

PART VII THE CONCLUSION

During the past century, the approach to the study of the Old Testament has been subjected to confusion and violent attack by historical-critical scholarship. The scholars of this school of criticism mostly stop short at their historical investigations and have failed to make the results of their study relevant to our faith today. On the other hand, some evangelical scholars do not take the progress of revelation history seriously. They easily spiritualise Bible verses, taking everything to have been fulfilled in the person of Christ, and claim that now we, the church as a new Israel, inherit all those promises through Christ. Both of the above types of scholars have taken away the consideration for the important position of Israel in revelation history and in our faith. The Jew has been ignored because of the wrong attitude of Christians.

Our investigation testifies that Israel has not been forsaken for one single moment without the care of God through history. Israel was adopted as the chosen people of God through the covenants with Abraham, with the people at Sinai, and with David. When the people went astray, they were severely punished by being taken away from their own land. However, since the history of Israel started by God's sovereign initiative, their existence was not entirely dependent on the people's side, either. Since the existence of Israel was directly related to God's choice, the disgrace of the people of Israel from the nations resulted in profaning God's name (Ezk 36:16-20). But God was concerned for his holy name, and declared "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone" (Ezk 36:22). His decision was firmly expressed by his declaring that He would gather the people from where they were scattered and bring them back to their land which He gave to Jacob, their

forefather (Ezk 39:25). He would no longer hide his face from them, but would pour out his Spirit on "the house of Israel" (Ezk 39:29).

Although the Old Testament passages strongly stress the salvation of Israel, Yahweh's final purpose is not limited to Israel, but to the universal kingdom of God. The universality of Yahweh's kingdom is seen at the very beginning of the nation of Israel, namely the covenant with Abraham. The promise for the nations is not forgotten by the prophets, as it is even found in the salvation oracles of Israel. It can be stated that the purpose of the salvation of Israel was that "the nations will know that I am the Lord" (Ezk 36:23; 39:27-28). In other words, through the work of salvation, the nations become the people of Yahweh.

The great revival of Israel starts with the work of the Spirit upon the dead body of Israel (Ezk 37:1-14). The dead cannot rise from the graves by themselves, but only by God's mighty power. The nation of Israel will be re-established by the people of both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (Ezk 37:15-24). Yahweh's servant David will be king over them forever (Ezk 37:24; cf. Jr 23:5; 30:9; 33:14-17; 34:23f). Yahweh will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them (Ezk 37:26). Their sins will be forgiven; a new heart will be given to them; they will follow Yahweh's laws. He will put up his holy sanctuary and dwell among the people forever (v 26). "They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived" (v 25). They will enjoy prosperity with peace (Ezk 34:25-30; 36:33-38; Jr 31:5; 31:12-14; etc).

All these promises were given to those very same people who were scattered among the nations. Gathering and bringing them back to their own land is one of the most dominant promises. The land which was given to their forefathers (sometimes Jacob) is none other than the land of Canaan although some scholars spiritualise this as the heaven where we Christians may dwell. The strongest argument of spiritualisation, which is that of the new covenant being

fulfilled by Christ in the new believers (from the Gentiles) also cannot be sustained. The new covenant was given to the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jr 31:31). It was repeated to those in exile, and all the references came with the promise of the return (Jr 32:40; Ezk 34:25; 37:26). The new covenant is solely based on Yahweh's remembrance of the old covenant (the Sinai covenant) (Ezk 16:59f). Thus the continuity between the old and the new covenant is strongly stressed. The new covenant does not introduce any new provision, but makes the provisions of the old effective and durable forever by God's own hands. Therefore the theory of two different covenants, namely that the old covenant was for Israel and the new is for the church, cannot be maintained.

When the new covenant was sealed, Yahweh solemnly swore an oath:

This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars.....: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight...will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me" (Jr 31:35f).

Again He says:

"Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done", declares the Lord (Jr 31:37).

Who can change the decrees of nature? Who can measure the foundations of the earth and below? Then how can anyone claim that the nation of Israel was finished because of their hardening? This is a mystery which lies beyond human reason. However, this mystery is not an enigma (in a sense of a riddle), it is rather the plan of salvation revealed by God.

It is often argued that Haggai and Zechariah realised that these promises were fulfilled in their time. However, this is not true. The post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, still restate all the promises of restoration. Even Zechariah keep repeating the promise of returning to the land (Zch 8:7f; 10:8-12). The situation of the returned community is far from the reality of the eschatological community (Hg 2:10ff; Zch 7; 11:4ff). Those prophets rather envisage the eschatological hope of the future salvation. Those post-

exilic prophets also contained all three aspects of the restoration. Haggai emphasised the religious aspect in connection with the temple, while Zechariah provided long descriptions of restoring the nation (in the sense of the natural and political realm) in the visions and the apocalyptic. The priestly-kingly Messiah is distinctively introduced by Zechariah. The religious and political restoration of the nation will be accomplished by the priestly-kingly Messiah.

