



—*The Children of Promise*—

Dale Rumble

God has promised to fill the earth with His glory. He will do so through His Son, and those who by faith follow His Son. They are children of promise who have separated themselves from everything else to be wholly identified with Him. They are the fruit of God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations through a seed, a descendent of Abraham. This promise was not simply a matter of genealogy but of spiritual life, for the promised seed is the Son of God, Israel's Messiah. Through faith in Him the children of promise become children of God (Galatians 3:16, 29).

*. . . For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, . . . That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the **children of the promise are regarded as descendants.** (Romans 9:6-8)*

All begins in God's covenant made with Abraham (Galatians 3:6-9). Fulfillment of God's promises has over the years been marked by conflict between flesh and the Spirit. However, the glory of God can only come through the Holy Spirit. For that reason, it is necessary to separate what is flesh from what is Spirit. The following ten observations help to distinguish issues of the Spirit and issues of the flesh.

1. When the nation of Israel did not walk righteously in the Abrahamic covenant, God gave to her the covenant of the Law (Galatians 3:15-19). The initial covenant of promise was *not* set aside. The purpose of the Law was not to express God's holiness; it was given to reveal the utter sinfulness of man's heart (Romans 7:5-7; 1 Timothy 1:9-10). Flesh must be seen as flesh!

2. The nation of Israel is not forever lost because she rejected her Messiah at His first advent. After the time of the Gentiles comes to a fulness, the

grace and mercy of God will again touch the nation of Israel and she will be saved (Romans 11:1-27). The church would not be complete without this remnant of the Jewish people.

3. Israel will be saved when she receives the Lord Jesus Christ as her Messiah. At this time, she will recognize that the old covenant of the Law has passed away and is now replaced by the new covenant, in which the laws of God will be put in their minds and written in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 8:7-13). They will then understand that the Law had been given to them as a tutor, to reveal their sin and so prepare them for their Messiah (Galatians 3:24-25).

4. The church did not replace Israel. She is a fulfillment and continuation of the Abrahamic covenant. Christ, head of the church, is the promised seed through whom all of God’s blessings come. He is where the children of promise have their identity.

5. Saved Israel will recognize that her calling by God was irrevocable; the promise made to her in the Abrahamic covenant is now being fulfilled in Messiah, the seed promised to Abraham. The blessings on Gentile nations are being fulfilled through their faith in the Jewish Messiah (Romans 11:11-12; Galatians 3:8, 14, 29). He has fulfilled all of the Abrahamic covenant in the new covenant through His death, burial and resurrection. Since the cross, no one can become a child of God apart from faith in Him.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4)

6. Transition from the old to new covenants involves replacing commitments to observe days, foods, feasts and decrees with the spiritual reality of what these traditions foreshadowed. All were fulfilled in Messiah’s sacrifice. The following are some examples:

OLD COVENANT SHADOW	NEW COVENANT REALITY
Physical Circumcision	Heart Circumcision
Feast of Passover	The Communion Service
Feast of Pentecost	Baptism in the Holy Spirit
The Sabbath	Entering into God’s Rest
Levitical Priesthood	Priesthood of all Believers
The High Priest	The Lord Jesus Christ
Commandments of the Law	The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

7. God's purpose in the new covenant is to bring forth a people of the Spirit for Himself from all nations.

... the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:6)

God has described the children of promise through scripture in the following ways: as a family of sons who are conformed to the image of Christ; as a bride for His Son; as a house or dwelling place for His rest. The Lord and His people are also referred to as the body of Christ or as "one new man." His purpose for them is currently in progress but will not be finished until the return of Christ. At that time, the children of promise receive their glorified bodies; they will then have completed their adoption as sons of God (Romans 8:23). They will no longer have conflict between flesh and the Spirit.

8. After the church was birthed by the Holy Spirit among Jewish believers, it grew rapidly as many Gentiles came to faith in Christ. Over the years that followed many Gentile practices began to change the nature of the church from an organism of the Spirit into hierarchical structures that were patterned after Gentile business and military organizations. This introduced conflicts between flesh and Spirit that continue until today in the church.

Conflict between flesh and Spirit is also manifest in some Messianic congregations. Jewish believers have become children of promise through faith in Messiah, but are put under pressure from leaders to keep the Law. Scripture describes this conflict of two options by the following allegory (Galatians 4:21-29):

- Flesh - Ishmael (son of a bondwoman), Mount Sinai, covenant of the Law, the present Jerusalem in Israel, bondage.
- Spirit - Isaac (son of promise), faith in Messiah, the New Covenant, the New Jerusalem in heaven, freedom.

The conflict comes in the choice between freedom that is offered in Christ, and bondage that comes from an obligation to keep the Law.

9. Children of promise are to conduct themselves according to the new testament. The following are some important guidelines:

- The Lord Jesus Christ must be kept central in all that is taught and done. Their identity is solely in Him.
- Believers are responsible to walk in all new testament truth. There is not one body of truth for Gentiles and another body for Jews.

- Believers are to avoid influences of the world; they are to be led by the Holy Spirit.
- The proper corporate focus is the one body of Christ. Believers should avoid commitments to religious institutions and their agendas.
- Believers must avoid being “lone-rangers.” They are part of a corporate whole and they need none another.
- Believers should avoid anything that weakens unity in the body of Christ. There will be no glory where there is disunity. True unity will preserve the great diversity that exists among the children of promise (John 17:22).

10. The fire of God will test the quality of what believers have built upon the foundation of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Works of the flesh will be burned up. When leaders build local churches to function as an institution rather than as a spiritual body under the headship of Christ, they are building with wood, hay and straw. When Messianic leaders build and teach congregations to express their faith by keeping old covenant traditions and lifestyle in order to preserve their Jewish identity, they also are building with wood, hay and straw. Their identity should be in Messiah, not in the Law. Like Paul, the apostle, Jewish believers need to die to the Law so they can live to God (Galatians 2:19). God sees His people as new creations in the Spirit, not as Jew and Gentile.

A final end-time harvest of souls lies before us. This harvest will be great because God’s glory will rise upon His people (Isaiah 60:1-3). We are living in a gracious day of shaking and restoration as God deals with issues of flesh and Spirit in the church. It is a time of great promise!

—Reference—

1. The Challenge of Messianic Ministry in Israel, A Fountain of Life tract, Dale Rumble.

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