

Israel In Prophecy

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Forum:

The last Bible study I posted "Life in the World to Come" (Endtime Issues No. 9) has generated considerable healthy discussion. It is evident that some members of our forum strongly feel that there will be no marital relationship of any kind in the world to come. They assume that God is going to change the make up of our human nature from heterosexual to unisex, what that may be. Personally I feel that it is better not to be so sure of what God is going to do, otherwise we may be in for a disappointment. While we wait for the consummation of our redemption, let us not become accusative of those who envision life in the new earth similar to the present one, but without the presence of sin, suffering, sickness, pollution, and death.

For me it is hard to believe that God would create planet earth to be inhabited by heterosexual human beings and then repopulate this planet at the End by unisex persons. If God declared at the beginning "it is not good for man to be alone," is He going to change His mind and proclaim at the End "it is better for human beings to be alone"? This is hardly reflective of the unchangeable (Heb 13:8) and omniscient nature of God. It is inconsistent with God's nature for Him to declare the creation of mankind as male and female "very good" at the beginning, and then eliminate gender distinctions at the End. Would not this imply that God discovered that gender distinctions were "not good" after all? Does the God of Biblical revelation learn from mistakes like human beings? Such notion is reposterous to me.

Let me reassure those who have expressed disagreements with my view, that what I posted represents a tentative, personal theological reflection, based on what I consider a sensible interpretation of Scripture. But this does not means that I am necessarily right. I come from Rome, Italy, but I do not claim infallibility. All what I can claim is that I have time to think through the issues I am writing about. Further reflection, enlightened by your constructive criticism, may lead me and all of us to a fuller understanding of these Bible teachings.

With this issue I am starting a series of Bible studies focusing specifically on **endtime prophecies**. We will consider both the mistaken and the correct interpretation of prophecies regarding the signs of the End. I have chosen to begin with an analysis of the role of Israel in prophecy, because most Evangelical Christians strongly believe that the restoration of the State of Israel since 1948 represents the "center piece" of endtime prophecies. This view is bold taught by practically all the popular preachers today. This means that if what is widely believed and preached today about the role of Israel is prophecy, is based on a mistaken interpretation of relevant Biblical texts, there is a most urgent need to expose the fallacies of this teaching.

This essay represent a brief excerpt from a longer chapter I have written on this subject. Feel free to contact me for a copy of the whole chapter. May I express my gratitude again to all of you who have been sharing these Bible studies with your friends, inviting them to join our ENDTIME ISSUES FORUM. As a result of your endeavors, our list is growing by an average of 100 names. Thank you for making it possible for me to share my ministry of Biblical research with a larger audience.

ISRAEL IN PROPHECY

It is widely believed among Evangelical Christians that the steady return of Jews to Palestine during this century, and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948,

represent an amazing fulfillment of specific Old Testament promises made to the Israelites. Furthermore, this alleged fulfillment is viewed as the prelude to such final events as the Rapture, the Tribulation, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, the conversion of the Jews, the Return of Christ, and the establishment of the millennial Jewish kingdom ruled over by Christ from David's throne in Jerusalem.

Leon J. Wood aptly expresses this popular view in *The Bible and Future Events*: "The clearest sign of Christ's return is the modern state of Israel . . . One should realize that God's timetable could call for Israel to be in the land for many years before bringing the fruition of the age. But with the nation actually there, and with many factors concerning it fitting into conditions set forth in Scripture for the last days, . . . one may safely believe that Christ's coming is not far in the future."

Hal Lindsey is even more specific by asserting that the political restoration of Israel in 1948 is not only "one of the most important events of our age," but also "the most important prophetic sign to herald the era of Christ's return." He even boldly predicted in 1970 that "within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place."

A Remarkable Event. To say the least, the return of many Jews to Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel are most remarkable happenings. So it is not surprising that many Christians and Jews see in these events which have transpired in the Middle East the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. But is this a legitimate interpretation of prophecies?

