



Many Christians today strongly feel that **“Israel according to the flesh” (1 Corinthians 10:18 NAB)** is still ‘God’s chosen people’, and that the modern day Republic of Israel has a place in God’s purpose, and fulfilled Bible prophecy when it was established in 1948. They believe that Old Testament prophecies of the restoration of Israel are fulfilling and will be fulfilled in a physical, literal way. Which Jerusalem matters to Christians? This article will consider what the scriptures themselves say.

God foretold, **“I will raise up a righteous branch for David; As king he shall reign and govern wisely (Jeremiah 23:5 NAB).** God foretells that he **“will set up over them, one shepherd, my servant David” (Ezekiel 34:23 ESV),** and, **“David my servant shall be king over them” (Ezekiel 37:24 NAB).** These cryptic prophecies of “David” ruling are obviously symbolic of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, ruling. This is one of many indications that the restoration prophecies of Israel, while true and accurate, are not literal.

CHANGE OF ISRAEL

God said that ancient Israel **“did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord” (Hebrews 8:9 NIV).** God foretold that he would **“make a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah” (Hebrews 8:8 NIV).** Would the “new covenant” be with “Israel according to the flesh”? No! Why not?

In Jesus’ parable of the vineyard (**Matthew 21:33-42**), Jesus illustrated how Israel rejected God’s prophets and finally killed his Son. His conclusion was, **“the kingdom of God will be**

taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43 NIV). Who is this 'people producing its fruit'?

"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—for the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:15,16 NIV). Jewish males had to be circumcised, but now this law is abolished. The 'people producing kingdom fruit' is "the Israel of God", where circumcision doesn't matter.

Because of these principles, **"there is no difference between Jew and Gentile" (Romans 10:12 NIV); "there is neither Jew nor Gentile" (Galatians 3:28 NIV); "here there is no Gentile or Jew" (Colossians 3:10 NIV).**

"It is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3 NIV). "A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code" (Romans 2:28,29 NIV). In writing to the mostly Gentile churches at Philippi and Rome, Paul says that Christians are the real Jews, because being a fleshly Jew no longer matters.

CHANGE FROM THE OLD COVENANT TO THE NEW COVENANT

"Christ is the end of the law"—Romans 10:4 NAB

In fact, **"the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, you must love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14 NAB)**

"He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect"—Hebrews 10:9 NLT

The covenant with Israel, was canceled.

“So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!”—2 Corinthians 3:11 NLT

What is “the old way, which has been replaced”? The Bible tells us:

“ . . . the old covenant, because through Christ it is taken away”—2 Corinthians 3:14 NAB

“Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people”—Ephesians 2:14 NLT

“Abolishing the law with its commandments”—Ephesians 2:15 NAB

What is **“the second”** that he puts **“into effect”** (Hebrews 10:9)?

“Christ” is the **“the mediator of a new covenant”** (Hebrews 10:9).

The New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant.

“Let no one, then, pass judgment on you in matters of food or drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or *SABBATH*”—Colossians 2:16 NAB

Since the Old Covenant has been replaced by the New Covenant, and no one is to judge us in regard to the sabbath, does that mean that Sabbath keeping is not required of Christians? Yes! That’s exactly what it means!

“One person considers one day more sacred than another; another person considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind”—Romans 14:5 NIV

Under the covenant that governs Christians, the New Covenant, Sabbath keeping is optional.

It is not required. However, scrupulously slaving to keep various requirements of the Old Covenant is described as **"observing days, months, seasons and years"** (**Galatians 4:10 NAB**), and such effort is described being **"in vain"** (**Galatians 4:11 NAB**).

CHANGE OF JERUSALEMS FOR CHRISTIANS

"Now these may be interpreted allegorically . . . the present Jerusalem . . . is in slavery . . . But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother" (**Galatians 4:24-26 ESV**). The Jerusalem for Christians is not the earthly Jerusalem, but "the Jerusalem above". This point is further emphasized by the following, speaking to mostly Jewish Christians:

"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God . . . and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (**Hebrews 12:22-24 ESV**). Here the Jerusalem that matters to Christians is called "the heavenly Jerusalem". But it is the same as "the Jerusalem above". Both terms are to be **"taken figuratively"** (**Galatians 4:24 NIV**), not literally. The point is also that "the present city of Jerusalem" (**Galatians 4:25 NIV**) no longer has any relevance in bible prophecy, and therefore no longer matters to Christians.