

Response to Mark Dunman 1

Introduction

Thank you for your response to my paper criticising your book. I am grateful for the time you have taken to respond, but I am saddened that you seem to have failed to see key points that I raised which have a fundamental effect on your whole position. The result of this is so serious that, I fear, it requires very strenuous rebuttal. It is for this reason that I would have preferred to debate this face to face to avoid giving the impression of harshness and a lack of love. However, since that is not possible I must make my case forcefully and risk appearing overzealous because the consequences of your theology is very damaging to the cause of Christ.

Critical words

Regarding using the term 'blasphemy' etc.: this does add to my argument and is quite important. A crucial criticism of your position is that your theology takes attention away from Christ and places it on to a fleshly people, which is both idolatry and blasphemy. Such accusations therefore are entirely appropriate. The fact that you don't see this consequence is worrying.

Abrahamic covenant

Regarding *"There are two aspects to the Abrahamic Covenant; David Pawson calls them its 'international' and 'national' aspects. These are accurate descriptions, but in order to emphasise the differences I shall also refer to the faith and the ethnic covenants."*

This assertion is crucial to your argument; however where is there even the slightest proof of such an assertion? There is none whatsoever. Amazingly, much later in your paper while discussing a different subject, you admit this openly [*'I agree that God does not tell us that the covenantal promises to Abraham have a two-fold application'*]. Despite admitting this, you base your first argument entirely on a principle which you admit is not Biblical. What sort of Christian reasoning is this?

Your assertion makes the purpose of the Abrahamic covenant almost entirely fleshly and earthly. In fact, the focus of the Abrahamic covenant is the fulfilment in Christ and the promise of the Abrahamic covenant is the basis of the Gospel (*'foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed",'* Gal 3:8).

The basic feature of singling out Abraham is that he is the father of those with faith (root) not that he is the father of the Jews (Rm 4:9, 12, 13; Gal 3:7, 8, 9, 14). In fact, Paul emphasises that he had faith before he was a Jew (before he was circumcised; Rm 4:12). *'Those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,'* (Rm 4:16).

From the beginning, the promise of God to Abraham involved blessing to all nations (Gen 12:3). This is the blessing of the Gospel of faith in Christ. The promises to Abraham's descendants have to be explained in Biblical terms – which Paul explains are the people in Christ, who is the genuine Seed of Abraham. Remember Paul is saying the final words of Christ from heaven to the church. Any confusion in this subject must be resolved by the final words of Christ, not obscure, debated prophecies in the OT in an early period of progressive revelation. [More later.]

The spiritual essence of Abrahamic covenant can be seen in the attitude of Abraham himself, which was far from earthly (unlike your view, centring it in Israel). Abraham looked to a city that had foundations, to a heavenly fulfilment (Heb 11:10, 16); he did not look to an earthly fulfilment in any way. This was why he was happy to let Lot have the best land in the valley when Lot had not been promised anything by God at all neither was Lot called out of Ur.

The fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant has nothing to do with a fleshly people inhabiting Israel in this world. The Seed is not Jewish people who can trace their ancestry back to Abraham (which, in fact, 90% of modern Jews cannot do at all according to the Jewish Encyclopaedia); no, the Seed is Christ and only Christ (Gal 3:16). Paul expressly states that it is not 'seeds as of many' in the plural (i.e. Jews), but the Seed, i.e. Christ. You appear not to have read my paper very clearly or have just ignored entire arguments that you have not disproved.

Your entire theology is based upon a complete mistake of something that is not in Scripture at all and something that is been placed there by eisegesis. The essence of your theology is fleshly, earthly and human; the real interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant (as explained clearly by Paul in Galatians) is that it is heavenly and spiritual.

