any of these earlier uses of figurative language. Turner apparently equates any figurative language with a parable, a false equation.

¹⁵Gundry states plainly the purpose of these parables: "The *ἵνα*-clause tells the purpose of the parables so far as outsiders are concerned. In this clause Jesus says that behind the telling of parables to outsiders lies the purpose of keeping the outsiders from insight, understanding, conversion, and forgiveness" (Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His apology for the Cross* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 198). Elsewhere, he writes, "Mark's 'in order that' makes the seeing yet not perceiving, hearing yet not understanding, the divine, judgmental *purpose* behind Jesus' speaking to nondisciples in parables" (Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982] 256). Regarding the Isa 6:9-10 citation, Nolland notes, "People do exhibit a hardened attitude; Scripture anticipates it; and it takes its place within the larger sweep of the plan and purpose of God" (*Luke 1:1-9:20*, 380). Bock adds, "These parables are introduced as an indication of emerging judgment for rejection . . ." (*Luke 1:1-9:50*, 720), and "The parables represent a warning, since they are present, in part, because of hardness of heart" (ibid., 722). In this historical context, such hardening comes in connection with the unpardonable sin committed earlier in the same day by a representative Jewish leadership.

¹⁶BDAG defines *μυστήριον* as "the unmanifested or private counsel of God, the secret thoughts, plans and dispensations of God . . . which are hidden fr. Human reason, as well as fr. all other comprehension below the divine level, and await either fulfillment or revelation to those for whom they are intended . . ." 662. In responding to the Jesus Seminar's rejection of Luke 8:9-15, Bock responds, "[T]he issue of mystery is not about the kingdom, but about understanding how it works—a big difference" (*Luke 1:1-9:50*, 720). Apparently, Bock has missed the point related to *μυστήριον*. The mystery is about the kingdom. It is a different kingdom from the one prophesied in the OT. It is more about what the kingdom during the period of Israel's rejection is, not just about how the OT kingdom works.

concept of the kingdom according to which only one of four seeds fell on good soil and bore fruit and in which tares grew alongside the wheat that was sown.¹⁷ The concept of evil alongside good in the kingdom was hard for Jesus' disciples to grasp (e.g., Matt 13:36), because the OT had not provided that kind of information about the Davidic kingdom (cf. Ps 89:13-14, 20-23, 20-32). Jesus acknowledged to them that the prophesied OT kingdom would eventually come (Matt 13:43), but only after this unexpected phase of the kingdom caused by Israel's rejection had run its course (cf. Matt 13:41-42). Only then will the kind of kingdom that the OT had led them to expect become a reality, i.e., Daniel's prophecy of the righteous kingdom ("And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever," Dan 12:3; cf. Matt 13:43). The OT promises of a future Davidic kingdom on earth remained unchanged. The new truth advanced in the parables described characteristics of the kingdom as present on earth between the unpardonable sin and the second coming of the King to earth. During this period of Israel's rejection, some morally unprepared people will participate in kingdom activities.¹⁸

Two charts may help refresh one's memory about this series of parables.

¹⁷ Turner (*Matthew*, 334). notes the perspectives of Walvoord (John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* [Chicago: Moody, 1974], 196-97) and Toussaint (Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* [Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1980], 170-76) that Jesus spoke of either the offered, rejected, postponed kingdom or the future millennial kingdom in the parables. As a progressive dispensationalist, Turner rejects both views (*ibid.*). The perspective of this paper is that both the Walvoord and the Toussaint views have elements of truth. The listeners could hardly have failed to make a connection with Davidic kingdom promises in the OT, yet they surely would recognize that what Jesus taught was different from what the OT said about the Davidic kingdom.

¹⁸Regarding the question of the disciples in Matt 13:36, Davies and Allison write, "The title, 'the parable of the weeds', shows us that Matthew is thinking primarily not of the salvation of the righteous but of the wicked and their terrible fate. The subject is not reward but punishment" (W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991], 427). They add, "(1) The parable of the tares and its interpretation cannot . . . be seen in isolation. This is because the discourse in chapter 13 naturally arises out of the opposition narrated in 11.1–13.50. How so? The problem posed by Israel's unexpected behaviour is the mystery of unbelief, and this is a theme addressed in the parable chapter. . . . (2) The parables of the mustard seed and leaven, cut from the same cloth, stand in continuity with the parable of the tares in that they too place God's triumph only in the future. For the present the kingdom is a mysterious hidden entity, whose chief feature seems to be weakness" (*ibid.*, 431-32).

