

The Return of Israel

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GOD said of the people of Israel, "Ye are my witnesses" (Isa. 43:12). For many centuries they have witnessed to the truth of His word by their scattered and suffering condition; but their history in the last fifty years -- even while their sufferings have been intensified a hundredfold -- has borne witness in another way. The revival of their spirit as a nation, their return to their ancient land, their achievements in founding agricultural colonies and restoring fertility to its wastes, and their establishment as an independent State, are all evidence that the words of the prophets are being fulfilled.

What does this development mean? Readers of the Bible know that it is not merely one more nationalist movement. It is the most vital event in our day, because it has a central place in the whole purpose of God for the future of mankind.

1. The hope of the gospel is the hope of Israel. To be in a saved position is to have this hope, and to be a fellow-heir with Israel of the promises made to them, and a fellow citizen of their commonwealth.

"Ye are called in ONE HOPE " (Eph. 4:4). "The hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23). "For the HOPE of Israel I (Paul) am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20). "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). "I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which hope our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night hope to come" (Acts 26:6-7). "Whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of THE HOPE steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

"It is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:5-6). "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners (aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12), but fellow citizens with the saints: and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). "He is a Jew which is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:29). Gentile believers are described as a wild olive branch grafted on the good olive tree (Rom. 11:17).

2. It is a hope including, among other elements, the restoration of Israel's kingdom.

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). "In the regeneration (restoration) when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory (that is, when he comes again (see Matt. 25:31), ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as

my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30). "Jesus Christ... whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

3. The Prophets referred to in these words have plainly foretold the gathering of Israel from their dispersion throughout the world, and the restoration of the kingdom of David which was overthrown. This, they show, is to come in an age when Christ (the Messiah) shall reign with his immortal saints. Their subjects will be all mankind, who will be freed from the evils that now oppress them.

SCATTERED AND GATHERED. "He that scattered Israel will gather him" (Jer. 31:10). "He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12). "Like as I have watched over them to pluck up, and to break down, and destroy, and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build, and to plant, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:28). "For thus saith the Lord: Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them" (Jer. 32:42). "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah" (Jer. 33:14).

THE DIVINE SON OF DAVID. "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 33:15-16).

FOR GOD'S SAKE. "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you unto your own land" (Ezek. 36:22-24). "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. 54 :7-8). "And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever" (Micah 4:7). "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, THERE SHALL COME OUT OF ZION THE DELIVERER, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:1, 2,12, 25, 26). "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23). "And all

the nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3:12).

PEACE AT LAST. "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4).

From these passages it must be clear that one cannot be a member of the household of God without sharing in the hope that belongs to the "commonwealth of Israel": and outside the household of God there is no hope; for in that position a man is "without God, in the world" (Eph. 2:12). In other words, the hope of Israel is the hope for all men, and none can be saved apart from it. True, it pertains to the people of Israel in the first place (Rom. 9:4) ; but it is not offered on grounds of blood, but of faith. And so the believing Gentile, once "afar off", has been "brought near" through Christ so that he too may share in that salvation which is "of the Jews". This is the theme expounded by the Apostle Paul in Eph. 2, which is briefly quoted under the first proposition