Thus all the theological statements about covenant and salvation in the rest of the OT have to be understood in the light of the fact that the inheritor is Christ and not humans. All the promises are fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor 1:20); the law is fulfilled in Christ (Matt 5:17) and he is the end of it (Rm 10:4). Thus entrance to the covenant is by faith in Christ and nothing else: 'those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham,' (Gal 3:9, see also: 3:22, 24, 26, 5:5, etc.) because this places believers in Christ through the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). Jews in the OT who had faith in God's future deliverer were included in Christ (the remnant); all else were lost. Physical features (gender, race, ethnicity, merit, status) have absolutely nothing to do with it. Paul specifically states that circumcision (Jewishness) has no place in this: 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love' (Gal 5:6). You aver that Jewish circumcision does avail something.

This wrong interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant is foundational to your entire theology. If this is wrong, as it clearly is, then everything else in your system is erroneous. Unless you can overturn Paul's clear statement that the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant is not to many (Jews) but only to one (Christ) then nothing else in your system has any validity. Consequently, I don't really need to pursue your further comments, however, as you make very many mistakes I will evaluate what you have said further. My purpose in this is to help you see the truth.

What is faith?

Regarding. *"Faith was the quality that God most esteemed in Abraham."*

This is another crucial mistake in Biblical theology. The Bible nowhere affirms that faith is a personal quality that God esteems in certain humans. In fact the Bible overwhelmingly asserts that no one can do any good, especially any spiritual good, because they are totally depraved (or dead in sins as Paul terms it). Someone who is spiritually dead cannot do a good spiritual work, such as repent or believe. The Bible declares this from cover to cover but especially in Romans three.

Furthermore the Bible expressly states that faith is a gift from God and not something worked up from man (Acts 14:27; Acts 18:27; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; Jn 6:29; Heb 12:2). This is why salvation is by grace and not works. In your view faith is a human work that

initiates salvation and that this was exemplified in Abraham. The Bible teaches, on the contrary, that faith is not a work and salvation is all of grace.

This is why, on hundreds of occasions, the Bible specifies that, 'salvation is of the Lord' e.g.:

Salvation *belongs* to the LORD. (Ps 3:8)

O Lord, my salvation! (Ps 38:22)

Salvation *is* of the LORD. (Jonah 2:9)

According to your Arminian view, salvation is partly accomplished by God but the key initiation of it is entirely the work of man.

Failure to see the termination of the Jewish kingdom

'Even where he speaks of the New Covenant and the coming Messiah, it is still in relation to the national covenant with Israel, in other words with the Jews. It is very important to appreciate that the New Covenant enunciated in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34) was given first to the Jews. At that time no-one apart from God knew that it would expand to include the Gentiles after Jesus had come. The early Church's attempts to appropriate this covenant as though it did not belong to the Jews, was quite wrong.'

There are multiple mistakes here and a failure to read clear arguments in my paper.

'At that time no-one apart from God knew that it would expand to include the Gentiles.'

The original promise to Abraham included many nations (Gen 17:4). Prophet after prophet highlighted the act that the responsibility of Israel was to bring the light of God's word to other nations (Ps 67:2-4); instead she despised them but also adopted their idolatry, for which she was deposed (see below). Thus prophets explained that the Messiah would do this job of universalising the covenant (Isa 2:2).

Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments *and* My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and *went* after the nations who *were* all around them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. 2 Kg 17:13-15

'The New Covenant and the coming Messiah, it is still in relation to the national covenant with Israel, in other words with the Jews.'

See the book of Hebrews, which affirms exactly the opposite. Jewish Christians who wanted to return to Judaism are spoken of as,

"A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Pt 2:22

For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives

blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned. Heb 6:4-8

For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:26-31

Apart from that, the Lord himself categorically stated that the kingdom was taken away from the Jews and given to the church (which includes Gentiles and believing Jews),
 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Matt 21:43

All this was explained in my paper, which you have ignored.

'The early Church's attempts to appropriate this covenant as though it did not belong to the Jews, was quite wrong.'

Then presumably the writer to the Hebrews is 'quite wrong' when he argues exactly this?

