

Israel: Past, Present, and Future #11

Hebrews 11:8-16

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As we consider objections to Israel being restored to her land of old, let me emphasize again that though I believe the Scripture teaches Israel will yet be converted to Christ and become a Christian nation, will at that time be brought into the Church of Jesus Christ, and will dwell in her land in peace and safety among the nations of the world, nevertheless, I do not believe the Scripture teaches that this future converted Israel will re-build the temple, re-institute the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the ceremonies of the Old Covenant Church which were abolished in Christ at His death on the cross (Colossians 2:14).

For many Christians, the promise of the land to Israel and the re-institution of the Old Covenant ceremonies are bound together in God's future purpose for Israel. That I vigorously oppose and deny. The promise of the land to Israel is a national promise to be realized when Israel turns in faith to Jesus Christ; whereas the Old Covenant ceremonies have been nailed to the cross of Christ (the Church of the Old Testament was a Church underage but is now realized in the full-grown Church of the New Testament). Thus, Israel and all of the nations will in the future be united in the same olive tree (Visible Church), and profess and practice the same doctrine, worship, and church government. Israel as a nation has a future purpose in God's plan. Israel as an Old Testament Church has no future purpose in God's plan—but is realized in the New Testament Church and New Covenant in Christ's blood.

For the next couple sermons, we will be considering some objections to Israel's future inheritance of the land to dwell in it in peace and safety.

Our main points are: (1) Historical Confirmation That Believing Israel Will Inherit the Land; (2) An Objection: The Earthly Promise Land Was a Type of the Heavenly Promise Land (Hebrews 11:8-16).

I. Historical Confirmation That Believing Israel Will Inherit the Land.

A. I use historical testimony not as our primary standard for faith and practice (that belongs to Scripture alone), but as a confirmation of Scriptural truth in history (by way of godly and learned scholars of the past). Historical testimony does not establish truth (God's revelation alone in nature and Scripture does that). Historical testimony confirms God's truth that is already established by revelation. Before we consider the first objection, let us hear from some non-dispensational scholars/teachers from the past in regard to the future restoration of the land to a converted Israel. This position is not a recent innovation of dispensationalists in the last 200 years.

1. **John Owen**—sometimes called “the prince of English theologians” (1616-1683).

Moreover, it is granted that there shall be a time and season, during the continuance of the kingdom of the Messiah in this world, wherein the generality of the nation of the Jews, all the world over, shall be called and effectually brought unto the knowledge of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ; with which mercy they shall also receive deliverance from their captivity, **restoration unto their own land**, with a blessed, flourishing, and happy condition therein (*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:546).

2. **James Durham**—one of the most notable Scottish pastors/teachers of the Second Reformation (1622-1658).

Neither can that promise made to Israel (Deut. 30:2-4) that whenever they should repent the Lord would

gather them from the nations whither they were scattered, **and return them to their own land**, be thought void and null after Christ's coming, especially considering the general repentance and mourning which is to accompany their conversion. Therefore, it would seem by that promise **they may expect their own land**, it being a part of God's engagement to the natural seed of Abraham (Commentary on Revelation 16:12).

3. **Wilhelmus a Brakel**—one of the great pastors/teachers of the Second Reformation in the Netherlands (1635-1711).

Will the Jewish nation be gathered together again from all the regions of the world and from all the nations of the earth among which they have been dispersed? **Will they come to and dwell in Canaan and all the lands promised to Abraham, and will Jerusalem be rebuilt?**

We believe that these events will transpire. We deny, however, that the temple will be rebuilt, and that therein the previous mode of worship will be observed, which prior to Christ's coming was of a typifying nature and would then be of a reflective nature (*The Christian's Reasonable Service*, IV:530-531).

4. **J. C. Ryle**—Reformed Anglican minister (1816-1900).

I believe that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, **restored to their own land**, and converted to the faith of Christ, after going through great tribulation (Jer. 30:10-11; 31:10; Rom. 11:25-26; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9) [*Are You Ready For The End Of Time?*] (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 9; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties*].

5. **Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892).