New Revelation about the Kingdom

To the Crowds		
Matt 13:3-9, 18-23	parable of the soils	3/4 of the soil unfruitful
Mark 4:26-29	parable of seed's spontaneous growth	seed will produce fruit in spite of the sleeping sower
Matt 13:24-30, 37-43	parable of the wheat and tares	tares grow along with wheat
Matt 13:31-32	parable of the mustard seed	birds of the air nest
Matt 13:33	parable of the leaven	spread of evil
To the Disciples		
Matt 13:44	parable of hidden treasure	value of understanding hidden truth
Matt 13:45-46	parable of pearl of great value	value of understanding hidden truth
Matt 13:47-50	parable of the dragnet	purging of evil at end of age
Matt 13:51-52	parable of householder	sharing treasure from old and new

Emphasis on New Revelation

Scriptures	Emphasis
Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10	use of the term "mysteries"
Matt 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10	portions of Isa 6:9-10
Matt 13:17	truths hidden from OT prophets
Mark 4:21-22; Luke 8:16-17	hidden to be revealed
Matt 13:35	things hidden from the foundation of the world

Here was new truth about the Davidic kingdom that was hidden to mankind throughout the OT. Who would have envisioned that the kingdom would for a period take on negative proportions? Throughout His discourse in the parables, Jesus acknowledged the hiddenness of much of the new truth about the kingdom (Matt 13:35, 44; Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17). The parables had three purposes: revealing new truth to faithful disciples, hiding new truth from the unfaithful, and removing old truth from the unfaithful (Matt 13:11-12; Mark 4:11, 29; Luke 8: 10, 18). Much of the new truth taught in the parables was not found in the OT (Matt 13:17). Existence of this new kingdom truth alongside old kingdom truth is in evidence in Matt 13:41-42—which speaks of the end of one kingdom, gathering the wicked from that kingdom—and Matt 13:43—which speaks of the Davidic kingdom to follow when ideal

conditions will prevail. The responsibility of Jesus' disciples was to delineate both new and old kingdoms (Matt 13:52).

Scene #12: Reaffirmation of the exclusivity of Israel's claim to covenant benefits (Matt 10:5-6).

When Jesus commissioned the Twelve to spread the message of the Davidic kingdom (Matt 10:7), He specifically forbade them from taking the message to Gentiles, including the Samaritans (Matt 10:5-6). This must have been the kingdom provided for in the OT Davidic Covenant, not in the newly revealed parabolic kingdom. These instructions came in spite of His recent parabolic teaching that the word of the kingdom would eventually go to the whole world (Matt 13:38). This more recent revelation must be the word about the parabolic kingdom (Matt 13:19; i.e., the word of God, Luke 8:11) that He described as "mysteries" in Matthew 13:11.

Scene #13: New Revelation of the Messiah's *ekklēsia* and His coming crucifixion.

Shortly after Christ divulged the secrets about the kingdom and after another blasphemous accusation by His enemies (Matt 9:34) and a final visit to unbelieving Nazareth (Matt 13:54-58 = Mark 6:1-6a), He with His disciples left Galilee to launch a ministry of about six months in regions around Galilee. He devoted this period particularly to training the Twelve. Toward the end of the period, a series of revelatory events near Caesarea-Philippi amplified Jesus' response to Israel's unresponsiveness. Revelation included new information and a renewed confirmation of the OT covenants.