- Jesus is surety of a better covenant than the one holding Jews together. ['Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant' Heb 7:22.]
- This is based upon a Melchizedekan priesthood since the Jewish priesthood is abolished. [Heb 7:21] Melchizedek was a Gentile.
- Jesus is mediator of a better covenant with better promises [Heb 8:6]
- The first covenant (Mosaic) had faults [Heb 8:7].
- Israel is disregarded by God [Heb 8:9]
- The new covenant is the same as that promised to Jeremiah [Heb 8:10-12, 10:16].
- The first (Mosaic) covenant is annulled [Heb 8:13]
- The new covenant does not have a tabernacle, temple, priesthood, feasts or ordinances for offerings [Heb 9-14, 24-26, 10:18]. Thus the new covenant has no Jewish appearance at all.
- The entrance to this covenant is through death and the redemption of sins [Heb 9:15]. In other words it is the Gospel.
- The new covenant requires the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart, whose presence is secured by forgiveness of sins [Heb 10:16-17].
- Those in this covenant are able to be bold to approach God in heaven [Heb 10:19-20].

Furthermore, Paul explains that apostles of Christ are the ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6) and the church's central sacrament, the Lord's Supper, is the memorial of the new covenant in Christ's blood (1 Cor 11:25).

It is clear that the new covenant is nothing but the Gospel of salvation in Christ with all the Jewish traits removed from it. The priesthood of Christ is even Melchizedekan, a Gentile. There is no Mosaic Law, no Jewish High priest, no Jewish offerings, no Jewish festal days – it is not Jewish.

This is not a false teaching of the early church, it is clear NT teaching.

Even in the OT, the doctrine of the remnant (see later) means that the promise of the new covenant was not with the entire, ethnic Jewish nation but only with the remnant, the elect, those with faith like Abraham. The promises of God are based on faith not nationality. The new covenant is not Jewish; it is the culmination of the Abrahamic covenant.

Romans 2

'In Romans chapter 2 Paul is addressing the issue of the Jews coming to faith. They need more than their ethnic Jewishness to enter the Kingdom of God – they need the salvation of their Messiah. Verse 28 does not deny their Jewish ethnicity; in fact it uses the phrase “who is merely one outwardly.” It is stressing that they cannot rely on their Jewishness and the Law.'

Firstly, Romans chapter 2 is not addressing the issue of the Jews coming to faith; it is part of Paul's argument, in the first three chapters of Romans, to show that all men are consigned to sin, are dead in sins, and cannot find God without the grace that he then discusses after 3:20. The book of Romans is about salvation and God's purpose, not Jews.

Secondly if, as you say, Jews need more than their ethnicity to enter the kingdom of God or to be saved then you are admitting that Jews are outside the Abraham covenant. I have explained that the Gospel is the new covenant and, the new covenant is also the fulfilment of the Abraham covenant - which is just the precursor of the Gospel. If Jews need more than their ethnicity to be part of the Gospel they also need more than their ethnicity to be part of the Abraham covenant. This is exactly Paul's argument in Romans 2:28-29, 9:6 and in Galatians. Entrance to the covenant is by faith, just like Abraham.

Thirdly, Romans 2:28-29 is not about ethnicity at all, whether affirming or denying it. As I explained in my paper Paul is playing on the word 'Jew' in terms of meaning 'praise'. A true Jew is a person whose praise comes from God, is one who is saved in his heart, and not having a salvation that is just external based on works. It is about spiritual circumcision (crucifying the old man) not physical circumcision. The context is Paul's argument about righteousness being the requirement for salvation but no one can keep the law to be righteous and that circumcision does not help to keep the law. Even a Gentile who keeps the law (if it were possible) would be better than a Jew who does not (verse 26) and eligible for Abrahamic blessings. He is laying out the case for the need of righteousness by faith in justification.