It is quite possible to believe personally that the Jewish people have a moral or historical right to the land of Palestine and that God has providentially led in the establishment of the State of Israel, but can such a belief be legitimately grounded on Biblical prophecies? To answer this question, it is necessary briefly to examine at least some of the prophecies generally adduced in support of this belief.

Old Testament Restoration Prophecies

God's Promises to Israelites. There is, first, God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen 17:8; cf. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). In addition there are promises in some of the prophets that speak of a "second" return of the Israelites (Is 11:11) to their homeland "from all the nations" (Jer 29:14). Dispensationalists believe that this predicted return is supposed to be in unbelief (Ezek 36:24-26; cf. Jer 30). They find confirmation for such a belief in what is taking place today.

The restoration promises are viewed as unconditional literal promises whose fulfillment began for the first time in 1948 with the dramatic recovery of part of Palestine by the Jews. Previous possessions and dispossessions of the land of Canaan by the Israelites supposedly do not fulfill God's territorial promises for at least two reasons. First, God promised not temporary but "everlasting possession" of the land (Gen 17:8). Second, the Israelites have never possessed in the past all the promised land "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen 15:18).⁴⁵

Conditional Nature of God's Promise. The above literalistic interpretation of God's territorial promises ignores first of all their conditional nature. God's promise of land to Abraham's progeny was conditional on a continuing obedience to His covenant requirements: "God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations'" (Gen 17:9; cf. 18:19).

The conditional nature of the promise of the land in the Abrahamic covenant is clearly recognized in the Scriptures. Moses, for example, after the Kadesh rebellion, reminded the new generation that disobedience prevented their parents from entering the land of promise: "Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land which I swore to give to your fathers" (Deut 1:35; cf. Num 14:22-23).

Anticipating the expulsion of the Israelites from the land on account of disobedience, Moses admonished the people to "return to the Lord," who in turn would remember "the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them" (Deut 4:30-31; cf. Deut 30:2, 3; I Kings 8:47-50).

The conditional nature of God's promises is perhaps best stated in Jeremiah 18:9-10 where the Lord declares: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will repent of the good which I had intended to do it."

The principles established in this passage is that God's predictions of weal or woe for a nation are conditional upon obedience or disobedience. Obviously it is only by God's grace that believers can fulfill the conditions, but the fact remains that the conditions are there and no one has the right to take the "ifs" out of the Bible.

The Return in Unbelief. Dispensationalists refuse to apply the principle of the conditional nature of God's promises to the predictions regarding the return of the Jews to Palestine. They appeal to passages such as Ezekiel 22:17 and 36:24-28 to argue that "the Jews are to be gathered back to the land in a state of unbelief. The national conversion to Jesus Christ their Messiah will not take place until after they are restored to the land."⁴⁶ In other words, the territorial restoration of the Jews is supposed to precede their conversion to the Messiah.

Unfortunately, this belief is based on a misinterpretation of certain Biblical texts. For example, the statement found in Ezekiel 22:19-20, "I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath," is taken to refer to the present emigration of the Jews to Palestine in unbelief.

This interpretation is erroneous for at least two reasons. First of all, in the preceding verses Ezekiel is describing not the future but the contemporary situation of the Israelites by enumerating their sins which will cause God to scatter them "among the nations" (v. 15). Second, the gathering of the Jews "in my anger and in my wrath" refers not to their return to Palestine in unbelief, but to the finality of God's judgment upon their disobedience which historically took place through the Babylonian invasions and captivity.

This passage leaves no doubt that the purpose of the gathering is for judgment, not restoration. This is clear in the following verse where the Lord says: "I will gather you and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it" (Ezek 22:21). Thus the gathering in Ezekiel, like the assembling in Jeremiah (8:14), is for the purpose not of restoration and salvation but of judgment and destruction.