By this time, as seen in Peter's confession (Matt 16:16 = Mark 8:29 = Luke 9:20), the disciples had seen and heard enough to be fully assured of Jesus' Messiahship. Only the disciples had reached this conclusion; the rest of the Israelites identified Him in other ways (Matt 16:13-14 = Mark 8:27-28 = Luke 9:18-19). Based on Peter's pronouncement, Jesus for the first time announced His future goal of building His church (Matt 16:18). He followed this with the first direct announcement of His coming suffering at the hands of the Jerusalem elders, chief priests, and scribes, His execution by them, and His resurrection on the third day (Matt 16:21 = Mark 8:31 = Luke 9:22). The church and His coming passion and resurrection were news to His disciples, who expected Him to set up His

kingdom immediately (cf. Luke 19:11). The OT had spoken specifically about His suffering, but said nothing about a church that Jesus would build. By this series of revelations, He clarified that His fulfillment of suffering Messiah prophecies must come before the fulfillment of the kingdom-reign prophecies, but His disciples were slow to grasp that sequence. They still expected the Davidic kingdom of the OT to be next on the agenda. In fact, Peter reprimanded the Lord for His announcement of coming suffering (Matt 16:22 = Mark 8:32).

Jesus could have used this occasion to tell the disciples that the church would replace Israel in God's program for the future, but He did not. Easily, He could have said that Israel's role in His crucifixion was the end of the line for that nation and that the disciples and a new group of people taken from all nations would supersede Israel and fulfil her promises. Such an announcement as that is conspicuously absent from Jesus' teaching at Caesarea-Philippi and everywhere else. Revelation of His *ekklēsia*, a body not necessarily limited to Israel, was new information that opened a realm of divine promises for a new people.

In case the announcement about His coming death discouraged them regarding God's promises to Israel, He went on to assure them that the OT kingdom promises would eventually be fulfilled. He did this by climbing a high mountain with Peter, James, and John and allowing them to witness His transfiguration and His session with Moses and Elijah (Matt 16:27–17:3 = Mark 8:38–9:4 = Luke 8:26–9:31). Here was a preview of the coming kingdom which, as Peter later attested, came as a reassurance to the disciples: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts” (2 Pet 1:16-19). The prophecy of His occupying the future Davidic throne received dramatic confirmation through this experience of the three even though His immediate future entailed rejection by the Jewish leadership. Israel's primary role in the OT Davidic kingdom was still God's program for the world in the future.

New revelation at this point included indications of a new people of God not necessarily limited to ethnic Israelites.

Scene #14: Pronouncement of Pharisaic blindness and new revelation of non-Jewish sheep.

After the six months with His disciples in regions around Galilee, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. There He experienced a series of clashes that led Jewish leaders to try to stone Him, but Jesus escaped (John 8:59). While Jesus was still in Judea, He healed a demon-possessed man, giving onlookers another opportunity to make a third blasphemous accusation (Luke 11:14-15).

About three months later, Jesus was still in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. His healing of a blind man on the Sabbath once again provoked the anger of the Pharisees and was an occasion for another confrontation. The climax came when Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind” (John 9:39). His Pharisaic listeners correctly interpreted His words as implying that they were spiritually blind (John 9:40-41).

As a sequel to His accusation of blindness, Jesus proceeded to tell the allegory of the Good Shepherd and the thief (John 10:1-18). In the allegory, the man healed of blindness was one of the sheep, who were the godly remnant of Israel (10:4), and the Pharisees were identified with thieves (10:1, 8), the stranger (10:5), and the hireling (10:12-13). The “fold” of which Jesus spoke (10:1, 16) represented corrupt Judaism of Christ’s day from which He had led a believing remnant (10:3). The “other sheep” (10:16) were those of the Gentile world who were to believe in Christ. “One flock” (10:16) anticipated formation of the body of Christ—the church which He purposed to build (Matt 16:18)—composed of the godly remnant of Israel and Gentile believers. Jesus is both the door of access into the flock (10:7, 9) and the Good Shepherd who cares for the flock (10:11, 14). His claim of unity with the Father triggered another attempt by His opponents to stone Him (John 10:30-31). This might have been another opportune time for Jesus to turn His back permanently on national Israel, but He did not.

Here was a plain allegorical prediction of the Shepherd giving His life for non-Israeli sheep.

Scene #15: Jerusalem's role in the Messiah's coming death and in His return.

