

Will Israel Be Restored?

Terry Mabery

Terry was baptized at the age of 13 in 1958. As a teenager he preached monthly for two rural congregations. He was married in 1965 to Mary Herbst. They have two grown children, Shelley (married with four sons) and Brett (still single). Terry graduated in 1967 from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale with a bachelor's degree in education and also has post graduate work in physics. He taught mathematics and physics in public schools in St. Louis County from 1967 to 1977. During that time he became a deacon at the Lemay church of Christ in St. Louis County, working with evangelism and youth. He was hired in 1975 to work more in depth with the youth and evangelism. In 1977 he was hired to work full time with the church and began full time preaching there in 1979. In 1997 began working with the Collinsville church of Christ in Collinsville, Illinois where he now preaches. In 1999 he was appointed as an elder of the congregation there. Terry has preached in youth rallies and gospel meetings in Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Virginia, and West Virginia. He has preached in and directed crusades to Jamaica, West Indies. He has also preached and participated in work in Murmansk, Russia, the largest city in the world above the Arctic Circle and has taught in the Murmansk Bible College.

Introduction

A great number of those in denominations are looking for the coming of the Lord in the near future. They are trying to read the signs that would point to that coming, though there are none given in God's word (Matthew 24:36). They give a scenario that has our Lord coming to establish an earthly, material kingdom, and He is to reign from Jerusalem on the literal throne of David. Of course, for that to take place, Israel must have sovereignty over Jerusalem. Therefore, part of this scenario has Israel being restored to the physical land of Palestine. Many of them will be converted to Christianity. The temple will be rebuilt and the sacrificial system under the Law of Moses will be restored. The above scenario may not be the exact one prescribed to by all. Yet, the idea that Israel's restoration is requisite to the second coming of our Lord is one that has been around for centuries and is a common belief among many so called "Christians" today. According to Brotsky, "[For centuries] theologically this subject of the Jewish return to the Promised Land was not occupying too many minds. However, about 500 years ago the relevance of these Scriptures moved from the back burner to the front burner; and it just gradually expanded as the fulfillment of most prophecies do (2)...A Danish pietist, Høleger Paulli (1644-1714) believed wholeheartedly in the Jewish return to the Promise Land as a condition for the Second Coming of Christ" (3). Regarding the immigration of many Jews to Palestine in the late 19th Century, William Hechler, a British clergyman said, "If the Jewish State is successful, which it must be according to the Bible, the Jews are then to be a blessing to the nations" (Brotsky 6). Brotsky calls "...the Jewish return that started en masse in 1948," the "...second and final ingathering of the Jews..." (10). In his last reason given for why Gentile Christians should be assisting the Jewish return, Brotsky writes, "And finally, the Scripture is clear...that God's program is physical restoration of Israel, followed by spiritual restoration of Israel, to world-wide revival. (Romans 11:15,26) It is God's primary intention to bless the Jews in the land and from that land to make Jews a blessing to the whole world...to bring glory to his holy Name. (Genesis 12:3)" (13).

Those of similar mind are at work even today to help shape politics to enable the continuation of the Jewish state of Israel with Jerusalem in its control. According to some, "The so-called Road Map [to peace - TLM] not only doesn't lead to peace between Israel and Palestine, it invites God's judgment on the United States of America...This plan clearly is contrary to God's Road Map – the Bible" (Evans). The reason for the effort of some to end the "Road Map to Peace" effort is that it calls for the division of Jerusalem, with part of it under control of the Palestinian state rather than Israel. This, of course, would be contrary to the view that God intends to restore Israel to an exalted status prior to the coming of Jesus, having control of the lands promised her by Him.

This all comes from a mistaken view of the kingdom that was both prophesied in the Old Testament and spoken of by Jesus in the New Testament. This mistaken view is that Jesus came to the Jews in the first century to establish an earthly kingdom, ruling from the literal throne of David in Jerusalem. However, according to this view, He was rejected and must, therefore, come again to do what He could not do before. This view will be touched upon only briefly, since it is thoroughly covered in other lessons. It will be shown that Jesus never intended to establish an earthly kingdom. It will be shown that He is now reigning, sitting on the throne of David. Second, some of the prophecies used in trying to establish the above mistaken view will be observed in light of these two facts. It will be shown that these prophecies have been "wrested" (2 Peter 3:16), or twisted, to fit into the mistaken view that is propagated.

Jesus Is Now Reigning in His Kingdom

Jesus made it clear from the beginning of His ministry that the kingdom for which He came was about to be established (Matthew 4:17). Furthermore, He indicated that it would come in the lifetime of some of those who stood at His feet while He taught (Mark 9:1).