Regathering and Cleansing. The second "proof text" generally cited to support the return-in-unbelief view, is Ezekiel 36:24-25: "For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you." The fact that the promise of territorial restoration precedes the spiritual cleansing of the people in this passage is taken to mean that first the Jews will return to Palestine in unbelief and afterwards they will be cleansed and redeemed.

This conclusion is based on an artificial chronological sequence which cannot be derived from the passage. Ezekiel is not saying that the Lord first will regather the Israelites and then at a subsequent period He will cleanse them. He simply declares that God will do two things for His people: He will regather and cleanse them. No hint is given that the two events will be separated by an undetermined length of time.

The context of the chapter suggests that the regathering and the cleansing will take place at the same time, with the spiritual cleansing preceding rather than following the regathering: "On that day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt" (Ezek 36:33). Observations such

as these clearly show that Ezekiel 36:24-28 offers no proof for a twentieth-century return of the Jews in unbelief to Palestine.

Two Biblical Principles. Further support for this conclusion is provided by two basic Biblical teachings regarding the land of promise. First, historically it was unbelief that prevented the Israelites from entering the land of Canaan (Num 14:23; Ps 95:7, 11). This truth is reiterated by the author of Hebrews when he emphasizes that unbelief disqualifies anyone from entering the rest which the Sabbath typifies, whether it be the political rest in the land of Canaan (Heb 3:18-19; 4:6-8) or the spiritual rest of salvation (Heb 4:3, 9, 10). If unbelief prevented the initial entrance into the land of Canaan, it can hardly provide the condition accompanying a return to it.

Second, God rewards obedience, not disobedience, with the covenant privileges. The restoration predicted by the prophets is conditional in character. Israel will be restored "if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies" (1 King 8:38; cf. Hosea 11:10, 11; Deut 30: 2, 3, 9, 10).⁴⁷

A "Second" Gathering. Another prophecy viewed by many as a proof text for the present reconstitution of Israel is found in Isaiah 11:11: "in that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea."

Isaiah's reference to "a second" gathering of the remnant of Israel from many nations is viewed as being fulfilled today for the first time with the return of some Jews to the reconstituted State of Israel. The latter is seen as the prelude to the final regathering of Israel, which, to use J. F. Walvoord's words, "will have its culmination when Israel's Messiah returns to the earth in power and glory to reign."

This view rests on the assumption that the "second" gathering predicted by Isaiah was not fulfilled when a faithful remnant of Israel returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. under Zerubbabel and again in 457 B.C. under Ezra. Two main reasons are generally given. First, the return from the Babylonian exile was only from one nation, Babylon, and not "from all the nations" (Jer 29:14; cf. Is 11:11). Second, the return from the Babylonian exile was but a pale reflection of the grandiose return envisioned by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.

A Return "From All the Nations." The first reason ignores three significant facts. First, it was customary at that time to sell prisoners of war to other nations, so that they were dispersed far and wide (Joel 3:7; Jer 42-44; Ezek 27:13; Amos 1:6, 9). In a gradual return from captivity it would be natural for some of the widely dispersed Jews to go back to Palestine from many countries. This is what apparently took place after the Babylonian exile, since those who returned did not belong exclusively to the tribe of Judah but also to the other tribes as well (Ezra 2:59; 6Z:17; 1 Chron. 9:33, 34).

Second, the prophets sometimes fuse together references to a return from "the land of their captivity" (i.e. Babylon) with a return from "all the nations," because to their minds these expressions were simply variant ways of describing the condition of the Jews in exile and God's promised restoration. A good example is found in Jeremiah 30:10-11, where the two expressions are used interchangeably in the same passage: "Fear not, O Jacob my servant, . . . for I, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity . . . I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you" (cf. Jer 31:8, 11; 46:27).

Third, to apply literally and consistently Isaiah's prediction of "a second" gathering of Israel from many nations to the contemporary return of the Jews to Palestine would require that the Jews destroy or plunder or subjugate the Philistines, the Edomites, and Moabites, and the Ammonites, as stated in the context of Isaiah's prophecy: "They shall swoop down upon the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put forth their hand against Edom and Moab,

and the Ammonites shall obey them" (Is 11:14). Since these nations have long ago disappeared, it is hard to see how the Jews today could fulfill literally Isaiah's prediction of "a second" gathering.