Jesus left Jerusalem and Judea after this encounter and spent about three months in and around Perea. Back in a territory controlled by Herod Antipas, He was warned by some Pharisees about Herod's desire to kill Him (Luke 13:31). He responded with a lament over Jerusalem and its desolate condition, but acknowledged that some day the city would welcome the one who comes in the name of the Lord (Luke 13:34-35). Word about being welcomed by Israel in the future anticipated His second coming and a reception that will be in sharp contrast to the way Israel's leadership and people treated Jesus at His first coming. Still in the regions in and around Perea and on His way to Jerusalem, sensing that the time was near for a showdown with Israelite leadership, Jesus predicted for the third time His coming arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection (Matt 20:17-19 = Mark 10:32-34 = Luke 18:31-33). Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's suffering had to be fulfilled, but beyond that, He was to be raised from the dead, ascend to heaven, and return to establish His earthly reign with ethnic Israel playing the prominent role. This was new revelation and a confirmation of the OT covenants.

At one point during the period, a rich young ruler came to Jesus to ask about obtaining eternal life (Matt 19:16 = Mark 10:17 = Luke 18:18), a request which Jesus equated to asking how to enter the kingdom of God (Matt 19:23 = Mark 10:23 = Luke 18:24). Jesus spoke of the difficulty rich people will have in entering the kingdom (Matt 19:23 = Mark 10:23 = Luke 18:24) and repeated His warning about difficulty, this time for *anyone* to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:24). His disciples were puzzled at these words and asked, "Who can be saved?" (Matt 19:25 = Mark 10:27 = Luke 18:26). After assuring them that all things are possible for God, He went on to make a striking statement: "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). In the continuing context of Christ's teaching, "the regeneration" spoke of the world's restored condition when the Messiah returns to fulfill the long-anticipated OT promises of the Davidic kingdom on earth. From the statement it is clear that the people of Israel will once again be central objects in God's dealings with the world, and that these twelve disciples (excluding Judas Iscariot, of course) will occupy places of authority over Israel. Following Jesus' shocking statement about how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God, this teaching must have been not only a relief

to them, but also a reassurance of Israel's future role in that kingdom. Jesus did not discontinue the hope of national Israel; He reinforced it.

Scene #16: Further corruption in Israel noted.

Then came the climax in the life of Jesus, often called Passion Week. The week began with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-11 = Mark 11:1-11 = Luke 19:29-44 = John 12:12-19). In unmistakable terms, Jesus on this occasion presented Himself to Israel in the role of Davidic King, not as a suffering servant.¹⁹ He took great pains to demonstrate His office as King of Israel in fulfillment of Zech 9:9, a point that was not missed by the crowds who called Him the Son of David and the King (Matt 21:9 = Mark 11:9-10 = Luke 19:38 = John 12:13, 15). The people as a whole were correct on this point—some day the Messiah will deliver Israel from foreign oppressors²⁰—but they failed by not complying with the spiritual requirement of repentance. The national aspirations of that group of Israelites were not mistaken about Israel's future, but for spiritual reasons were doomed to disappointment, a failure that brought grief to Jesus even in His hour of great public acclaim (Luke 19:41).

John's Gospel locates another significant happening just before the triumphal entry, the anointing of Jesus with very expensive perfume in preparation for His burial (John 12:2-8 = Matt 26:6-13 = Mark 14:3-9). Some of Jesus' disciples, including Judas Iscariot, were upset over the loss of the money that sale of the perfume would have brought, but Jesus commended the woman who anointed His head and feet. Jesus informed the men that "she did it to prepare Me for burial" (Matt 26:12), which must have surprised them greatly on the eve of His triumphal entry.

¹⁹In defense of his position that Jesus did offer the kingdom to Israel at His first coming, Robert Saucy, in disagreement with other progressive dispensationalists, writes, "We suggest that the solution lies in the same realm as other problems related to the sovereign decree of God for history and the responsible actions of mankind. The idea that God could offer humankind a real choice and opportunity, knowing all the while that humankind would fail (and, in fact, having decreed a plan on the basis of that failure), is expressed in other passages of Scripture. In Eden, humankind was given a genuine opportunity to choose holiness, yet Scripture indicates that God's plan already included the sacrifice of Christ 'from the creation of the world' (Rev 13:8; cf. Ac 2:23; 4:28). Thus in this instance, a similar unanswerable question as that related to the offer of the kingdom might be posed: What would have happened to the death of Christ if Adam and Even had not sinned?" (*The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993], 92). Just as the opportunity for Adam and Eve to remain innocent was valid, the offer to Israel of repentance and receiving the kingdom was valid even though the cross was inevitable because of OT prophecy that predicted it.