There are those who claim that Jesus, contrary to the plan of God, was rejected by the Jews, was crucified, and did not establish the earthly kingdom He intended. Actually, Jesus' rejection and crucifixion were expected. Isaiah even prophesied that it would take place (Isaiah 53). It was expected by God.

Just prior to His crucifixion, Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea. He was questioned regarding the claim that He was the king of the Jews, a claim that He did not deny (John 18:33-37). Yet, neither did He indicate that His purpose was to establish an earthly kingdom. To the contrary, He said that His kingdom was not an earthly kingdom. If it were, His servants would fight in order to save Him from being delivered to the Jews (John 18:36). In fact, Peter was willing to do just that when the Jews, led by Judas, came to take Jesus. He drew his sword and smote the servant of the high priest. Jesus, however, restrained Him, indicating that stopping the act of His deliverance would hinder the fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 26:50-54). God never intended for Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom.

Not only is there the claim that Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom and failed, the claim is that He will do so when He returns and will sit in Jerusalem upon the throne of David. There are at least two problems with that view, however. The first is that Jesus will not sit upon David's throne in

the future, but is doing so now. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached that David spoke of a day when the Christ would sit upon his (David's) throne (Acts 2:29-30). Peter continued by saying this took place when the Christ was raised from the grave to sit at the right hand of God (Acts 2:31-33). The prophet Daniel confirms this (Daniel 7:13-14). He prophesied that the Son of man would be given dominion, and glory, and a *kingdom* when he came with the clouds *to* the Ancient of days, which is God. Note that it would not be when he came *from* the Ancient of days, but *to*. After His resurrection, Jesus ascended, and a cloud received Him as He was received up into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). He ascended *to* the Father, the Ancient of days. Therefore, one can conclude that Jesus has been given the kingdom already, and that kingdom will be delivered back to God the Father when He returns again (1 Corinthians 15:22-26) (Duncan 38-39).

The second problem arises from a prophecy of Jeremiah. Jehoiakim was king in Judah when Babylon carried away the first captives in 605 B.C. When Babylon later laid siege against the rebellious Jerusalem (598 B.C.), Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin (also known as Coniah or Jeconiah) became king. He was evil and reigned in Jerusalem only three months before being deported to Babylon. Jeremiah prophesied of this Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24) that he would be written childless and no more would one of his seed sit on the throne of David and rule in Judah (Jeremiah 22:30). He was not literally childless (1 Chronicles 3:17-18). Yet, he was considered childless in the sense that the dynasty came to an end with him. The significance of the prophecy is that no one of his seed would sit on the throne of David while *ruling in Judah*. This prohibits Jesus, the descendent of Coniah (Jeconiah - Matthew 1:12) from ruling on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Nichols 10-11).

Jesus is now reigning, but at the right hand of God in heaven. When He comes again, He will deliver the kingdom to God. He will never reign in Jerusalem.

Misconceptions Regarding the Restoration of Israel

One of the misconceptions held by many that look to the restoration of Israel is that the land promise made to Abraham has never been fulfilled. When Abraham obeyed God, leaving his country and kindred for a land that God would show him, he settled in the land of Canaan where God said, "*Unto thy seed will I give this land*" (Genesis 12:1-7 ASV). Again, after Lot had separated himself from Abraham due to the strife between their herdsmen, God promised to give to Abraham all the land that he could see (Genesis 13:13-17). Some time later, Jehovah once again told Abraham that the land would be given to him. Then, when Abraham asked how he would know that he would inherit it, Jehovah affirmed it with a covenant, even giving the extended boundaries of the land promised (Genesis 15:7-8, 18). That God never intended for Abraham himself to possess the land can be seen by the words of Stephen as he stood before the very ones that would stone him to death. As he described the call and promise to Abraham, he said, "*he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: and he promised that he would give it to him in possession, and to his seed after him, when (as yet) he had no child*" (Acts 7:5-6 ASV). Continuing, he said, "*But as the time of the promise drew nigh which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt*" (Acts 7:17 ASV). Notice that the time of the promise was near at that time. Moses then led them forth out of the land of Egypt (Acts 7:36). Eventually, Joshua led them into

promised land, and they received all that God had promised to Abraham (Joshua 21:43-45; Joshua 23:14). The extended boundaries were realized later under the reign of David the conqueror and his son, Solomon (2 Chronicles 9:26). Furthermore, even though the land was given as an “*everlasting possession*” (Genesis 17:8 ASV), as with many of God’s promises, the retaining of the land was conditional. They had to remain faithful to Jehovah, otherwise they would perish from off the land (Joshua 23:14-16).