Romans 9

'He then reverts to the ethnic aspects in verses 7-8: Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the Promise are counted as offspring. The child of the flesh is Ishmael and the child of the Promise is Isaac. This is clearly confirmed in Galatians 4:23. This distinction is reinforced in the rest of chapter 9 and in the opening part of chapter 10. It is clear that though they as ethnic Jews are the children of Promise, they need to be saved and that their zeal without knowledge, is what has led them astray. Chapter 11 then takes us right back to ethnic Israel and the national covenant with Abraham.'

The constant juxtaposing of ethnic and international aspects throughout Romans and elsewhere has no warrant whatsoever. This is an arbitrary human invention and eisegesis. You have no right to put words into Paul's mouth, especially when he has explained who the children of the promise and the children of the flesh are; both in Romans and in Galatians.

Paul has explained that the Seed is Christ and Isaac stands as a type of Christ. The children of the promise are those who are in Christ; Paul stated this categorically in Galatians. The

children of the flesh, as Paul is explained in Rm 2:28-29, are Jews who are trusting in their ethnicity for salvation.

You say Ishmael is the child of the flesh, which is clearly confirmed in Galatians 4:23, and yet don't read the next verse which says that that is merely a symbol and not the reality. In fact the reality which Ishmael symbolises is current ethnic Jews, current fleshly Jerusalem, and current national Israel. Read Paul's argument in Galatians 4 which is crystal clear and which I have fully explained in my paper, which you clearly have not read. The contrast is not between Isaac and Ishmael, but with fleshly Israel and spiritual Israel (all God's people in the church); between Jerusalem in bondage under Mosaic Law now (= Hagar and Ishmael) or the Jerusalem above, the mother of us all (spoken to Celts, i.e. the church). The difference is two covenants: the Mosaic covering ethnic Jews who are in bondage, and the new covenant, which covers all God's people together (believing Jews and Gentiles). You are simply not reading plain Scripture properly, or just ignoring what doesn't suit your argument. What else can I think? It is there in plain black and white.

Consequently, it is certainly not clear at all that ethnic Jews are children of the promise; nowhere does Paul say that, in fact he says the very opposite in Galatians 4, and there is no support for this in Romans. Chapter 9 is not saying this either. You constantly add things to scripture that are not there in order to make your argument.

In fact, Romans 9, continuing the theme of salvation by grace, is not about Jews it is about election; 'that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls,' (Rm 9:11). Now the best illustration of election is Israel, which alone was chosen to have a relationship with God amongst all the nations. Thus Paul explains what election is – it is the choice of God according to his good pleasure and not according to will or works (9:16; contra your view). In Israel this election is seen in the choosing of the remnant while all the rest of the nation was lost (Rm 9:27).

Ethnic Jews are NOT children of promise. Only those in the remnant are the children of promise. Failure to understand this belies your whole theology. Even your theology suggests this when you say that ethnic Jews still need to believe the Gospel to be saved (the logic of your thesis is that this is not necessary since they are naturally of the promise). If that is so, how can they (in their natural state) be children of promise – they are currently under condemnation and going to hell until they believe. If you say that they are only potentially children of promise until they exercise faith – then my earlier argument about the gift of faith refutes this argument. So you are left with ethnic Jews who are not naturally children of promise.

Restoration of the Jews

Even in the OT the restoration of Israel only applied to the remnant alone. Those outside the remnant perished. I explained this in my paper and this also has been ignored. It is impossible to apply the passages in the OT regarding restoration to the whole ethnic people today since even the OT states that the whole people (on many occasions) will be destroyed. The caveat to this is that a remnant will be saved.

The remnant is evidenced by those who seek the Lord, by those who believe in God's Messiah. This, is but one example,

Hear this word which I take up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel: The virgin of Israel has fallen; She will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land; There is no one to raise her up. For thus says the Lord GOD: "The city that goes out by a thousand Shall have a hundred left, And that which goes out by a hundred Shall have ten left to the house of Israel." For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: "Seek Me and live ... Seek the LORD and live, Lest He break out like fire in the

house of Joseph, And devour it, With no one to quench it in Bethel -... Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it? ... I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savour your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.”
Amos 5:1-6, 21-23

Only those who seek the Lord will be saved and none of the ritual ordinances help this in any way.

