Who Really Has the Right to the Land of Israel?

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Romans 9:6-8

[6]*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they*

[are] not all Israel, which are of Israel: [7]Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, [are they] all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. [8]That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Romans 2:28-29

[28]*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: [29]But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God.*

Introduction

Many people today—especially within the Christian world—hold the firm belief that the modern State of Israel, established in 1948, represents the fulfillment of God's ancient promise to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Jacob, also known as Israel. This belief is often accepted without question, based on the assumption that the people who inhabit the land today are indeed the rightful heirs of that promise.

But let us pause for a moment and consider a scenario—one that raises an important and often overlooked question: **Who actually has the right to claim that land according to Scripture?** And even more fundamentally, **is the land promise still relevant under the New Covenant?**

The Hypothetical: What If Another Group

Claimed the Land?

Imagine this: A group of people from somewhere far outside the Middle East—let's say Europe or Africa—announces that the land of Israel belongs to them by divine right. They arrive in the land, settle in its cities, and declare that they are the true heirs of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Naturally, the world would respond with skepticism. Many would ask:
"Are you descended from Jacob? Can you trace your lineage back to the tribes of Israel? On what basis do you claim this land?"

Most people—especially Bible-believing Christians—would likely reject such a claim. After all, the land was promised to Jacob's descendants, not just to anyone. Without a direct connection to Jacob's bloodline, the claim would seem baseless.

But here's the follow-up question: **What if the same standard were applied to the current people claiming that land today?**

Historical Reality: A Mixed Lineage and a Political Return

The return to Palestine in the early 20th century and the formal establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948 were largely the result of **secular and political efforts**, not divine command or prophetic fulfillment. These efforts were driven by Zionist ideology and supported by world powers—not by national repentance, divine revelation, or covenantal obedience to God.

Many of the people who returned were of **unknown or mixed ancestry**, including:

- **Ashkenazi Jews**, many of whom are believed by scholars—including Israeli historian **Shlomo Sand**—to descend in part from **Khazar converts**, a Turkic people who adopted Judaism in the 8th–9th century.
  (Learn more about Shlomo Sand here: Wikipedia – Shlomo Sand)
- **Edomites**, forcibly converted to Judaism under **John Hyrcanus** around 125 B.C., whose descendants (like Herod the Great) were never of Jacob's bloodline.
- **Secular or atheist Jews**, who may culturally identify with Judaism but **reject the God of the Bible** and do not practice biblical faith.

In addition, it's important to note that **Judaism today is not the same religion practiced by the Israelites under Moses**. Modern Judaism—especially Talmudic or rabbinic Judaism—is largely a **post-Temple development** influenced by Babylonian teachings, oral traditions, and later rabbinic authority. It no longer practices the sacrificial system, Levitical priesthood, or many of the core Torah ordinances God gave to Moses. Thus, claiming continuity with biblical Israel is **not accurate theologically or historically**.

The term **"Jew"** itself, as used in the New Testament, often referred to people who lived in **Judea**—not necessarily those who were ethnically descended from Judah or Jacob. Many who bore the label "Jew" in Jesus' day (and today) did so by geography, culture, or religion—not bloodline.

So, if genealogical descent is required to justify a land claim, then **consistency demands that modern claimants also prove their descent from Jacob**. And if they cannot, how is their claim more legitimate than that of any other people group?

Biblical and Historical Examples of Mixed Lineage

Even in the Old Testament, God's covenant people often had **mixed bloodlines**, further complicating claims of pure descent:

1. Many "Became Jews" Out of Fear

> *"And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." (Esther 8:17, KJV)*

Judaism was something one could **become**, not just something inherited. That alone challenges the idea of exclusive ethnic inheritance.

2. Priestly Lineage Compromised After Babylon

> *"All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children." (Ezra 10:44)*

Even the **priesthood was corrupted** by intermarriage. This led Ezra and Nehemiah to cleanse the leadership—revealing that purity of blood was already compromised.