One can conclude from these passages that 1) the land promise made by Jehovah to Abraham was fulfilled, and 2) though they have not lost their identity as a people, the Jews have lost their right to the land promised by God because of their disobedience to Him.

A second claim by some is that Jehovah must fulfill promises made to Israel as a nation that are yet unfulfilled. Generally, what is in mind here is the promise made time and again to restore the nation. This includes more than a restoration of the physical nation to the physical land. It includes a restoration of the nation to Jehovah, along with a restoration of the system of Judaism. Consider, for instance, the promise made through Moses even before they entered into the land.

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither Jehovah thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto Jehovah thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; that then Jehovah thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee” Deuteronomy 30:1-3 ASV).

One must note, however, that a return to the land was conditional — conditional upon the people returning to Jehovah and obeying Him. Those who hold this view admit that there was a restoration of the Jews to the land from Babylon. However, they agree that the restoration from Babylon was not all of Israel, but Judah only. They fail to remember that there were those of the ten northern tribes that fled to Judah and dwelt there when Jeroboam cast out the Levites and developed a priesthood after his own liking (2 Chronicles 11:1-17). Also, when Israel, the northern kingdom was taken captive by Assyria, there was a small portion left on the land. Some of those joined themselves to Judah during the reformation of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:16-18). It should, also, be remembered that it was prophesied that only a remnant would return to Jerusalem, not all of Israel (Isaiah 1:9; Jeremiah 23:3).

A favorite passage of those with this view is from the prophet Amos,

“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 its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old;... And I will bring back the captivity of my people 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 plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God” (Amos 9:11-15 ASV).

The claim is that reference to the rebuilding of the “*tabernacle of David*” refers to the restoration of Israel and of the system of Judaism when the Lord returns. It will be pointed out by many that Israel, in returning to the land over the last century, has turned cities and land that was wasted and in ruin and made them to flourish. Even more so, it will be emphasized that “...*they shall no more be plucked up out of their land...*” (emphasis TLM). Regardless of how men view this passage, one should let the Bible speak for itself. At the Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15) concerning the conversion of Gentiles both by Peter (Acts 10) and by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13-14), James said that such conversion was so that God could take out of them, the Gentiles, a people for His name (Acts 15:14). He went on to say, “*And to this agree the words of the prophets*” (Acts 15:15 ASV) as he began to quote from Amos 9:11. In other words, James considered what was happening at that time to be the fulfillment of Amos 9:11, not what will take place just before the coming of the Lord. Whom will we believe — the smooth talkers of today, or James, the brother of Jesus and inspired scribe of the general epistle of James? The building up the tabernacle of David had to do with Christ beginning His reign at the right hand of God, establishing His church, and giving the Gentiles the privilege of becoming part of His people.

Another favorite passage that is used to claim the restoration of the nation of Israel is from the pen of Paul (Romans 11). Referring Romans 11:11, 15, Arthur W. Pink wrote, “While in Romans 11 we are told that the restoration of Israel will bring even greater blessing to the world than did their casting away” (Pink). The claim is that the *fulness* of verse 11 refers to the fulness of their restoration. One should ask, however, “Upon what basis is such a conclusion drawn?” Why would the fulness not refer to the fulness of their fall and their loss, which is mentioned earlier in the verse. In Romans 11:15, Paul wrote, “*For if the casting away of them (is) the reconciling of the world, what (shall) the receiving (of them be), but life from the dead?*” The claim is made that “*the receiving of them*” refers to the conversion of the Jews as a whole. Again, such is an assumption without basis. Certainly “*the world*” does not mean the **whole** world was reconciled. Why then would the whole of the Jewish nation be received? Finally, Paul wrote,

“For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” (Rom 11:25-26 ASV).

The argument is made that when the fulness of the Gentiles comes, **all** Israel will be saved. The key to understanding this is found in the word, “So.” Winters says that “So is an adverb of manner and translates a Greek word which means in this way. It does not mean ‘and so then’ as the premillennialists would like for it to read but in this manner or in this way. All Jews will be saved in the same way as the Gentiles” (138). Winters, thus, has the “so” looking back to the manner in which the Gentiles would be saved. Lusk agrees with the general meaning of “so,” but he says that it looks to that which follows, the quote from Isaiah (25-26). This is a Messianic prophecy regarding the forgiveness of sins, which was fulfilled in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Luke 24:44-47). In either case, where the “so” looks backward or forward in the text, one comes to the same conclusion. “‘All Israel’ here is Israel as a whole as she stands in need of salvation...all Israel shall be saved as

every creature shall be saved; i.e., by belief and baptism and baptism into Christ. There is no other manner by which Jew or Gentile shall be saved” (Lusk 26).