This fanciful prophetic interpretation could be avoided simply by carefully reading the context, which clearly speaks of "a second" return of a remnant from Assyria, in relation to the first return from Egypt under Moses: "There will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant which is left of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt" (Is 11:16). Assyria is mentioned first (also in v. 11) presumably because Isaiah wrote these words after the Northern Kingdom had been deported to Assyria in 721 B.C. Thus this prophecy had a literal fulfillment when the Israelites returned from captivity in the sixth century B.C.

Limited Return from Babylonian Captivity. The second reason maintains that the trickle of Jews who returned to Palestine under Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. and under Ezra in 457 B.C. was only a pale reflection of the grandiose return envisioned by the prophets. Moreover, the Jews did not experience the economic prosperity and agricultural fertility predicted by the prophets (Is 35:1; 61:4). The surrounding nations were not destroyed and continued to threaten the Jews again and again. Consequently, one must look allegedly for a later fulfillment in the events of our time.

The return of the Jews to the land is now in progress. Israel has become the strongest military power of the Middle East. The soil is being reclaimed after centuries of neglect, through the diversion of water from the Jordan to irrigate the Negev desert. These developments have led many Christians to believe that that restoration prophecies are indeed being fulfilled today. A travel advertisement in Christianity Today (October 27, 1967) aptly expresses this popular belief: "Is Prophecy Being Fulfilled in the Bible Lands Today? Come and See."

Threefold Fulfillment of Restoration Prophecies

It can hardly be disputed that the restoration prophecies were not completely fulfilled in the post-exilic period and that it is appropriate to look for a fuller fulfillment at a later time. However, in looking for a greater fulfillment it is important to recognize that prophecies regarding the Land of Canaan and the restoration of Israel may be fulfilled in a threefold way: literally, figuratively, and antitypically.

Literal Fulfillment. God's territorial promise to Abraham's progeny was first fulfilled literally several times. Joshua, for example, declares: "The Lord gave to Israel all the land which he swore to give to their father: and having taken possession of it, they settled there . . . Not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass" (Josh 21:43, 45; cf. 1 Kings 8:56; Jer 32:21-23).

Similarly, the promised restoration of the Jews to Palestine predicted by the prophets found an initial literal fulfillment when a remnant of the Jews returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Jeremiah, for example, in the same passage where he announces the restoration of the Jews "from all the nations" (Jer 29:14), explicitly explains when the promised restoration would take place: "Thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place" (Jer 29:10). Daniel correctly understood that this prophecy would be fulfilled not at a distant future but in his own time (Dan 9:2).

Figurative Fulfillment. God's promise of the land to Abraham's progeny and of the restoration of Israel have also been fulfilled in a second way, figuratively. The New Testament explains that the land and blessings promised to Abraham's posterity have been fulfilled not only literally, in the past return of the Jews to Palestine, but also figuratively in and through the coming of Christ, Who is the intent and content of God's covenant with Abraham (Acts 3:25-26; 13:16, 32-33).

Paul explains that the promises which God "made to Abraham and to his offspring" (Gal 3:16) have been fulfilled through Christ, because He is the epitome of the true seed of Abraham. The fulfillment, however, consists not in a future repossession of Palestine by the Jews, but rather in the inheritance of the whole renewed earth by believers in Christ from all nations (Rom 4:13; Matt 5:5, 3; Rev 21:1-8).

Ingathering of the Gentiles. Not only God's territorial promise to Abraham's progeny, but also the later predictions regarding the restoration of Israel, are seen in the New Testament as fulfilled figuratively through the coming of Christ. At the Jerusalem Council, for example, after Peter, Paul, and Barnabas reported how God brought many Gentiles into the faith, James, who apparently presided over the council, said: "Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says that Lord, who has made these things known from of old'" (Acts 15:14-18).