In the New Testament, the restoration of Israel is described more in terms of the religious aspect, meaning that the people once again become the people of God. However, other aspects are also not neglected. The Gospels say that the kingdom of God will come (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Lk 10:9; etc.). Luke 1:31-33 introduces the Messianic kingdom in connection with the Davidic covenant, saying that the Davidic king is to rule over the house of Jacob. However, the restoration of the nation cannot be understood to be like the old earthly kingdom of Israel. It is the Messianic kingdom. It must come at the end of earthly history. Amillennialists, like Verhoef (1967:14-28), deny the application of the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom to the millennial kingdom on earth. However, there can be no such a kingdom on earth before the second coming of Christ. Then, without spiritualising all the prophecies of the Old Testament, there would be no reason to deny such a Messianic kingdom on earth after the end of this earthly history.

The Messianic Kingdom will come about in all three dimensions, viz., the spiritual (religious), the political, and the natural. Considering the natural aspect, we are convinced that the kingdom will be on earth. But it will not be the same as the old kingdom of Israel, if we also take the other aspects into account. Under the rule of the Messianic king, the people of God will enjoy all kinds of blessing of nature. Yet it does not mean the old Davidic dynasty will be restored. The people will enjoy real communion with God. God will place his sanctuary among the people and He will dwell with the people permanently. With regard to the holy sanctuary, we must stress the true meaning of it, namely Yahweh's presence among the people. In this sense, the restoration

in the religious realm may not mean a return to the old cult. The sacrificial system along with the articles and the structure of the temple will become reality in the true sense. All these have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the spiritual sense, but they are waiting for the completion and the consummation when Jesus returns to earth again.

Considering the "spiritualisation" of Old Testament passages, one can say it is true that the church shares the promises of God given in the new covenant. But the church shares not only the promises of the new covenant but also those of the Abrahamic covenant. If the church shares the promises with Israel, it does not mean that the former has simply replaced the latter. The nations take the promises through the offspring of Abraham of which Jesus Christ is the representative (Gn 22:18; 26:4; Gl 3:16; see Part VI, 4.4.2.1). Christ is the mediator of the blessing for the nations. Jesus is not the body of the new covenant, but He is the medium of the new covenant. It means that He does not take all the promises into his own person or work, but that He brings the new covenant into effect. By means of Jesus, the Gentile believers enjoy the promise of the new covenant.

There is continuity between the church and Israel in terms of God's people. In the Old Testament, God's people were only called by the name of Israel, while in the New Testament, they are called by the name of the Church. In the New Testament time people from the nations come together with Israel to the people of God (Eph 2:12ff). The Gentile believers are grafted onto the people of God, in which the true Israel of the physical descendants of Abraham remains (Rm 11:17-24). The true Israel is not spiritualised to participate in the people of God, the church, but only the Gentile believers. The tree of Israel, which has a holy root (the patriarchs), is not cut down, but some bad branches are pruned away only.

At the present time Israel suffers because of her stubbornness. But she has a future. The new covenant passage was introduced by the eschatological

phrase, "Behold, the days are coming" (Jr 31:31). This eschatological hope continues through the exilic and post-exilic prophets. Although there seemed to be no hope among the Jews in the time of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Paul, all still envisaged a future for Israel. All those inspired prophets and Apostles had hope for the future of Israel, and yet why do we not have it?

The hope, for those prophets and the Apostle, was based on God's election of his people and this fact renders the idea that He should now reject them impossible (Munck, 1967:107). Paul's argument for the question, "has God rejected his people" (Rm 11:1f) sounds the promise of the Old Testament: "For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people" (1 Sm 12:22); "He will never forsake his inheritance" (Ps 94:14) (cf. Cranfield, 1979:543). The historical particularity of Israel, being the covenanted people of God, has persisted throughout revelation history: The time of Moses and Joshua, the time of David, the time of the exile and the post-exilic period. The covenant with Israel still remains in force at present (Rm 9:1-4) (Nygren, 1978:392). It cannot be denied or spiritualised "without calling in question the whole historical foundation of God's Revelation in the Old and the New Testament" (quoted by Coetzee, 1965:170, from Torrance).