Not all Israel was hardened. But as the rejection of the gospel by the Jews became more widespread, more Gentiles accepted it. Thus, the fulness of the Gentiles came in. That remnant of Israel that would be saved (Romans 11:5), would be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles, through the gospel (Romans 1:16).

It should be pointed out that any national promises made to and through Abraham for his descendants, Israel, will not be fulfilled in the future, but have already been fulfilled. According to Peter in his sermon in Solomon’s Porch at the temple (Acts 3:11-26), those promises made to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 22:18) were fulfilled in Christ. It is admitted that Peter said that heaven must receive Christ until the times of restoration of all things (Acts 3:20-21). Yet, what in the context makes one believe this refers to the restoration of Israel before the coming of the Lord. Is there another acceptable explanation? Whether or not one can know what the “restoration of all things” refers to, one thing is certain. As Peter drew that sermon to a close, he said that all the prophets of old spoke of the very days in which they were living, the days of the establishment of the church and of Christianity (Acts 3:24). He then referred to the promise made to Abraham (Acts 3:25). According to Peter, the blessing promised through Abraham was not a national Israel ruling over the Gentiles. Rather, the blessing, which was to come first to the Jews, was “turning away every one of you from your iniquities” (Acts 3:26). That blessing was realized in the shed blood of Jesus upon the cross and came first to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-38). That same blessing, which came first to the Jews, is for all who are in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, for they are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). Thus, according to Peter, the blessing promised through Abraham has been realized.

Conclusion

We have seen that Jesus never intended to establish an earthly kingdom. He established His spiritual kingdom according to the plan that God had set forth before the foundations of the world. He is now reigning in His kingdom at the right hand of God. When He comes again, it will not be to establish an earthly kingdom, but to deliver the kingdom up to God. Therefore, the whole basis for boxing in prophecies of the Bible to fit this scenario is false. When allowing the Bible to speak for itself, one can see that the promises made to Abraham have been fulfilled. Israel received the land promise, but because of unfaithfulness she lost the privilege to the land. She was once restored to the land after the Babylonian captivity. The seed promise was fulfilled through our Lord Jesus Christ. That promise was for Israel first, but then for all mankind who would yield to His will. The nation of Israel is no longer the people of God, but all Christians make up the priesthood of God (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Works Consulted

- Bales, James D. (1972) *Prophecy and Premillennialism*. Searcy, AR: James D. Bales
- Brotsky, Dr. Edward D. Brotsky. "Christian Zionism." *Judeo-Christian Studies*.
[Http://christianactionforisrael.org/judeochr/radio.html](http://christianactionforisrael.org/judeochr/radio.html) (6/3/03)
- Duncan, Bobby. (1997) "Premillennialism." **Spiritual Sword**. Volume 28, Number 3. Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ
- Evans, Mike. "Follow Bible, not quartet's map!" *Conservative Petitions.Com*. May 23, 2003
<http://www.conservativepetitions.com/petitions.php?id=198> (6/3/03)
- Harper, E. R. (No date) *Prophecy Foretold Prophecy Fulfilled*. Abilene, TX: E. R. Harper
- Jackson, Wayne. (1978) "Premillennialism: A system of Infidelity." **Spiritual Sword**. Volume 9, Number 2. Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ
- Lard, Moses E. (No date) *Commentary on Paul's Letter to Romans*. Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company
- Lusk, Maurice W., III. (1978) "An Exegitcal Analysis of Romans 11:26." **Spiritual Sword**. Volume 9, Number 2. Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ
- Nichols, Hardeman. (1992) "Will There Be a Thousand-Year Earthly Reign?" **Spiritual Sword**. Volume 23, Number 3. Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ
- Pink, Arthur W. "The Restoration of Israel is only made possible by the Second Advent of Christ." *Redeemer's Return, The*. 1918. [Http://www.ccel.org/p/pink/awprtrn/htm/vii.iv.iii.htm](http://www.ccel.org/p/pink/awprtrn/htm/vii.iv.iii.htm) (7/21/03).
- Taylor, Robert R., Jr. (1996) *Studies in Romans*. Abilene, TX: Quality Publications
- Turner, Rex A. (1977) "Premillennialist Doctrine of the Promise is False." **Spiritual Sword**, Volume 9, Number 1. Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ
- Winters, Howard (1985). *Commentary on Romans: Practical and Explanatory*. Greenville, SC: Carolina Christian