

DO THE SCRIPTURES FORETELL THE RETURN OF THE JEWS TO PALESTINE.

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In the statement of belief issued by the recent prophetic conference in Philadelphia, the fifth article is as follows: "We believe that there will be a gathering of Israel to her land in unbelief and she will afterward be converted by the appearance of Christ." Dr. Schofield says: "The proof of the re-gathering of Israel is embarrassing in its richness. Where shall we begin in the Bible to look for it? Genesis is filled with it, also Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. It is the beginning and the ending of the so-called prophetic books from Isaiah to Malachi. Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans are rich in this teaching. It is the warp and woof of the Bible." The *Sunday School Times* is devoted to the maintenance of the proposition that the Jews must go back to their own land, that its non-fulfillment would be proof absolute that God's word could not be depended on. God's veracity and the Jewish restoration are inextricably bound together. The question arises, Why were the Jews driven from their land, why did it cease to be theirs, why were they scattered among the nations? The answer is found in one short sentence: they disobeyed God, they turned their backs on Him and He turned His back on them. It was God's heavy penalty that came upon them. Jesus taught that the kingdom was taken from them. Having been expelled from Palestine for their disobedience, the conference affirms that they will be restored to their own land while disobedient. God punished them for their disobedience and rewards them by restoring them in unbelief. There will be needed a new John Milton to justify the ways of God to men in showing the consistency of God in His moral government in punishing for disobe-

ence by expelling them and rewarding them for disobedience in restoring them while unbelieving.

This discussion has no reference to the Zionist movement. It may be that for national, economic, and religious reasons there may be a large Jewish movement to Palestine and that in some form a Jewish state will be formed. Prominent English statesmen have given a project of this kind their hearty endorsement. The present discussion has reference only to this: Do the Old and New Testament Scriptures stand committed to such a restoration? Is God by His word and promise pledged to it? Are the Scriptures responsible for a belief in a restoration of a Jewish state as a religious institution, as part of God's plan for His old-time people, so that not to believe it is a mark of distrust in Him?

There are three distinct conceptions on this subject. There is the Jewish conception. The Jews hold, and on their principles consistently hold, that they should, as a people, be gathered from their dispersion and restored to their ancient territory; that there the temple shall again be built and its worship set up anew after the handwriting of Moses; and that as thus established and presided over they shall stand politically at the head of all the nations of the earth. There are not wanting evangelical Christians who entirely agree with the Jews in their interpretation and confidently anticipate their restoration to their native land, also a re-institution of the rites and services of the law to be performed in a Christian spirit and frequented by Christian worshipers from every region of the earth. The second view concurs only so far as the national restoration to Palestine is concerned, along with a certain pre-eminence in honor and Christian influence beyond what shall be possessed by any other people in Christendom. The Moody Bible School stands openly committed to this view, all the members of the faculty yearly affirming their allegiance to the Niagara platform embracing this tenet. The third view holds

that as it is impossible to divide, in the work of interpretation, between the national restoration of the Jewish people and the re-establishment of their ancient polity and worship, rejects the one as well as the other and holds that the proper meaning of the prophecies, insofar as they bear on the future of Israel is to be made good simply by the conversion of the people to the Christian faith and their participation in the privileges and hopes of the Church of Christ. Those who adopt this view take their stand on distinct New Testament principles, and contemplating all that is written in the Old Testament Scriptures of gospel times, in a New Testament light, they apply uniformly one and the same rule to the prophecies which bear on the future of the covenant people. What it obliges them to hold in respect of the religion and the more distinguishing principles of Israel they feel constrained to hold in respect to their land and polity. They hold that the Christianity which has abolished circumcision and the sacrifice has abolished along with other distinctions those also of land and people and leave no room for any name or commonwealth in the Kingdom of Christ but that of one body, formed out of all peoples and tribes knit together by the bond of a living faith and a common participation in the blessings of Christ's redemption. This principle of interpretation must be held to as controlling all the prophecies of every kind in the Old Testament—we are to interpret all the Old Testament writings in the light of New Testament principles. We cannot allow any prophecies in the older Scriptures, whatever their face value may be, to interfere with or subvert plain New Testament teaching. We must read and interpret Leviticus in the light of the letter to the Hebrews. We are to understand the Old Testament in the light cast upon it by the New Testament.

