

Restored Israel

and the Kingdom of the Messiah

by

Kurt Simmons

One does not have to move in dispensationalist circles long before he hears that the establishment of modern state of Israel in Palestine fulfills prophecies that mark the imminent return of Christ. Underlying this doctrine is the belief that modern state of Israel has a continuing claim upon God's special favor and occupies an important place in future pages of redemption's story. However, this view is sorely mistaken. The modern state of Israel is antichrist; it is a cursing and execration; its very existence stands in denial of the Sonship, Kingdom, and Priesthood of Christ, and has no further role to play in the sacred history of salvation. It is not the *political* restoration of Israel the prophets spoke to, but the *spiritual* restoration of man in Christ.

The Tower of Babel and the Call of Abraham

Scripture records that, early into the history of the race, God was required to divinely intervene to save mankind. The first such instance was the flood of Noah. The circumstance bringing on the flood was a general turning away of men from God, but, more especially, the apostasy of the world's few believers, called the "sons of God," by profanely marrying the daughters of unbelieving men. The children of these unions grew up to be "giants" (Heb. *Nephil*, a "tree-feller" *e.g.*, a tyrant or despot, *cf.* Isa. 14:8 where the like term is used of the king of Babylon), who filled the earth with violence and oppression. (Gen. 6:1-4, 11) By their marriages to unbelieving women, the existence of a righteous seed was threatened, requiring God's divine intervention lest the righteous perish from the earth. The absolute necessity for the flood may be seen in the fact that, out of all mankind, only eight souls were brought through its waters. (I Pet. 3:20; II Pet. 2:5)¹¹

After the flood, scripture records that the earth was of one tongue and lived and dwelt together in the plain of Shinar. (Gen. 11:1, 2) The people's manner of life at this juncture can only be described as one of disbelief and disaffection from God, epitomized by the erection of a tower whose height they intended to reach to very heaven itself. (v. 4) Like weeds choking out the goodly herbs and vegetables of a garden, the commingling of the righteous and the wicked in a single social and political organization threatened extinction of the godly seed. Hence, God divinely intervened to save mankind a second time by confounding their language, causing them to part asunder and populate the remote places of the earth and the isles of the sea in order that, by scattering abroad mankind, the goodly seed might have room to grow unaffected by the habits and customs of the wicked.¹² (Gen. 11:1-9) It is against this background that we are introduced to Abraham.

The call of Abraham is given in Gen. 12:1-3:

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great

nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

The evil manners of the wicked are transmitted more readily than the righteousness habits of the believing are learned. The commingling of the righteous and wicked, whether by marriage before the flood or in a single social structure after the flood, had threatened the existence of a righteous seed altogether. The significance of our introduction to Abraham at this juncture of sacred history is to show God’s work in preserving a goodly seed in the earth by making of Abraham a *separate* nation unto himself. However, this work would not culminate in the founding of national Israel under Moses, but in the *church* of the Lord Christ. National Israel was merely *provisional*; it served to nurture and keep alive a righteous seed until the kingdom of the Messiah, into which people of *every* race and language would be gathered. This is the meaning of the promise that in Abraham *all nations* of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)

Under the Mosaic economy, one’s ability to participate in the blessings of Israel depended upon his status under the law; to inherit a paternity and be enrolled in the congregation depended upon whether one was slave or free, male or female, Jew or Greek. In Christ, none of these distinctions affect one’s hope of salvation. Through obedience to the Gospel, every race and language of men are made heirs of the promise to Abraham: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heir according to the promise.” (Ga. 3:27-29; cf Jno. 1:13; 3:3-5)

No nation can exist as a separate entity without laws defining its borders, organizing its powers, and enforcing its decrees. God instituted Israel as a nation separate from the heathen by the ordinances of the Mosaic law, which served as a “wall of partition” between Jew and Gentile. (Eph. 2:14; cf. Isa. 5:1-7) However, in Christ, the wall of partition was broken down that he might create in himself one new man, and reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God in *one body* by the cross. (Eph. 2:14-16; cf. 1:10) If all soteriological distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished in Christ, what basis is there for believing that national Israel occupies some favored place in the divine scheme after the institution of the church? Nationhood consisting in the sum total of the laws and institutions which mark a people off from the rest of mankind, the abolition of the law separating Jew from Gentile of necessity meant the termination of fleshly Israel as a nation before God. To be a Jew, if such is to have any Biblical meaning at all, must find its origin in the sacred scriptures. Therefore, if the law was abolished under scripture, so was Biblical Judaism. Having been thus dissolved like so many grains of salt in the sea, Judaism can only be restored by reinstitution of the Mosaic law. But the temple service and sacrifices of the law pointed to Christ; they were merely the types and shadows of which Christ is the body and substance. (Col. 1:19; 2:16, 17; Heb. 10:1-4) Hence, reversion to the law of Moses is an implicit *denial* of the Sonship and priesthood of Christ. And this is nothing if not apostasy.^[31] “For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” (Gal. 2:18) Indeed, it was their obstinate adherence to the temple and its service that marked the Jewish nation for destruction in A.D. 70 by the hand of Rome:

“He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you

out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies." (Isa. 66:3-6)

Jesus made the like prophecy regarding destruction of Jerusalem and Judea (Matt. 23:34-24:34; Lk. 19:41-44; 23:27-31), as did both Peter and Stephen. (Acts 2:20, 40; 6:14) God was pleased to destroy the nation for rejecting Christ; the Old Covenant is abolished, the Jews have *no* covenantal relationship with God today. The modern state of Israel is founded in very denial of the Lordship of Christ. Far from being a token of God's continuing favor toward the Jews, the reestablishment of the modern state of Israel is a token of their continuing rebellion against Christ and God. We may fairly assume that, in God's own time, they will again suffer wrath and destruction.

Restored Israel in the Prophets

So much for the big picture of Israel's provisional place in God's redemptive purpose, how does this picture bear out in the prophets? Does the image given in the prophets accord with the one we have just sketched? Listen to Isaiah:

"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." Isa. 11:10, 11

The Messianic context of this prophecy is seen in the reference to the "root of Jesse," which points to the promise that Christ would spring from the fruit of David's loins. (II Sam. 7:12-14) The catalogue of nations mentioned reflect the places where Israel and Judah were scattered in the desolations suffered under Assyria and Babylon and show that a modern-day fulfillment is beyond the contemplation of the text. The point of the prophecy is that, as God gathered his people a *first* time in the return of the captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah, so he would gather them a *second* time into Christ. Jesus is the standard or ensign around which all men would rally, a beacon to give light to those in darkness, providing glorious rest from the labor and anguish of sin. John the Baptist spoke to the gathering of Israel by the Messiah when he said: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. 3:11, 12) The "garner" is Christ's kingdom-church, into which are gathered all who obey the gospel message; the "chaff" consisted of unbelieving Jews who were consumed in the conflagration ("baptized with fire") that enveloped the nation in A.D. 70.

In Hosea we read concerning the restoration of Israel:

Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for

great shall be the day of Jezreel. (Hos. 1:8-11)

This prophecy spoke to the Assyrian invasion and carrying into captivity of the northern tribes. For their abominations they “were not God’s people” and hence were cast away. However, in time to come, God would gather his people together again from all the places where they had been scattered. Although presumably this began to be fulfilled in the return of the captivity from Babylon, the prophecy looks beyond national restoration unto the spiritual restoration of *all* mankind in Christ. We may be certain of this inasmuch as the New Testament writers, by the Holy Ghost, apply this passage unto the conversion of the Gentiles. (Rom. 9:25, 26; I Pet. 2:10) “For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 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.” (Rom. 9:6-8) The children of “Israel” who would be united with the children of Judah were not the *physical* descendants of Abraham carried away by the Assyrians. The children of Israel were the *spiritual* seed and progeny of Abraham, the children of the Promised Seed, Jesus Christ. Thus, the prophecy of Hosea did not have in view the political restoration of national Israel at all, but the gathering together of earth’s peoples under the “one head” of Christ. (Eph. 1:10; 2:16)

Ezekiel made the like prophecy of Israel’s restoration:

“Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all...And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them...and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.” Ezek. 37:21-26

Ezekiel is not saying that Christ would be an earthly king over restored Israel in Judah. Indeed, when Jesus perceived that the people would come to take him by force to make him king, he hid himself apart in a mountain alone (Jno. 6:15) – conduct inconsistent with one appointed to reign from an earthly throne. The Jews wanted a national liberator to free them from the yoke of Rome, but Jesus came to free men, not from political or military rule, but from the bondage of *sin and death*. Having brought his people back from Babylon and the places they were scattered, their true King would reign over them *spiritually*, not nationally or politically. Thus, when Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, Gabriel said “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Lk. 1:32, 33) The angel’s prophecy was fulfilled in Christ’s resurrection and ascension. At his ascension, Jesus received coronation as King of kings and Lord of lords, and was given the throne of David. Peter makes this plain in the very first gospel sermon preached after the Lord’s ascension:

“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:32-36)

Thus, by the plain statement of Peter by the Holy Ghost, Jesus sat down upon the David’s throne in *heaven*, thenceforth to await his enemies to be made a stool beneath his feet.

