

THE DIVINE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL¹

I. Introduction

A. The Question of Israel's Future

- Zechariah 8:20–23 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘*It will yet be* that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. ²¹ ‘The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, “Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go.” ²² ‘So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.’ ²³ “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” ’ ”
- Isaiah 2:2–4 Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.
- Does the Bible predict an eschatological restoration of the nation of Israel at the end of the present age?
- Matthew 21:43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.”
- Thomas Schreiner: “The salvation of Israel at the end of history...is the fulfillment of the covenantal promises that were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God will not forsake his people but has pledged, in accordance with his covenantal love, to graft them again onto the olive tree.”²

¹ Notes adapted from Dr. Matt Waymeyer, TH 701 course on Eschatology and Ecclesiology.

² Thomas R. Schreiner, Romans, vol. 6, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 626.

B. The Challenge of Supersessionism

- Supersessionism: The view that the NT Church is the new and/or true Israel that has forever superseded the nation of Israel as the people of God.
- Herman Ridderbos: “The church...as the people of the New Covenant has taken the place of Israel, and national Israel is nothing other than the empty shell from which the pearl has been removed and which has lost its function in the history of redemption.”³
- Bruce Waltke: “National Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the New Covenant.... The Jewish nation no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God’s purpose for Israel.”⁴
- Lorraine Boettner: “It may seem harsh to say that ‘God is through with the Jews.’ But the fact of the matter is that He is through with them as a unified national group.”⁵
- RC Sproul: “The biblical view (which is sometimes mistakenly called ‘replacement theology’) does not say that the church ‘replaces’ Israel. Rather, it affirms that true Israel always was, always is, and always will be comprised of those who trust in Christ alone for salvation.”⁶
- Liam Goligher: “It’s not that Israel has been replaced. [Rather], Israel continues as the people of God.”⁷

³ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 354–55.

⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988) 274. According to Waltke, “no clear passage teaches the restoration of national Israel,” and “the Jewish *nation* no longer has a place as the special people of God” because “that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God’s purposes for Israel” (ibid., 274–75).

⁵ Lorraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1957) 89-90. According to Bright, “The New Testament triumphantly hails the Church as Israel . . . the true heir of Israel’s hope” (John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1953] 226).

⁶ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/people-god/>

⁷ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/conferences/the-truth-of-the-cross-2014-regional-conference/questions-and-answers-2/>

C. The Issue of Sound Hermeneutics

- Lorraine Boettner: “It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, that they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over the other nations.”⁸

KEY QUESTION: Should prophecies be “taken literally”?

- The way in which a text is understood is via authorial intent and the original audience. What did the author intend? What would the original audience have heard?
- Matt Waymeyer: “Because God intends that we understand the Bible, a given passage of Scripture – like any other piece of literature – must contain only one meaning.”
- Walt Kaiser: “It never ceases to amaze me how those interpreters who wish to fight the theory that meaning is single-fold and always a return to the author’s own meaning demand that all who read their own papers and books do so with the understanding that their meaning is singlefold and must be understood literally.... Any successful exegete must face the question of intentionality. We are most confident that the meaning of any given word (and therefore its text and context) will be discreetly contained in a single intention of the author.”

II. The Foundation of the Biblical Covenants

- The future of Israel in the redemptive plan of God is built upon the foundation of the various covenants that Yahweh made with the nation in the Old Testament.

A. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12, 15, 17)

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

⁸ Lorraine Boettner, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*; Ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1977) 95.