I. The Scriptures teach that Judaism, with its institutions, ordinances, sacrifices, priesthood, was of divine appointment. It came as a revelation from God, speaking

truth for the time. It spoke the truth so far as it went, but it was not meant to be perpetual. Its teachings were fragmentary, temporary, educative, typical, prophetic. The contrast between the older and the newer covenants is brought out clearly in Hebrews 1:1-4. Jesus affirmed the divine origin of Judaism in the words, "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). The Jewish people was Jehovah's heritage; it was a kingdom of God, but God had something better in mind when the Christian commonwealth introduced by Christ took its place. The Jewish institutions were all of Jehovah's appointment, they spoke of and for and from Him, but they were only shadows of His teaching to be done away with when the larger teachings came through Christ. The land promised the fathers was God's land, given to them, separated from other lands that here He might train and lead them that being God's people in God's land all peoples might see that God was real and dwelling among them and thus they might be led to seek Him. And this land also was typical, a prophecy of a larger possession obtained for God's people through Christ. Jesus came into the world as heir of an inheritance; it was the inheritance of the earth as given up to Him to be freed from the curse of sin and made a home for God's people. (Rom. 8:21.)

Jehovah in establishing Judaism had Christianity in mind—it is an undeveloped Christianity. The altar prefigured the cross, the animal sacrifices were a prophecy of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; the Levitical priesthood has been displaced by the priesthood of all believers. Judaism had one central material temple. Christianity has made of all the world a temple, where men may acceptably worship God. Under Old Testament forms there was contained a truth that New Testament times have enlarged. Because they taught in an imperfect way, they were of necessity transitory—"imposed until a time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10). Ritual, temple, priesthood, people, land, sacrifices, all

have lost their hold on men because Christ has brought larger things in their place.

II. Christ is the heir of the promises made to Abraham. In Genesis 12:7, Jehovah said: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." The promise was repeated to Isaac and to Jacob. It is said therefore by many that the title deed to this land is vested in the Jewish race. If it be not returned to them and held by them, God's promise has been broken. There is a threefold promise that Abraham's seed shall possess the land. The question, Who are Abraham's descendants? is discussed by Paul in Galatians 3:16: "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken and to his seed. He saith not And to seeds, as of many; but as of one And to thy seed which is Christ." Abraham has no descendants, who can claim any promise, except believers in Christ—"so then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). When men take a census they enroll all physically descended from Abraham as Jews. When God takes a census only those are classed as Jews who have the faith of Abraham. He is a Jew who is circumcised in heart, not in body. (Rom. 2:28.) If the natural descendants of Abraham are not in possession of the promised land, has God therefore broken His word? Paul makes answer in Romans 9:6: "But it is not as though the word of God hath come to naught. For they are not all Israel that are of Israel; Neither because they are Abraham's seed are they all children." Are there no promises to Abraham and his descendants? Yes, to those who are in God's sight real Jews, to those who are his spiritual descendants. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). Who are Jews in 50 A. D. and in 1919 A. D.? Paul makes answer in Phil. 3:13: "We are the circumcision who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus." Where is Israel? Who are Israelites? Galatians 6:16 affirms that the Christian body is the true Israel. "Peace be upon

them and mercy and upon the Israel of God." Where is Mt. Zion? In New Testament times, it is not in Jerusalem, but in the spiritual new Jerusalem. Coming down from God out of Heaven. (Heb. 12:22.) Christianity, with its spiritual geography, furnishes the location of the present day city of God. Jesus Christ, Christianity, the Christian commonwealth is the heir of all the promises. Whatever there is of promise in Old Testament times, of growth and glory has passed over to its heirs; Judaism lives in a larger way in Christianity. In representing the saved in Revelation 7:5-8, "the innumerable company", they are described under the figure of the Twelve Tribes. The New Testament looks upon the Church of Christ as the true Israel. This principle is announced by Jesus in Matthew 12:47-50, flesh and blood relationship do not count, only a spiritual kinship. The man who does God's will is Jesus' mother, brother, sister. Such outward distinctions as descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have been displaced by relationship to God through Jesus Christ. This is an abiding and controlling New Testament teaching. Physical heredity counts for nothing in giving a man a standing before God. All interpretations of the Bible must be subordinate to this principle.