Heb 3-4 explains that virtually all those leaving Egypt at the Exodus were destroyed and did not enter God’s rest. Their ethnicity did them no good at all.

So, applying a restoration to all Jews based on ethnicity is unbiblical and pointless. All Jews are not children of God, are not the people of God, and will not be restored – only a remnant will be saved. This is Paul’s argument in Romans 11; there is a salvation by grace for a remnant – those Jews who believe in Christ. The ‘all Israel’ that will be saved cannot mean every single Jew since millions have died in sin and are lost, both in the OT and since the cross. It means all the elect in Israel, all the remnant.

The essence

Further discussion of your individual points is a fruitless enterprise and a waste of time. They all hang on your prime assumptions, which I have demonstrated, are false. Since your basic interpretation of key Scriptures is erroneous, all your arguments fall. For instance, you apply to fleshly Israel promises which the Bible clearly states are only for the remnant. Adding scores of references to your argument is pointless if they all apply to the elect remnant and not the whole people. Thus the everlasting promises of the covenant are for the elect and not all ethnic Israel.

I will not deal with the points about metaphor and literalism since I dealt with this effectively in my paper. Literalism cannot stand up and the apostles do not always interpret prophecies literally, We have to follow apostolic guidance.

The key errors and difficulties in your paper are these:

You fail to appreciate specific apostolic statements that have a significant effect on your arguments. This is a very serious problem that destroys all your points. In general, you fail to appreciate the importance of NT revelation on your theology.

Your interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant is entirely false. Since this is the case, and since it is fundamental, all your propositions following from this are wrong.

You fail to see that Christ is the Seed of Abraham and the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, which results in the Gospel. Jews are not the inheritors of the covenant unless they believe in Christ.

You fail to see the importance of the gift of faith; and this has grave consequences for your propositions. It also makes your theology of salvation to be based on human works; something that undergirds your explanation of Israel also.

You fail to do justice to the serious point made by Paul that there is a difference between an ethnic Jew, whose external religion will result in his condemnation to hell, and a real Jew (one who is praised by God) whose heart has been changed by faith in Christ (i.e. he has become a Christian believer). Thus there are two types of Jew, two Israels, two Jerusalems

two covenants etc. One is fleshly, earthly, in bondage and lost; the other is spiritual and in Christ.

You do not see the importance of the remnant, both in the OT and the NT. This also ruins your propositions.

You make no interaction with clear statements that the kingdom has been taken away from Israel and given to another. This ruins your entire argument.

So, there are several points where your entire thesis is completely collapsed; not one but several. Until you can overcome these central foundational issues your argument has no validity whatsoever.

A minor point, never dealt with by Christian Zionists, is how to explain why no major Christian theologian in history taught this theology, which only began to appear with Dispensationalism after 1830, which itself was propounded by a heretical church based on the ravings of a young sick girl. If Christian Zionism is true, then why is there no witness to it in every age of history? Why is there no mention of it in all the major confessions of faith, written by the most godly, spiritual and brilliant brains of the church?

Finally, if this thesis is both unbiblical and false, then it is also blasphemous since it creates idolatry – focusing upon a fleshly, sinful people instead of Christ. Christian Zionism must be confronted because it is dangerous and blasphemous; it will ruin people who follow it.

Conclusion

I fear that even this paper will not convince you, since you appear to be unable to see very clear statements in the NT which destroy your theses (such as Matt 21:43), and also the arguments I made in my paper, which I have been told are easy to understand.

Obviously only a true revelation of Christ, based on NT truths will ever be able to dissuade you from your errors, therefore I pray for this revelation of the truth for you.

Since this is the case, it is clear that any further debates are pointless and will only mean going over the same ground again and again. From my point of view the discussion is now closed as I have done everything in my power to apply Biblical reasoning to your errors.

I pray that God will have mercy on you.

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