There will be a native government [of Israel—GLP] again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land. Her sons, though they can never forget the sacred dust of Palestine, yet die at a hopeless distance from her consecrated shores. But it shall not be so for ever, for her sons shall again rejoice in her: her land shall be called Beulah, for as a young man marrieth a virgin so shall her sons marry her [i.e. the land—GLP]. **"I will place you in your own land," is God's promise to them** ("The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews" a sermon preached on June 16, 1864 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle).

6. **R.C. Sproul** (1939-2017).

The Jews as a people are presently under judgment. But as there was a national judgment, so there will be a national restoration. Their rejection, even though it was a national rejection, did not include the rejection of every individual. So the restoration doesn't necessarily mean that every individual Jew will be saved, **but the nation as a nation will be restored to God** [which includes the land—GLP] (Commentary on Romans 11:26).

B. What these biblical scholars agree upon is that the promise and fulfillment of the land to Israel was made to Israel as a nation and will be realized to Israel as a converted nation to Jesus Christ. These pastors and teachers did not envision that a restoration of a Christian Israel to its ancient land was a return to a rebuilt temple or to a re-established priesthood, sacrifices, and ceremonies. Those have passed away, and yet the fulfillment of the promise of the land to a converted Israel yet remains. God's purpose for the nation of Israel is not finished, though His purpose for the Old Testament Church of Israel is finished.

II. **The Earthly Promise Land Was a Type of the Heavenly Promise Land (Hebrews 11:16).**

A. This Letter of Hebrews is written to Hebrew Christians that are facing persecution for their faith

in Christ from unbelieving Jews. Paul (most likely the author) writes to encourage these Jewish Christians not to return to the Old Covenant, for Jesus Christ and the New Covenant is the fulfillment of all that was written concerning the Messiah to come in the Old Testament.

1. Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter, just as 1 Corinthians 13 is the love chapter. In it we find an inspired Hall of Fame of saints that trusted God and His promise, even when they could not see with their eyes or touch with their hands the full realization of God's promise. They walked by faith, not by sight. And yet their faith was not a blind/irrational faith, but a faith placed in a trustworthy God and in His firm promise (Hebrews 11:1—faith is based upon “substance”/“evidence” not seen).

2. This was true of Abraham whom God called out of his home in Ur of the Chaldees to go to a land that God would reveal to him, an earthly Promise Land that God would give to his seed/posterity after him. God not only promised this land to Abraham and His posterity, but swore an oath to give it as an “everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:7-8). Abraham saw by faith beyond the earthly Promise Land that God was promising him a heavenly Promise Land (Hebrews 11:16; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21—the New Heaven and New Earth).

3. Thus, the earthly Promise Land was a type or prophetic symbol of the heavenly Promise Land to Abraham and to all his posterity that had the faith of Abraham in trusting in Christ—the Seed of Abraham who would bring salvation to Israel and all the nations of the world.

B. I do not deny that the earthly Promise Land was a type of the heavenly Promise Land and that the earthly Promise Land is fully realized in the Heavenly Promise Land—I affirm it. That is how the earthly Promise Land becomes the “everlasting possession” of Abraham and his believing posterity (Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:1 ff).

1. This passage is sometimes used as an objection to a future restoration of the land to a converted Christian nation of Israel. How so? It is argued that the earthly Promise Land points to and is realized in the heavenly Promise Land. Thus, the earthly Promise Land fades away in the New Testament and what is left is the heavenly Promise Land. The Old Covenant consisting of the temple, priesthood, and ceremonies are abolished by the New Covenant and so is the promise of the land to Israel—it is an Old Covenant promise. Again, I agree that the Old Covenant Church (and its priesthood, sacrifices, and ceremonies) is realized/fulfilled in the New Covenant Church. However, the promise of the land to Israel is to Israel nationally—not to Israel ecclesiastically. The promise of the land is nowhere abrogated in the New Testament.

2. Hebrews 11:16 is only saying that Abraham saw by faith that the earthly Promise Land was a type of the heavenly Promise Land. The passage says nothing about the type having ended. I dare say that what Abraham saw by faith, so did Moses, David, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles. The earthly Promise Land was not only a type of the heavenly Promise Land to Abraham, but was a type to all of the saints that had the faith of Abraham. If the earthly Promise Land ceased to be a type of the heavenly Promise Land, when does the New Testament indicate that it ceased? I submit that it ceases forever to be a type only in the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1ff).