.III. Any method of interpretation that favors a Jewish restoration must, of necessity, stand for the re-establishment of the rites and sacrifices of the Old Testament. The regaining of the land means the rebuilding of the temple and its worship. Zechariah 14:16 has this prophecy of gospel times: "Every nation shall go up from year to year to worship Jehovah of hosts and to keep the feast of Tabernacles." Is this to be taken in a literal sense? It cannot be. What Zechariah means is that in the after times, through Jesus Christ, should come a time of universal joy and rejoicing such as was manifested by the feast of Tabernacles. He spoke in Old Testament terms, the only intelligible terms in which he could speak, of New Testament times. Malachi 1:11 says: "For from the

rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering." Did Malachi mean that everywhere should be an altar of incense and that sheep and goats should be brought for sacrifices. No; that is morally impossible of conception. He predicted, under Old Testament terms, the only way in which he could speak, that the times would come when men everywhere would praise God and would offer, not the lame and defective, in sacrifice, but the pure offering of a devoted life. Ezekiel in chapters 40-46 describes a great and gorgeous temple such as the world never saw in a holy city which would be a physical impossibility in Palestine. He portrays the city as covering three to four thousand square miles, taking up almost the whole of Judea. From this prediction, inspired by the Spirit of God, are we to look for any such temple holding that God's word is pledged to impossible things? In Ezekiel's day the holy city was in ruins, the walls were levelled to the ground, the temple destroyed. Ezekiel, with his mind illumined by the Holy Spirit, looked ahead and portrays a time when godliness would triumph and God's glory shine through the world, when the no-temple of his day would give way to a building vast in size. It was a picture of the triumph of Christianity. Under Old Testament figures he described New Testament times. In Ezekiel 40:39, the prophet has these words: "Two tables on this side and two tables on that side to slay thereon the burnt offerings and the sin offerings and the trespass offerings." When it was God's revealed purpose to throw aside, through Christ, all these animal sacrifices, would He inspire His prophet to predict their continuance and permanence in New Testament times? Tyndal, the scientist, said that twice two might make five somewhere in the universe if the statement were made often enough. It would be as impossible of conception to think of sin offerings since Christ made the once-for-

all offering as it would be to conceive of a change in the multiplication table. All that he could possibly have meant was that in the after days there would be complete provision for the forgiveness of all sin. It is a religious monstrosity that evangelical teachers today affirm that in the restored land will be a re-constituted worship with actual sin offerings. A temple now with sacrifices would be a denial of the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. He who sacrificed before Christ confessed the Messiah; he that would sacrifice now would solemnly deny Him. Rejecting the re-establishment of the Old Testament ritual, we reject that which is joined with it, the return of the Jews to the land of promise. Did these prophets understand the full meaning of their foretellings? Perhaps not, for Peter says (1 Pet. 1:11): "Searching what time or manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

IV. The Old Testament people, ordinances and land were all types of higher things to come to be fulfilled by and merged, in New Testament times, into the Christian dispensations. When so fulfilled, they of necessity disappear. The Jewish nation, a selected people, was an imperfect Kingdom of God. This has been replaced by the New Testament Church, a real, spiritual Kingdom of God. Persons became members of the Jewish kingdom by a physical birth; they became members of the Kingdom of God by a spiritual birth. The sheep and oxen gave way to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The altar symbolized the cross. The blood of animals has been replaced by the blood of Jesus that atones for sin. The priest is now the believer (1 Peter 2:5), for the Jewish high priest we now have the great high priesthood of Jesus. The Day of Atonement prefigured the death of Christ. Paul says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). There was a temple where God placed His name. Jesus gave us a world

without a temple, as essential for right worship, by making all the world a temple (John 4:23). Paul taught that these outward rites are weak and beggerly elements (Gal. 4:9), shadows to disappear when the substance comes (Heb. 10:1). The land itself was also a type and prophecy of something larger, not the regetting of that land, but that of which the Hebrew fathers had a glimpse, "a better country, even a heavenly". Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit"—not a Palestine, but "the earth". Through Jesus Christ the children of Abraham inherit all things (1 Cor. 3:21). In Him the Old Testament is interpreted and fulfilled. The Old Testament is useful as a steppingstone, not as a resting place.