James here quotes Amos's prophecy regarding the restoration of David's kingdom (Amos 9:11-12) which would bring about the ingathering of the Gentiles, and declares that this prophecy was being fulfilled through the ingathering of the Gentiles into the community of God's people. We have here a clear example of a figurative New Testament fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy regarding the restoration of Israel.

Noteworthy is the change made by James in translating Amos's prophecy. Amos's phrase "that they may possess the remnant of Edom" (Amos 9:12), becomes in Acts 15:17, "that the rest of men may seek the Lord." What this means is that James saw the fulfillment of Amos's prophecy not in a future political restoration of the Davidic dynasty that would militarily gain possession of the remnants of Edom, but rather in the spiritual reign of Christ which is voluntarily sought by believers. Here, then, the New Testament interprets figuratively an Old Testament prophecy regarding the restoration of Israel.

Antitypical Fulfillment. Prophecies about the Promised Land and the restoration of Israel will also be ultimately fulfilled antitypically—that is, in the final possession by all of God's people of the new earth of which Canaan was a type.

The Scripture indicates that the land of Canaan was a type of the inheritance of God's people in the new earth. Hebrews explains that Abraham and his believing descendants saw the ultimate fulfillment of the promised land of Canaan, not in a return to "that land from which they had gone out," but rather in reaching "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:15-16). Consequently Abraham, who had been promised the land of Canaan, "looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10).

The future "holy city" (Rev 21:10), to which Abraham looked forward, will be the antitypical fulfillment of God's promise to him of the everlasting possession of the land of Canaan. This promise will be fulfilled on the new earth for all the spiritual descendants of Abraham, believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Paul emphasizes this truth when he writes: "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29). As believers we are "heirs" to God's promise made to Abraham regarding the land of Canaan. This promise will be ultimately fulfilled when we reach the "better country" and "inherit the world" (Heb 11:6; Rom 4:13).

Messianic Restoration. The antitypical fulfillment also applies to the prophecies regarding the gathering of Israel from the dispersion. Isaiah's prediction of "a second" gathering of the remnant of Israel (Is 11:11) is given in the context of the Coming of the Messiah as a glorious Judge who "shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked" (Is 11:4). The outcome of

this final judgment will be peace, justice, and harmony in the natural world, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:5-9).

At the time of the final messianic restoration just described, "the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant" from many nations (Is 11:11). What this means is that Isaiah forecasts the second gathering of Israel, not merely to the land of Canaan, but to the Messiah Himself at the time when He will come as a Judge to restore justice, peace, and prosperity to this world. This gathering is not only for Israel, but for all believers from many nations. (Is 11:11).

The New Testament envisions this final gathering of believers from all nations at the glorious Return of Christ. At that time, "He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt 24:31). This final gathering will be not to the Middle East, but "from one end of heaven to the other" to the Savior. This is Christ's final antitypical fulfillment of Isaiah's predicted second gathering (cf. Matt 8:11-12).

Deeper Meaning of Israel and Canaan. The question could be asked: Why then do the Old Testament prophets speak so plainly of a national restoration of Israel to its land, when the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies is the inheritance of the new earth by the believers of all the ages? The answer is to be found in the fact that the Old Testament prophets often describe the ultimate blessedness by means of terms and experiences familiar to the Israelites of their days.

For the prophets the term Israel signified the people of God and the land of Canaan represented the promised blessings of peace and prosperity. Because of these deeper meanings, these terms could serve to express the hope for the ultimate realization of God's blessings for His people.

We noted in Chapter 2 that the "prophetic perspective" enabled the prophets to see the final divine visitation and restoration through the transparency of imminent historical events. In the same way the final gathering of all believers (Is 11:11; 49:6) is sometimes described by the prophets in terms of the regathering of the remnant of Israel to its land.