Amos provides the following picture of restored Israel and the Davidic throne:

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this...and I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.” Amos 9:11-15

The Davidic throne had been thrown down in the captivity under Babylon and the Gentiles ruled over God’s people. Amos thus looks to a time when the Davidic throne would be restored and its occupant rule over the Gentiles in restored Israel. Although this prophecy may well have begun to be fulfilled in the return of the captivity from Babylon, it is clear that the idealized picture it represents looks beyond national restoration unto spiritual restoration in Christ. Hence, James indicates fulfillment of this prophecy by the bringing in of the Gentiles into the *church*. (Acts 15:13-17)

The union of men from every race and language under the kingship of Christ bespeaks a reversal of the division made at Babel. Hence, we may expect language pointing to a time when a common tongue would be restored to mankind. Just such a picture is given in Zephaniah: “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.” (Zeph. 3:9) The first, faint glimmerings of the fulfillment of Zephaniah’s prophecy occurred on Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection, when people from the whole inhabited world heard the apostles speak to them the wonderful works of God in their own tongue. (Acts 2:1-11) Of course, Zephaniah’s prophecy is merely poetic and not intended to indicate that all languages would one day vanish and single tongue obtain again among mankind. The “pure language” the prophet mentioned is better understood as the *word of the gospel*. Rather than the babble of confused religious profession that formerly obtained, the nations would be turned the pure faith of the gospel, and Jew and Gentile “with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 15:6)

The Destruction of Jerusalem

The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 marked the final earthly scene in the restitution of all things. This is because the kingdom of the Messiah had to be purged of all who refused to serve Israel’s King before it could properly be deemed restored. “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:21-23) Hear Isaiah:

“And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinner shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.” (Isa. 1:25-28)

The restoration of Israel’s judges and counselors would be effected by the purging of her dross and the destruction of her sinners. Then would the kingdom be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. But this never happened in national Israel’s history. Even after the return of the captivity the people never recovered their national piety and devotion. Malachi speaks to the apostasy of the children of the captivity and prophesies the coming of a second “Elijah” (John the Baptist) to restore the spiritual foundations of the kingdom and

prepare a people for the Lord. (Mal. 3:7-4:6; cf. Matt. 11:14) It is therefore manifest that Isaiah's prophecy looks beyond national restoration from the captivity unto the kingdom of the Messiah. (Cf. Isa. 2:1-4) Numerous parables of Jesus make plain this aspect of Israel's restoration.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return...But his servants hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having receive the kingdom, then he commanded...those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." (Lk. 19:12-27)

This parable speaks directly to the destruction of Jerusalem. The King's enemies were the Jews who did not want to live under Christ's reign. Having received the church-kingdom, Jesus caused the unbelieving Jews to be slain. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never save suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Lk. 23:28-31) Jesus was the green tree, the disbelieving Jews were the dry tree. If Jesus suffered such things, what would the Jews suffer? "Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12), the disobedient were cut down and cast in the fire. (Matt. 3:10)

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of his world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 13:40-42)

The "end of the world" (*Gk., aion*) is the end of the Mosaic age and dispensation. At the end of the age, Jesus would cause all the rebellious and unbelieving servants to be gathered out of his kingdom and cast into a "furnace of fire." The furnace here answers to the "unquenchable fire" that John the Baptist said would consume the chaff. (Matt. 3:12) The angels are the ministers of God's wrath, the Romans: "For he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom. 13:4) The Lord of the vineyard came and destroyed the husbandmen, and gave the vineyard to others. (Lk. 20:9-16) The kingdom would be taken from the Jews and given to a nation bringing for the fruits thereof. (Mat. 21:43)

Conclusion

The restoration of Israel was spiritual, not national or political. National Israel's place in the divine economy was merely provisional. They were "vessels of wrath" (Rom. 9:22) fitted for destruction, which God bore with over long centuries of rebellion and disobedience. They filled up the measure of their national sin when they crucified the Lord of Glory and persecuted his church and, hence, were destroyed. Today, the church is the Israel of God. (Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16) It consists of men of every race and language who men are gathered into the Messianic kingdom where they worship and adore their Saviour.

Notes:

⌚ These same men are probably the "angels" that sinned and were cast down to tartarus under chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment. (II Pet. 2:4)

^[2] The crisis requiring confounding the people's tongue came only 101 years after the deluge. This is seen from the genealogies in Gen. 11:10-16 tracing the offspring of Shem unto Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided. (Gen. 10:25)

^[3] Apparently some accommodation was made for Jewish Christians living in Palestine during the transition period, permitting them to continue certain customs and observances associated with the Mosaic law that Gentiles were prohibited to keep as denying the truth of the Gospel. (Cf. Acts 21:20-25; Gal. 5:1-4; Col.2:14-17)