The hope for Israel does not diminish the hope of the church. The hope of the church comes from the full number of the salvation of Israel and the nations. Yahweh's election of the people of Israel and his faithfulness to that election make the hope of the church stronger. As He works faithfully according to his promise to Israel, likewise, He will work faithfully according to what He has in mind for the church as a whole.

The restoration of Israel must be understood in terms of "continuity" and "discontinuity" of the new covenant from the old. Although we are living in the eschatological stage already fulfilled, we cannot think that everything has been fulfilled now. On the one hand we refute the theory that all promises

have been fulfilled in a spiritual way in the church (by seeing "continuity"); and on the other hand we also reject the assertion that those certain promises are being fulfilled by the establishment of the modern state of Israel (by seeing "discontinuity"). Ezekiel never speaks of the revival of the secular state of Israel, or the return to the state of the old Israel, but the revival of the nation through their conversion to the true religion of Yahweh. The fundamental element of revival is the restoration of the true relationship between Yahweh and his people. The restored kingdom of Israel will be ruled by David, the servant of Yahweh, namely the Messiah, and not by a secular leader. The kingdom will endure forever; and the people will dwell in safety and peace. The restoration of Israel must begin with their return to Yahweh by believing in Jesus Christ. The people Israel will finally return to the true worship of Yahweh. They will share the holy land along with the Gentile believers. Under the rule of the Messianic king the people of God will enjoy all the blessings which were given to them by the prophets. Yahweh will dwell among the people permanently. The true relationship between Yahweh and the people will be established. The city of Jerusalem will be dedicated to Him, and the whole city will become Yahweh's dwelling place, namely the sanctuary. It will be said: "The name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE" (48:30-35).

OUR DUTY AS CHRISTIANS TOWARDS ISRAEL

The church has neglected its duty towards the unbelieving Jews, by thinking that salvation history closed for them when the Gospel turned from them to the Gentiles. But now, after we have proved that this thought of the main-line church is wrong, and that the Scriptures testify to the future hope of Israel, what can we do for the unbelieving Jews?

First we must recognise the facts of the existence of Israel (or the Jews). Why and where did they come from? Is there no special meaning for their

existence, and are they nothing more than a nation (or a people) in the world? Look at the history: How long and how far they have been wandering all over the world; how much have they suffered; how much have they been shamed; how have they succeeded in keeping and preserving their identity and peculiarity? If we, so-called Bible believers, have a doctrine that everything in history is in God's hand, can we dismiss any meaning of the existence of Israel today? Ridderbos states:

To be sure, Paul then returns in his remarks to Israel and expresses a new hope for her future. But the main point of his entire profound reasoning does not concern itself with Israel's existence as a nation, but with consistency of God's election of Israel as an election of grace. This should teach us not to shift the main issue when arguing about the future of Israel in our day. God will never forsake his promises, but in these promises He never submits Himself to the will of man. This truth applies to individuals; it applies also to Israel (1971:319).

We firmly believe that "the zeal of Yahweh Almighty will accomplish" what He promised (Is 9:7). Then shall we wait for Him to do it?

What should we do for Israel? Once again let us borrow Ridderbos's words (1971:322):

I am convinced that before they can join us in our belief we have to join them. I would nearly say, in their unbelief, at least in their distrust in what we as Christians are saying to them. For they have heard and they have suffered too long from us to be ready to believe in Christian prophecy. Perhaps one of the reasons that Jesus cannot yet come back is that it will take many, many long periods of time before Christian prophecy can again reach the ears of Israel. Therefore, my friends, let us be vigilant, pray and watch and be sober. Pray that God may bring the full number of Israel in his eternal kingdom. Pray for that great day when God will bring together all his children from all nations, also from Israel.

FIELDS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following issues are suggested as fields for further study:

- 1) The conversation between Jew and Christian: A number of publications have come out of this area, but most Christian publications came from the New Testament background. A large area of common ground between the two is also to be found in the Old Testament background.

2) The restoration in the millennium kingdom: Amillennialists (mainly covenant theologians) deny the restoration of nature and the earthly rule of the Kingly messiah. And premillennialists or dispensationalists tend to apply eschatological predictions too literally. Since our study does not define the fulfilment of the promises, a balanced work is needed to continue our study. This study will also help to diminish the danger of the extreme view of certain dispensationalists who like to apply Bible verses to events of the world.

3) The damnation of Israel: Since our study is limited to dealing with the restoration aspect of Israel, the other aspect of judgment upon Israel needs to be researched. Since the history of Israel has been a repetition of damnation at the hand of Yahweh, the meaning of judgment should be defined. Such a study of judgment will illuminate the subject of restoration more fully.