²⁰Turner's opinion is that the multitude "wrongly model their Messiah after a conquering hero" (*Matthew*, 497). That wrong opinion arises from the assumption that Jesus was modeling a kingdom different from the one promised to David, i.e., "the upside-down values of the kingdom" (ibid.). To Turner "the triumphal entry is shown in reality to be a very tragic entry" (ibid.). In reality, however, Jesus was modeling the kingdom promised to Israel in the OT, a promise that was never broken.

Along with the crowds, they were expecting the Davidic King, but Jesus was speaking about the Messiah whose suffering was necessitated by His unrepentant contemporaries.

After the Triumphal Entry, Jesus illustrated the absence of genuine piety in Israel of His day by cursing the fig tree (Matt 21:18-19a = Mark 11:12-14). Then the next day, He showed Israel's corruption more vividly through His second cleansing of the Temple (Matt 21:12-13 = Mark 11:15-18 = Luke 19:45-48). But anticipation of His rule on the Davidic throne remained intact. The covenants were confirmed.

Scene #17: Jesus' woes pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees.

On Tuesday of Passion Week, in responding to the chief priests', scribes', and elders' challenge of His authority, Jesus gave several parables (Matt 21:28–22:14 = Mark 12:1-12 = Luke 20:9-19). Among the parables were included His statement, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a people [literally, a nation] producing the fruit of it” (Matt 21:43). That is the same fruit, the fruit of repentance, that John's baptism had required earlier (Matt 3:8 = Luke 3:8). When Jesus spoke of taking away the kingdom from “you” (i.e., Israel and her leadership) and giving it to another nation, He meant that the leadership through its failure to repent had forfeited their chance of becoming a part of the promised Davidic kingdom.²¹ Jesus' reference to another “nation” raised the prospect of a future time when Israel would repent and receive the kingdom.

Another action of Jesus, also on Tuesday, showed His wrath toward the scribes and Pharisees. That was His utterance of seven woes, apparently with them present to hear His negative pronouncements against them (Matt 23:1-36 = Mark 12:38-40 = Luke 20:45-47). The final woe condemned them for their false claim of opposing their ancestors who killed the prophets (Matt 23:29-30). Jesus labeled that claim as untrue, saying that His adversaries

²¹This passage and its parallels (cf. Matt 21:33-45 = Mark 12:1-12 = Luke 20:9-19) are among the Scriptures mistakenly used by Robert L. Reymond to demonstrate that ethnic Israel has no claim on the land promises made to Abraham (“Who Really Owns the ‘Holy Land’? Part 2,” *The Trinity Review* 257 [July 2006]: 1-2). What Reymond fails to consider is that in the NT the singular noun *ethnos* when unqualified by other words such as “nation against nation” (Matt 24:7 = Mark 13:8; = Luke 21:10) and “every nation of humankind” (Acts 17 26) usually refers to Israel (BDAG, 276-77). The singular noun frequently refers to Israel (e.g., Luke 7:5; 23:2; John 11:48, 50, 51, 52; Acts 24:2, 10). The plural usually includes those outside Israel. This follows a similar pattern found in the OT. BDAG observes, “In Mt 21:43 ἔθνη (not gentiles) in contrast to the leaders described vv. 23, 45” (ibid., 276), a comment coming under the category of “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions.” Quite obviously, Israel is the nation in view in Matt 21:43.

bore witness against themselves, because they were of the same ilk as their fathers and would not escape the sentence of Gehenna (Matt 23:31-33). He continued, “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” (Matt 23:34-35). In other words, Jesus predicted that they would continue the line of action of their unrepentant fathers and thereby become guilty of the same deeds committed throughout the history of rebellious Israel. He addressed his listeners with the plural personal pronoun “you,” which viewed the listeners as part of a larger group who murdered the righteous throughout the OT period. When He closed His remarks with “all these things shall come upon this generation,” He used “this generation” as interchangeable with the plural “you.” “This generation” therefore is not a chronological term covering forty or so years; it is a qualitative term for unrepentant Israelites on the earth at any given time.²²