The above considerations on the literal, figurative, and antitypical fulfillments of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel lead us to conclude that there is a sense in which these prophecies were not fully realized in Old Testament times. However, their fuller realization must be sought, not in a political restoration of the Jews in Palestine, but in the universal gathering of all believers in the new earth.

To limit the fulfillment of these prophecies to a political restoration of the Jews in Palestine, whether it be now or during the millennium, is to ignore the witness of the New Testament which sees these prophecies fulfilled not in some future return of the Jews to Palestine but in the present gathering of believers into the church and in a future universal gathering of people from all tribes, peoples, and tongues in the new earth.

"The Times of the Gentiles." One of the prophecies most quoted by dispensationalists to support the present return of the Jews to the city of Jerusalem is Luke 21:24: "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Many Christians believe that this prophecy was fulfilled for the first time on June 6, 1967, when the Jews recaptured the Old City of Jerusalem, thus terminating its "treading down" by the Gentiles.

The reasoning for this view is aptly expressed by a leading dispensationalist theologian, C. F. Baker: "If this city is trodden down until a certain time, there must of necessity come a time following that when the city will not be trodden down . . . If this Scripture teaches anything, it teaches that the earthly Jerusalem is to be restored." Such reasoning sounds logical but it rests on a gratuitous interpretation of the adverb "until," besides ignoring Christ's overall teachings on this subject.

The primary function of the adverb "until" in the phrase "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" is to indicate the termination of the treading down of Jerusalem but not its restoration to a previous state of Jewish sovereignty. The adverb "until" (achri) in itself does not suggest a change to a previous situation. For example, in the admonition "Hold fast what you have, until I come" (Rev 2:25), the adverb "until" does not convey the idea of a change from a present condition of faithfulness to a previous condition of unfaithfulness (cf. Rev 2:10; 1 Cor 15:25).

In this statement Jesus simply says that for Jerusalem the condition of being trampled underfoot will not cease within fifty or a hundred years, but will continue right on until His Second Coming. The event which follows the fulfillment of "the times of the Gentiles" is not the restoration of Jewish sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem, but the Return of Christ (Luke 21:25-28).

Prediction of Destruction, not of Restoration. Note should be taken of the fact that in predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ said nothing about its restoration. What Jesus taught instead is that the special status of the Jews as a people of God had come to an end (Matt 23:38; Luke 19:41-44). In the parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard, the unfaithful tenants do not regain possession of the Vineyard at a later time, but lose it forever, as God gives it "to a nation producing the fruits of it" (Matt 21:41-43).

The same truth is expressed in the parable of the Wedding Feast, where the place of those who were originally invited to the feast is taken by all sorts of other people brought in from the street (Matt 22:1-10). Those who "sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" "come from east and west . . . while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (Matt 8:11-12).

This description of people coming "from east and west" alludes to certain prophetic descriptions of the return of the Jews from exile (cf. Is 43:5; Ps 107:3). Yet here Jesus clearly applies these prophecies to the gathering of all believing people, Jews and Gentiles. The New Testament foresees not the return of the Jews to a restored Jerusalem but the gathering of all believers to the New Jerusalem built by God Himself (Rev 21-22).

Conclusion. The unmistakable conclusion that emerges from this study of the major restoration prophecies is that none of these offers a forecast or even a hint of a restoration of the Jews to Palestine in our century as a prelude to the final events of earth's history.

We have found that the Scripture sees these prophecies as fulfilled literally when a remnant of Jews returned to Palestine from Babylon; figuratively when Christ came the first time to gather spiritually all believers unto Himself; and antitypically when Christ will return to gather physically His people "from one end of heaven to the other" to the new earth.

The view that the political restoration of the Jews in 1948 is "the most important prophetic sign to herald the era of Christ's return" is, then, a view which has no legitimate Biblical support. Unfortunately, however, such a mistaken view is the very basis upon which rests the popular scenario of End-time events promoted by popular Evangelical preachers today.

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