ABBREVIATIONS

A GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

1p	first person
2p	second person
3p	third person
ANE	Ancient Near East
ca	ψ1θψα\ about
cf	ψρνξεθ\ compare
ch, chs	chapter, chapters
ed, eds	edited, edition, editor; editions
e.g.	εχεμτωι λθαττα\ for example
esp	especially
ET	English translation.
et al	ετ αωιι\ and others
f, ff	following, followings
fm	feminine
fn	in the food note
ibid	ιβιφεμ\ in the same place
i.e.	ιφ εστ\ that is
impf	imperfect
LXX	Septuagint
m	masculine
MS, MSS	Manuscript, Manuscripts
MT	Masoretic text
NT	New Testament
op cit	ρ+εθρ ψιτατρ\ In the work cited
OT	Old Testament
p, pp	page, pages
pl	plural

si	singular
Targ	Targum
viz	ⲕⲓⲫⲉⲱⲓⲫⲉⲧ\ as above
vol	volume
v, vs	verse, verses
Vul	Vulgate

* The abbreviations for chapter(s) and verse(s) of the Bible will be used without period (e.g., v and ch). If they are used with period (e.g. ch.), they will refer other reference books than the Bible.

B ABBREVIATIONS FOR MODERN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

AmT	An American Translation
ARV	American Revised Version
ASV	American Standard Version
GNB	Good News Bible
JB	Jerusalem Bible
KJV	King James Version
LB	The Living Bible
NAB	New Afrikaans Bible
NAmB	New Americal Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version

C ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT

Gn	Genesis	Ec	Ecclesiastes
Ex	Exodus	Can	Song of Solomon
Lv	Leviticus	Is	Isaiah
Nm	Numbers	Jr	Jeremiah
Dt	Deuteronomy	Lm	Lamentations
Jos	Joshua	Ezk	Ezekiel
Jdg	Judges	Dn	Daniel
Ruth	Ruth	Hs	Hosea
1 Sm	First Smuel	Jl	Joel
2 Sm	Second Samuel	Am	Amos
1 Ki	First Kings	Ob	Obadiah
2 Ki	Second Kings	Jn	Jonah
1 Chr	First Chronicles	Mi	Micah
2 Chr	Second Chronicles	Nah	Nahum
Ezr	Ezra	Hab	Habakkuk
Neh	Nehemiah	Zph	Zephaniah
Es	Esther	Hg	Haggai
Job	Job	Zch	Zchariah
Ps	Psalms	Ml	Malachi
Pr	Proverbs		

NEW TESTAMENT

Mt	Matthew	1 Tm	First Timothy
Mk	Mark	2 Tm	Second Timothy
Lk	Luke	Tt	Titus
Jn	John	Phlm	Philemon
Ac	Acts	Heb	Hebrews
Rm	Romans	Ja	James
1 Cor	First Corinthians	1 Pt	First Peter
2 Cor	Second Corinthians	2 Pt	Second Peter
Gl	Galatians	1 Jn	First John

Eph	Ephesians	2 Jn	Second John
Phlp	Philippians	3 Jn	Third John
Col	Colossians	Jude	Jude
1 Th	First Thessalonians	Rev	Revelation
2 Th	Second Thessalonians		

D Abbreviations for Periodicals, Series, and Reference Works

ASTI	Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem
Bib	Biblica
BASOR	Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research
BDB	Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament, by F Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, second edition, 1978 (2nd ed.)
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BS	Biblica Sacra
BWAT	Beitrage zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testment
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBA	The Catholic Biblical Association of America
CBQMS	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBSC	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
CTMis	Currents in Theology and Mission
CTMon	Concordia theological monthly
EvT	Evangelische Theologie
ExT	Expository Times
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
Int	Interpretation
IB	The Interpreter's Bible
ICC	The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments

IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Nashville/NY: Abingdon
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JB	Jerusalem Bible, Standard Edition, 1966.
JETS	Journal of Evangelical Theological Society
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary of the Old Testament
NIDNTT	The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, C. Brown (ed.). Exeter: Paternoster
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	New Testament Studies
NTWSA	Die Nuwe Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
OTWSA	Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika
RQ	Restoration Quarterly
RThR	Reformed Theological Review
SCM	Student Christion Movement Press
ThS	Theologische Studien.
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, G. Kittel (ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TWZAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament
USQR	Union Seminary Quarterly Review
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

TRANSLITERATIONS OF HEBREW

א	a	מ	m
ב	b	נ	n
ג	g	ס	s
ד	d	ע	'
ה	h	פ	p
ו	w	צ	š
ז	z	ק	q
ח	ḥ	ר	r
ט	ṭ	ש	ś
י	y	ת	š
כ	k	ת	t
ל	l		