Jesus might have terminated God’s promised program for Abraham’s descendants at that point in passion week, but He did not. Instead, using the same collective second-person pronoun, Jesus closed His seven-woe pronouncements with a lament over Jerusalem’s spiritual desolation, and anticipated the day when Israel will repent and say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matt 23:39). At His second advent, Israelites on earth in the promised land of which Jerusalem is the capital will repent and welcome the Messiah. He implied that same anticipation later in the day when He said, “Truly I say to you, this generation [i.e., unrepentant Israel] will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt 24:34). By this He meant that Israel’s rebellion against God would continue until the events of His second coming. At that time, Israel will repent.

As Jesus was leaving the Temple after pronouncing the seven woes, a question of His disciples about the Temple buildings, gave Him occasion to prophesy about the coming destruction of the Temple and other matters related to His return to earth (Matt 24:1-3 = Mark 13:1-4 = Luke 21:5-7). Jesus turned the disciples’ attention to

²²Gundry, *Matthew*, 472.

Israel's future, both their immediate future (Luke 21:12) and their distant future, particularly events in fulfillment of Daniel's seventieth week. In the latter case, He spoke of "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matt 24:8 = Mark 13:8) and "the abomination of desolation" (Matt 24:15 = Mark 13:14; cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) which will immediately precede His return to earth (Matt 24:29-31 = Mark 13:24-27 = Luke 21:25-27). That will be a time of purging for Israel, a time of "Jacob's trouble (or distress)" (Jer 30:7). After the tribulation of those days, the Messiah will return, and a repentant Israel will enjoy her promised supremacy among the nations. From David's earthly throne He will judge the survivors of the "great tribulation" (Matt 25:31).

Scene #18: Some New Covenant benefits extended to outsiders.

On Thursday of Passion Week, Jesus participated with His disciples in the Passover meal. At this time, He identified Judas as the betrayer and predicted Peter's denials. The third of four cups at the Passover meal—taken after the supper—recalled God's promise of Israel's redemption: "I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments" (Exod 6:6). That cup became Jesus' symbol for the shedding of His blood for redemption (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). His use of "many" in speaking of the "blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28; cf. Mark 14:24) in effect extended redemptive benefits of the New Covenant beyond the boundaries of Israel to include Gentiles, a fact that 1 Cor 11:25 confirms as Paul uses the statement in writing about the Lord's Supper to the predominantly Gentile church at Corinth.²³ The fourth and last cup relating to God's promise of Israel's restoration was omitted, as Jesus explained

²³When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He worded His explanation of the cup to include not just Israel, but all people: "for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28); "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20); "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor 11:25). That Jesus by this statement expanded the group to be benefitted by the redemptive aspects of His sacrifice is evident from two features. (1) Jesus said His blood of the covenant—the new covenant, of course—was shed for *many*, not just for Israel. The adjective πολλῶν has a "comprehensive sense" in Matt 26:28 just as it does in Matt 20:28 (W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol 3 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997] 3:95, 474; Donald A. Hagner; *Matthew 14–28*, vol 33B of Word Biblical Commentary, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker [Dallas: Word, 1995] 583, 773). It carries the force of "all" the same as πάντων does in 1 Tim 2:6 (cf. Rom 5:15, 19). In wording His statement this way, Jesus thereby extended certain benefits of the new covenant beyond the boundaries of Israel. (2) Paul quoted Jesus' words instituting the Lord's Supper in writing to a predominantly Gentile church (1 Cor 11:25). Here again is another indication of the extension of certain benefits beyond the scope of national Israel. The applicability of that to Gentiles in the church indicated that Jesus was extending those benefits to others who are not Israelites. The extended benefits of the new covenant were not all-encompassing, but rather pertained only to certain benefits such as the forgiveness of sins. Jesus never extended other benefits such as the land benefits of the Abrahamic covenant to anyone; those belong exclusively to national Israel, the generation of national Israel who at His second coming will embrace Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah.

that He would not drink it until He drinks it in the coming kingdom of God (Matt 26:29 = Mark 14:25 = Luke 22:18). Clearly, Jesus was looking forward to Israel's promised kingdom when he spoke of the future. That Kingdom will come when He comes to fulfill God's promises to Israel.