3. Perhaps some might say that the earthly Promise Land ceased to be a type at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 a.d.? However, weren't Jerusalem and the temple also destroyed and the people led into captivity in 586 b.c.? Did the earthly Promise Land cease to be a type of the heavenly Promise Land then? No, for the promise of being restored to their land was presented by God through the prophets after that, and God did restore His people under Persian kings to the earthly Promise Land (as a type of the heavenly Promise Land).

4. Likewise, God's promise to restore the converted nation of Israel to their land in the Messianic age is also explicitly prophesied in the prophets (Zechariah 12-14; Zechariah 2:10-12; Isaiah 19; Jeremiah 23:5-8) and is implicitly prophesied in Romans 11. The restoration of the earthly Promise Land to a

believing/repenting nation of Israel to live and dwell in safety has not yet been realized. Thus, the earthly Promise Land continues to be a type of the heavenly Promise Land even after 70 a.d.

5. As long as God's promise of the earthly Promise Land to a converted Christian nation of Israel is yet to be fulfilled, it continues to function as much as a type of God's promise of the heavenly Promise Land to all who trust alone in Christ alone as it did for Abraham.

6. If (hypothetically) there was no promise of Israel's future restoration to the earthly Promise Land, then it could no longer function as a type of the heavenly Promise Land (it may have done so in the Old Testament, but it could not do so presently or in the future). But that is the very point: there are many places that either explicitly or implicitly prophesy of the restoration of the Christian nation of Israel to the earthly Promise Land (which we have previously considered). That being true, the earthly Promise Land continues to be a type of the heavenly Promise Land. For the covenant God made with Abraham was/is an "everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7), and the Promise Land was included in that "everlasting covenant" and was called by God, an "everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8)—until it is fully realized in the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21:1ff).

7. Moreover, that "everlasting" promise of the land to a converted Israel has never been revoked by God in Scripture. God's silence in the New Testament is not a denial of the restoration of the earthly Promise Land to Israel, but a confirmation of it—it doesn't have to be repeated if it is "everlasting". Rather than believing that unless God repeats the promise of the land to Israel in the New Testament there is no future promise to be realized, we ought to believe that unless God revokes the promise of the land to Israel (contrary to Romans 11:28), there yet remains a future promise of the land to be realized to Israel.

8. Therefore, just as the earthly Promise Land was promised to Abraham, and yet at the same time it was a type to Abraham of the heavenly Promise Land; so today the earthly Promise Land is promised to the converted nation of Israel (Abraham's seed), and at the same time remains a type of the heavenly Promise Land. The earthly Promise Land only ceases to be a living, ongoing type of the heavenly Promise Land, when there is no longer an earthly Promise Land to be inherited or possessed by the converted Christian nation of Israel. That, I submit, will only be realized in the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21).

C. Application

1. How does this have relevance for us? The faithfulness of God to keep His promise to restore to the believing nation of Israel the earthly Promise Land assures us that He will be faithful to keep His promise to all who trust in Christ to bring them at death into that heavenly Promise Land to enjoy everlasting peace and safety from temptation, sin, death, tears, sorrow and suffering forevermore. In other words, rather than taking us back to rebuild the temple and to reinstitute all the Old Covenant ceremonies etc., the restoration of Israel as a Christian NATION to her Promise Land assures us that God will not fail to bring all who trust in Christ into that heavenly Promise Land.

2. There is also a challenge to us all here. Are we looking in faith to Christ (like Abraham) to usher us into that heavenly Promise Land? Is that a glorious expectation to us as we think about our death? If not, death will be a terrible fear to you. Have you become so preoccupied with this world that you do not see yourself (like Abraham) as an alien/pilgrim in this world, but rather has this world become your life? Abraham is given to us an example of faith because he believed God's Word and was willing to do the revealed will of God even if it meant leaving all that was familiar to him and all that he possessed in his homeland. He was willing to follow the revealed will of God over what was comfortable. He was walking by faith in God's Word, rather than by feelings or by what pleased him. He was denying himself, taking up his cross, and following Christ. God grant us that faith.

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