1. The Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant

- Foundational
- Irrevocable (Gen 15:9-17)
- Everlasting (Gen 13:15; 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron 16:16-17; Ps 105:9-10)

2. The Promises of the Abrahamic Covenant

a. The Blessing of Abraham

- “I will bless you” (Gen 12:2)
- “I will make your name great” (Gen 12:2)
- “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse” (Gen 12:3)

b. The Making of the Nation Israel

- “I will make you a great nation” (Gen 12:2)
- “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth” (Gen 13:16)
- “Look toward the heavens, and count the stars....so shall your descendants be” (Gen 15:5)
- “I will make you exceedingly fruitful” (Gen 17:6a)
- “Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth” (Gen 28:14a)

c. The Promise of the Land for Israel

- “To your descendants I will give this land” (Gen 12:7)
- “All the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever” (Gen 13:15)
- “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it” (Gen 15:7)

- “To your descendants I have given this land” (Gen 15:18)
- “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting** possession” (Gen 17:8)
- “To your descendants I will give this land” (Gen 24:7)
- “The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants” (Gen 28:13)

d. The Establishment of a Relationship with Israel

- “And I will be their God” (Gen 17:8c)

e. The Blessing of the Nations through Israel

- “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3)
- “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 22:18)
- “In you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 28:14)

B. The Mosaic Covenant

1. The Nature of the Mosaic Covenant

- Dependent
- Legislative
 - Primarily pertains to making and enacting laws
 - The covenant hinged upon keeping those laws
 - Distinct from the “covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12)
- Administrative

- The keeping of the Mosaic Covenant was to serve as the means by which the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant would be administered to the people of Israel.
- If Israel obeyed the Mosaic Law, she would experience Abrahamic blessing (Lev 26:1-13; Deut 28:1-14), but if Israel disobeyed the Law, she would experience curses (Lev 26:14-46; Deut 28:15-68).
- Regarding the land, if Israel failed to keep the Mosaic Covenant, she would be dispersed and exiled from the land (Lev 26:32-33; Deut 28:63-64), but if she was faithful to the Mosaic Covenant, her days in the land would be blessed and prolonged (Lev 26:5-6; Deut 28:8).
- In this way, God's promise that the nation would possess the land was certain and eternal (the Abrahamic Covenant), but the occupation of the land and enjoyment of the blessings by any given generation of Jews was conditioned upon obedience to the Law (the Mosaic Covenant).
- Put another way, adherence to the Mosaic Covenant would enable a given generation of Israel to experience the blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant, but unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant would postpone the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises until a later time and generation.
- Among these blessings would be the opportunity to serve as a channel through which universal blessing would come to the nations of the world (Gen 12:3/Exod 19:5-6).

2. The Stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant

a. Exodus 19-23, 25-31

Exodus 19:1-8 In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. ³ Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. ⁵ 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." ⁷ So Moses

came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

b. Leviticus 1-7, 11-27

Leviticus 4:27-31 Now if anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, and becomes guilty, 28 if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without defect, for his sin which he has committed. 29 'He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slay the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. 30 'The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. 31 'Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat was removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

- 5 great offerings (chpt: 1-burnt, 2-grain, 3-peace, 4-sin, 5-guilt)
- Relationship with Yahweh depends on what you are doing to the animals
- These sacrifices were for outward manifestations of the heart problem
- The righteous would have understood how difficult to live for God; shows how easy it is to sin

Leviticus 11:44 For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

c. Numbers 1-10, 15, 18-19, 29-30, 34-36

d. Deuteronomy 4-28, 29-30

Deuteronomy 28:1 "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth."

Deuteronomy 28:15 "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you

Deuteronomy 28:45-49 "So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God

by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. ⁴⁶ They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. ⁴⁷ Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; ⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you. ⁴⁹ The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand”

C. The Davidic Covenant

2 Samuel 7:10-16 “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, ¹¹ even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. ¹² When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom **forever**. ¹⁴ I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me **forever**; your throne shall be established **forever**.” ‘ ‘

1. The Nature of the Davidic Covenant

- Dependent
 - The Davidic Covenant is dependent on the Abrahamic Covenant
 - More specifically, it consists of an expansion of the promises Yahweh made to Abraham and his descendants
- Irrevocable
 - “eternal” (2 Sam 7:13, 16; 23:5; Ps 89:4, 28, 36-37; 110:4)
 - “will never fail” (Ps 89:28; cf. v. 33)