When He offered His contemporary, fellow-Jews the fulfillment of Abraham's promises, they resisted Him, causing Him to broaden His offer of spiritual blessings to the rest of humanity. Paul notes this transition in beneficiaries: "I say then, they [i.e., Israel] did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" (Rom 11:11-12). Note how Jesus extended redemptive benefits of His death beyond the pale of Israel, but in doing so, He never revoked the OT promises made to the nation.

As Jesus continued His comments at the Last Supper, He delivered to His disciples what has been called "The Upper Room Discourse." Recipients of this discourse were the same (except for Judas Iscariot) as those who received the discourse on Tuesday evening, but the two discourses differed radically from each other. On Tuesday, the disciples were told about the future of national Israel of which they were a part. On Thursday, however, they were addressed as representatives of those who would become believers (i.e., the church) during the period of Jesus' absence (John 13:33, 36; 16:5-7; 17:20). Anticipations of the church, many of whose members are not Israelites, differ markedly from the national aspirations of Israel. That accounts for the differences between the two major discourses delivered during Passion Week.

Prominent in Jesus' words to the apostles who were to become the nucleus of the church on the day of Pentecost were Jesus' promises of the coming of the Spirit (John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13), to whom He also referred as the Helper (Greek, *paraklētos*, John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). This was in fulfillment of "the promise of My Father" (Luke 24:49) given through Jesus later during His post-resurrection ministry (Acts 1:4-5) and fulfilled still later on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23).²⁴ In speaking of the Spirit's ministry to the church beginning on the day of

²⁴Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1220-21.

Pentecost, Jesus was in effect extending to believers outside Israel and to the believing remnant of Israel a benefit of God's New Covenant with Israel (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28; cf. Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13).²⁵ Once again, however, the church does not represent the *fulfillment* of national Israel's New Covenant.

Members of the body of Christ receive certain benefits of the New Covenant as a result of Israel's rejection of the Messiah at His first advent—e.g., forgiveness and the ministry of the Holy Spirit—but only believing Israelites at some time in the future can enjoy the full benefits of that covenant of which the church has only a taste.

Scene #19: Specific instructions to apply new covenant benefits to everyone.

In His post-resurrection ministry Christ told His disciples to teach all nations what He had commended them (Matt 28:20) and that specific New Covenant benefits of forgiveness (Luke 24:47) and reception of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) should be proclaimed to all nations.²⁶

LK 24:45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
 LK 24:46 and He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,
 LK 24:47 and that repentance for **forgiveness of sins** would be proclaimed in His name **to all the nations**, beginning from Jerusalem.
 LK 24:48 "You are witnesses of these things.
 LK 24:49 "And behold, I am sending forth **the promise of My Father** upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Why would Jesus commission the disciples to proclaim such benefits to all the nations unless He had extended some of the benefits of Israel's covenants to Gentiles, specifically to other sheep of the Gentile church which He had promised to build? The promise of forgiven sins and the promise of the Father entailed New Covenant provisions that were extended to all nations.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶“(i) In Matthew ἔθνη certainly can mean those outside Israel (4.15; 6.32; 10.5–6, 18; 15.24; 20.19). But it can also have a comprehensive meaning (24.9, 14; 25:32). . . . When this last is the case the qualifier πᾶς is used; and because πᾶς is used in 28.19, here too the expression has universal sense. (ii) There is no explicit abrogation of the Jewish mission. (iii) In Dan 7.14, which lies behind our verse, the phrase includes Israel. (iv) It is historically implausible that, in Matthew's time and place, there were no longer Christian missionaries to Jews. (v) Inclusion of the Jews harmonizes with the universalism of the rest of the passage. (vi) The comparable πάντα τὰ ἔθνη of Lk 24.47 must include Jews” (W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, eds. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997], 684). Matthew 28:20 “interprets Jesus as the authoritative bringer of revelation” (ibid., 686). “By teaching what Jesus taught, the church becomes an extension of his ministry” (ibid.).