There is nowhere in the New Testament any statement, express or implied, teaching the restoration of the chosen people to their land. Concerning the statement in Acts 1:8, Dr. J. M. Gray says, "In answer to the question 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' Jesus did affirm that the kingdom will be restored, but it is not for you to know when". Without doubt, the disciples asked the question in a political sense. We have no more reason to affirm that the sense in which they understood the words of Christ was the sense in which He employed them than it was when He spoke of destroying the temple and rearing it in three days (John 2:21). It was the descent of the Holy Spirit alone which fitted them for entering properly into the meaning of any of our Lord's sayings. The utter disappearance from their thoughts and language after that event of all reference to a national kingdom of Israel, separate from the Church of Christ, is quite sufficient to show how great a change their sentiments had undergone. A careful reserve was maintained by our Lord in His teachings. When we turn to His parables, in which He indicated more concerning the future of His Church than He could do in His direct discourses, we find Him presenting almost every possible aspect of its coming fortune and destiny,

yet without once conveying an intimation that any of them were to turn upon the separate nationality or distinctive privileges of the national Israel. The Kingdom is always presented as a unity in nature, privilege and destiny with no national or fleshly distinctions such as would be occasioned by a separate national Jewish life. Paul, who had every inducement from his official calling and circumstances to speak in the most conciliatory tone of his countrymen and who does speak at length of their general fate and of their future recovery, utters not one word concerning their separate position, their local habitation or their distinctive worship. On the contrary, he represents their return simply as a reconciliation with the one spiritual body from which, for a time, they were cut off. He affirms in Romans 9:6 that the unbelieving Jews have no claim on God's promises, for they are not Abraham's real children, while the believing Jews are Christians and share in Abraham's world promises (Romans 4:13). It is maintained by some that the restored nation will come to the place of religious leadership, a national supremacy, the head of the nations and not the tail. This teaching is against the principle of New Testament democracy and catholicity. Christianity is a spiritual democracy. In God's Kingdom there is no provision for a primacy among His people founded on racial lines. In Paul's words, Jesus Christ breaks down distinctions and makes one new man. In God's Kingdom there is neither Jew nor Greek nor Scythian, there is one organic unity. There is no place in God's spiritual Kingdom for a division or headship founded on racial lines. Whatever of primacy there will be will depend upon goodness and character. All other distinctions are out of place in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Himself a democrat. When the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of Christ, the Jewish nation will not stand out apart from the others. Were it to do so, it would not be a continuation or a renewal of the past but

the introduction of an entirely new principle into the Kingdom of God.

V. The literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, which lies at the basis of the Jewish restoration idea, is oftentimes unnatural, impossible and unbiblical. Zechariah 12:12-14 is commonly urged as one of the clearest proofs of the permanently separate condition and restoration of the Jewish people in the latter days. But this passage affirms the existence of the old organization, the permanence of the old families (Zech. 12:11-13). In other prophecies of like nature the priests and Levites are mentioned as still existing, even the children of Zadok. Such distinctions involve not a resuscitation of an old but the creation of a new state of things. In Isaiah 66:23, the prophet speaks of a central place of worship to which all will go up. In the Christian dispensation this, in a literal sense, will be a moral impossibility. Jesus decided that question in John 4:23. Isaiah speaks of Egypt and Assyria as on an equality with Israel in spiritual things (Isaiah 19:23-25). But these countries have been dead and buried for many centuries. The same literal spirit must believe that David himself in person will be king over them (Ezek. 37:24). In a very real sense Jesus, David's greater son, is reigning over the spiritual Kingdom of David (Luke 1:32; 1 Pet. 3:22). Jesus found Elijah in John the Baptist.

The people of Israel were a chosen people typical of a redeemed nation. When the redemption came through Christ, then the Church became the spiritual Israel. In like manner the ordinances imposed on the people were prophecies of larger things. When the reality came through Christ, then temple, sacrifices, priesthood, of necessity, passed away. The rent veil showed the priesthood of all believers. The inheritance, a visible pledge of God's favor, as long as they were obedient, was an image and prophecy of the final portion of the redeemed. The second psalm speaks of Christ as the heir of the world

to the uttermost parts. The seed of Abraham is merged into the flock of Christ. The conversion of the Jewish nation gives no more warrant for the repossession of their former land than for expecting that the temple will be rebuilt and animal sacrifices re-established. It is of interest to note that the Church fathers with one voice and the Christian writers down to the seventeenth century rejected as chimerical the Jewish expectation both of a territorial restoration and of a revived Judaism. Jerome has these words: "Let the wise and Christian reader take this rule for prophetic promises that those things which the Jews and our Judaizers held to be going to take place carnally we should teach to have already taken place spiritually." Jerome follows Paul in his method of interpretation.