3. Edomites Were Forced to Convert

> *"He compelled them to be circumcised and to live according to Jewish laws."*
> *—Josephus, Antiquities 13.9.1*

This forced conversion by John Hyrcanus brought **non-Israelites into Jewish identity**, particularly the Edomites, who were later integrated into the Jewish political and religious elite.

4. Judah Married a Canaanite

Judah married the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shuah (Genesis 38:2), and his first three sons were of mixed

descent. Though Tamar (mother of Pharez and Zarah) may not have been Canaanite, Judah's family line was already mixed from early on.

5. Ephraim and Manasseh Were Half-Egyptian

Joseph married Asenath, an Egyptian (Genesis 41:45), making **Manasseh and Ephraim half Egyptian**. Yet Jacob adopted them fully:

> *"Ephraim and Manasseh, as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine." (Genesis 48:5)*

This shows that **God's inheritance is not limited to blood purity**, but is based on **His sovereign will**.

What Does the New Covenant Say?

But all of this leads to a deeper, more crucial point: **Is land even the issue anymore?**

The New Testament answers this emphatically: **No**. The promises of God, including inheritance, are fulfilled **in Christ**, not through physical geography or genealogy.

- *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen…"* (2 Corinthians 1:20, KJV)
- *"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* (Galatians 3:29, KJV)
- *"They are not all Israel, which are of Israel…"* (Romans 9:6, KJV)

The **true Israel of God** (Galatians 6:15–16) is made up of **those who walk in faith**, born of the Spirit—not of the flesh. Under the New Covenant, God is not restoring physical land to a

physical people. He is building a spiritual kingdom made up of **both Jew and Gentile** who are united in Christ.

Conclusion: Why This Matters

This is not simply a political debate—it's a question of **biblical truth**. Christians must ask:

> *Are we defending something in God's name that **God Himself no longer endorses under the New Covenant**?*

The land promise was **fulfilled** (Joshua 21:43–45). The covenant was **expanded and completed in Christ**. And God's people today are **those who belong to Jesus**, not those who lay claim to physical borders or tribal ancestry.

So the next time someone insists that the modern state of Israel has a divine right to the land, ask this:

> ***"Can they prove they are of Jacob? And even if they could—does that still matter under the New Covenant?"***

The answer is found not in national borders, but in the cross of Christ.

Appendix: Understanding the Term "Jew" in Scripture

Many Christians today assume that the word "Jew" always refers to a physical descendant of Judah or Jacob. However, Scripture shows that the term has several different meanings depending on historical and contextual use:

1. Geographic Identity (Judean)

In many New Testament contexts, *“Jew” (Greek: Ioudaios)* simply refers to someone from **Judea**, not necessarily a tribal descendant.

> *“How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me…?” (John 4:9)*

2. Religious Conversion

In Esther 8:17, people from other nations **became Jews** because of fear—not by lineage but by religious identity.

> *“Many of the people of the land became Jews…”*

3. Cultural and Political Affiliation

In the Gospels, “the Jews” often refers to religious leaders or people aligned with Pharisaical Judaism or political resistance to Christ, not necessarily tribal descendants.

4. Paul’s Redefinition: A Jew Is One Inwardly

Paul redefines the term to mean a person who is **circumcised in heart**, not merely in flesh:

> *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly… But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly.” (Romans 2:28–29)*

5. The Church as the True Circumcision

> *“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” (Philippians 3:3)*

Understanding these distinctions is essential to interpreting Scripture correctly. Not every reference to a “Jew” in the Bible supports the idea of a pure ethnic group or political

nation. In the New Covenant, **identity is spiritual, not genealogical**.

Applicable Key Verses

1. Romans 9:6-8
2. Romans 2:28-29
3. Esther 8:17
4. Ezra 10:44
5. Genesis 41:45
6. Genesis 48:5
7. 2 Corinthians 1:20
8. Galatians 3:29
9. Joshua 21:43–45
10. John 4:9
11. Philippians 3:3

Jews, Judaism & Christianity