Scene #20: Davidic benefits to Israel and New Covenant benefit to the church confirmed.

Once again, on the day of His ascension, Jesus met with the apostles and gave the following instructions:

^{AC 1:4} Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the **Father had promised**, “Which,” *He said*, “you heard of from Me;

^{AC 1:5} for John baptized with water, but you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.”

^{AC 1:6} So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are **restoring the kingdom to Israel?**”

^{AC 1:7} He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

^{AC 1:8} but you will receive power when **the Holy Spirit** has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even **to the remotest part of the earth.**”

Please note once again that the Davidic Covenant (1:7) promise of Israel’s future kingdom was still valid and that while awaiting that kingdom, the worldwide church for which the apostles were to lay the foundation would enjoy the New Covenant benefit of the Spirit’s ministry (1:5, 8).

Conclusion

The following chart is a chronologically approximate representation of how the Gospels and Jesus handled the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants.

#21—THE MAJOR PERIODS OF CHRIST’S MINISTRY²⁷

		<i>Season</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Time Span</i>	<i>Period Title.</i>	<i>Harmony Sec. Nos</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
		winter	A.D. 26			NIV§18-23	Mt 3:1-12; Mk
		spring			Public Ministry of John	NASB§21-26	1:1-8; Lk 3:1-18
		summer					
		fall					Mt 3:13-4:12
		winter	A.D. 27		End of John’s Ministry and Beginning of Christ’s	NIV§24-36	Mk 1:9-14a
		spring			Scenes 1-10	NASB§27-42	Lk 3:21-4:14a
		summer			Covenants Affirmed		Jn 1:19-4:45
		fall					
		winter	A.D. 28				Mt 4:17-14:12
		spring			Ministry in Galilee	NIV§37-72a	Mk 1:14b-6:30
		summer				NASB§43-103	Lk 4:14b-9:10a
		fall			Scenes #11-20		Jn 4:46-5:47
		winter	A.D. 29		Covenants Affirmed and		
		spring			Extended	NIV§72b-93	Mt 14-18; Mk 6-9; Lk 9; Jn 6-7
		summer			Ministry around Galilee	NASB§104-132	
		fall			Later Judean Ministry	NIV§96a-111 NASB§133-160	Lk 10-13; Jn 7-10
		winter	A.D. 30		Ministry in and around Perea	NIV§112-127b NASB§161-184	Mt 19-20; Mk 10; Lk 14-19; Jn 11
		spring			Passion Week, Resurrection and Ascension	NIV§128a-184	Mt 21-28; Mk 14-16; Lk 20-24; Jn
		summer				NASB§185-259	12-21

²⁷ Adapted from Robert L. Thomas, *Charts of the Gospels and the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 85.

The chart furnishes a birds-eye glimpse of Gospel teachings about God's promises in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. The promises are intertwined with each other, but the blanket truth is that the Lord Jesus extended some benefits of Israel's covenants, particularly those of the New Covenant, to the body of Christ, a body which conspicuously includes both Jewish and Gentile believers.

The NT writers took their cue from the Lord's teaching and found some benefits in Israel's covenants even for Gentile churches to whom they ministered. For example, Paul saw the possibility that the predominantly Gentile Roman church had through faith in Christ become children of Abraham (Rom 4:11, 16). Also, he allowed that Gentile believers in the Corinthian church would some day have authority of judges in the future Davidic kingdom (1 Cor 6:2). Yet the writers were careful never to indicate that anyone besides ethnic Israel could *fulfill* all the promises of any one of these covenants. That fulfillment will come only in conjunction with Israel's repentance at Christ's second advent to this earth.

The remainder of the NT, authored or sponsored by the apostles, expanded upon the details through applying to the church some OT Scriptures which spoke exclusively about Israel. This unusual use of the OT by the NT writers stemmed ultimately from the practice of Christ in His use of the OT, but that is another matter beyond the scope of the present study.