2. The Promises of the Davidic Covenant

a. The Exaltation of David’s Name

- “I will make you a great name” (2 Sam 7:9)

- “I will make you a name like the name of the great ones who are in the earth” (1 Chron 17:8)

b. The Giving of Israel’s Land

- “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place” (2 Sam 7:10)
- “I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place” (1 Chron 17:9)

c. The Protection from Israel’s Enemies

- “I will...plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly” (2 Sam 7:10)
- “I will give you rest from all your enemies” (2 Sam 7:11)
- “I will...plant them, that they may live in their own place and be moved no more; neither shall the wicked waste them anymore as formerly” (1 Chron 17:9)
- “I will subdue all your enemies” (1 Chron 17:10)

d. The Preservation of David’s Line

- “The Lord will make a house for you” (2 Sam 7:11)
- “The Lord will build a house for you” (1 Chron 17:10)
- “I will establish your seed forever” (Ps 89:4)
- “I will establish his descendants forever” (Ps 89:29)
- “His descendants shall endure forever” (Ps 89:36)

e. The Enthronement of David’s Descendant

- “I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Sam 7:12).

- “I will set up one of your descendants after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his throne forever” (1 Chron 17:11).

f. The Establishment of Messiah’s Kingdom

- “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:13).
- “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever” (2 Sam 7:16a)
- “Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:16b)
- “I will establish...his throne as the days of heaven” (Ps 89:29)
- “His throne [shall endure] as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful” (Ps 89:36b-37)

D. The New Covenant (Jer 31; Ezek 36)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² **not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt**, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

1. The Nature of the New Covenant

- New (Jer. 31:31)
- Irrevocable (“I will,” 6xs in Jer. 31:31-34)
- Everlasting (Isa 55:3; Jer 32:40; Ezek 16:60; 37:26; Heb 13:20)

HOWEVER:

- The Mosaic Covenant administered blessings thru the law.

- The New Covenant administers blessings thru the gospel.

Jeremiah 32:40: I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

2. The Promises of the New Covenant

- In the New Covenant with Israel, Yahweh made both physical and spiritual promises to the nation.

The Physical/geographical promises of the New Covenant:

a. The Return to the Land

- “I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land” (Ezek 36:24)
- “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers” (Ezek 36:28a)

b. The Renewal of the Land

- “I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine” (Ezek 36:30)
- “The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passed by. And they will say, “This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden” (Ezek 36:34-35a)

c. The Rebuilding of the Cities

- “I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt” (Ezek 36:33)
- “They will say, ‘...The waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places” (Ezek 36:35-36a)

d. The Increase of the Population

- “I will increase their men like a flock. Like the flock for sacrifices...so will the waste cities be filled with the flocks of men” (Ezek 36:37b-38a)

The spiritual promises of the New Covenant:

e. The Gift of Repentance

- “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations” (Ezek 36:31).

f. The Forgiveness of Sin

- “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols (Ezek 36:25)
- “I will save you from all your uncleanness” (Ezek 36:29).
- “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer 31:34c)

g. The Transformation of the Heart

- “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek 36:26; cf. Ezek 11:17-21)

h. The Provision of the Spirit

- “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezek 36:27)

i. The Internalization of the Law

- “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it” (Jer 31:33b)

j. The Consummation of the Relationship

- “You will be My people and I will be your God” (Ezek 36:28b)
- “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer 31:33c)
- “They shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jer 31:34a)

KEY QUESTION: When, how, and in whom will the Covenants of Promise be fulfilled?

III. The Fulfillment of the Biblical Covenants

- The aforementioned covenants promise future details concerning the land and people of Israel.
- Therefore, we must ask if and how these covenants have been fulfilled.
- This question (of when, how, and in whom the Covenants of Promise will be fulfilled) has been answered in a variety of ways.