

Entrust Systematic Theology: Eschatology Parts 5-6 11/14 & 21/19

A. Fulfillment in Joshua

1. The Case for Final/Complete Fulfillment

- Some hold that all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were completely fulfilled in the nation of Israel in the Book of Joshua and therefore will not be fulfilled in the future.

Joshua 11:23 “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.”

Joshua 21:43-45 “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. 44 And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.”

Joshua 23:14-16 “Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed. 15 And it shall come about that just as all the good words which the Lord your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you. 16 When you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods, and bow down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you.”

Joshua 24:19 Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins.

2. The Case for Initial/Partial Fulfillment

- There is much stronger evidence, however, that Joshua speaks only of an **initial/partial fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham**, indicating that the final/complete fulfillment is yet future and awaits a time when, subsequent to her dispersion, Israel will be restored to her land with a circumcised heart that loves the Lord.

- The following points argue that the fulfillment in Joshua was merely initial and partial.

a. The difficulty of the Dilemma

Joshua 21:43-45 makes it clear that Israel possessed “all the land” promised to her, and yet other passages indicate remaining land that had yet to be conquered and possessed:

- Much of the Land Not Yet Possessed (Josh 13:1-7; 17:17-18; 18:3; 23:4-5, 11-13)

Joshua 23:11-13 So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God. ¹² “For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these **which remain among you**, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, ¹³ know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

- Much of the Land Not Yet Conquered (Josh 15:63; 16:10; 17:12-13; Judg 3:5-6)

Joshua 17:12-13 **But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities**, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. ¹³ It came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

John Calvin: “A second point...raises some doubt, namely, how the children of Israel can be said to have been settled in the possession of the land promised to them, and to have become masters of it, in such a sense that in regard to the enjoyment of it, not one syllable of the promises of God had failed. For we have already seen that many of the enemy were intermingled with them. The divine intention was, that not one of the enemy should be permitted to remain; on the other hand, the Israelites do not drive out many, admit them as neighbors, as if the inheritance had been common to them; they even make pactions with them. How then can these two things be reconciled, that God, as he had promised, gave possession of the land to the people, and yet they were excluded from some portion by the power or obstinate resistance of the enemy?”

b. The Remainder of the Covenant

- The promise of land was only **one** component of the Abrahamic Covenant (the others include the blessing of the nations through the promised seed).
- Is it possible to entertain the idea that **all** of God's "Abrahamic obligations" were already fulfilled at the time of Joshua?

c. The Permanence of the Promise

- The promise given to Abraham was that his descendants would receive **all** the land of Canaan as "an **everlasting** possession" (Gen 17:8).
- The land that Israel possessed in those days was **not** an everlasting, permanent possession.
- Therefore, the **complete** fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of land must await a future time.

d. The Reiteration of the Promise

- Even **after** the time of Joshua, the OT prophets continued to reiterate the promise of the land as a **future possession** for the nation of Israel (e.g., Isa 2:2-4; 11:1-16; 14:1-2; 27:1-13; 35:1, 10; 43:5-6; 49:8-13; 59:15b-21; 62:4-7; 66:10-20; Jer 3:11-20; 12:14-17; 16:10-18; 23:1-8; 24:5-7; 28:1-4; 29:1-14; 30:1-3, 10-11; 31:2-14; 32:36-44; 42:1-22; 50:17-20; Ezek 11:14-20; 20:33-44; 28:25-26; 34:11-16, 23-31; 36:16-36; 37:1-28; 39:21-29; Hosea 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 14:4-7; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Obad 17, 21; Mic 4:6-7; 7:14-20; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 8:7-8; 10:6-12; and 14:11).
- Therefore, God's promise of land cannot have seen its final fulfillment in the days of Joshua.

e. The Significance of Deuteronomy 30

- In Deuteronomy 30, **prior** to the Jews' entrance into the Promised Land, God declared that the nation of Israel would eventually be dispersed from the land because of her unfaithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant (v. 1; Deut 31:20).
- He also declared that some day after that, Israel would return to the Lord with all of her heart and therefore be restored once again to the Promised Land (Deut 30:2-10).

- In light of Deuteronomy 30, the promise of the land extended not only beyond the days of Joshua, but also **after** the nation had been dispersed hundreds of years later.

CONCLUSION:

- Joshua speaks of an initial/partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, in which Yahweh proved Himself faithful to His word. But the final/complete fulfillment is yet future and awaits a time when, after her dispersion, she will return to the land with a new heart that loves the Lord.

B. Fulfillment in Ezra/Nehemiah

- Some of the amillennial persuasion hold that the Abrahamic promises were fulfilled in the nation's returns to the land from exile under Zerubbabel (536 B.C.), Ezra (557 B.C.), or Nehemiah (445 B.C.) and therefore will not be fulfilled in the future.
- So the question is, "Did Israel experience the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises when returning from the exile (6th-5th century B.C.) such that there will not be a fulfillment of the covenant by Israel in the future?" (which is the position of some amillennialists and/or some who reject the idea of a literal future for Israel)
- 9 considerations, however, make this impossible:

1. The Reuniting of the Kingdoms

- Several restoration promises speak of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom being **reunited** with the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom (Isa 11:11-12; Jer 3:18; 23:5-6; 31:27; Ezek 37:21-22; Hos 1:11; Zech 10:6), and this **did not** occur under the previous returns from exile.

2. The Transformation of the People

- Several of the restoration promises speak of the **spiritual renewal** and wholehearted obedience of the nation (Deut 30:1-3, 6; Jer 3:17; 24:7; 32:38-40; Ezek 11:19-20; 36:26-27), and this cannot be reconciled with the sinful state of the nation during the previous returns.

3. The Transformation of the Land

- Scripture indicates that when the nation of Israel is restored, her land will be **renewed** and her cities will be **rebuilt** (Ezek 36:29, 30, 34-35; 36:33, 35-36), and this **did not** occur under the previous returns from exile.

4. The Overshadowing of the Exodus

- According to some of the restoration promises, the return of Israel will be so astounding that **it will eclipse and overshadow the exodus out of Egypt and make it seem small in comparison** (Jer 16:14-15; 23:5-8), and such was clearly not the case with the previous returns. Numerically, the return of the exiles seems to have been significant smaller than the Exodus.

5. The Reiteration of the Promise

- Zechariah held out the promise of restoration to the land even after the returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah (Zech 8:4-8; 10:8- 10; 14:1-21).

Zechariah 8:4-5 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. ⁵ ‘And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.’

6. The Size of the Population

- Several prophecies indicate that at the time of the promised return to the land, the Jews will be **as numerous as they were prior to the exile** (Ezek 36:37b-38a; Jer 33:22; Zech 10:8). In contrast, the population of the post-exilic period was relatively small.

7. The Destruction of the Nations

- Scripture teaches that Yahweh will **destroy the nations** to which He has scattered the Jews at the time that He restores the nation of Israel (Jer 30:10-11; 46:28), but this **did not happen** in the previous returns.

Jeremiah 30:11 ‘For I am with you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to save you; for I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you...’

8. The Timing of the Restoration

- This promised return to the land is presented as an integral part of the New Covenant (Jer 31:27-40; Ezek 36:24-36), which **was not inaugurated** until the first coming of Christ.

9. The Permanence of the Restoration

- According to the prophets, once God restores the Jews to their land, they will **not be uprooted again** from their everlasting possession (Amos 9:15; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 34:28; 37:25), and such **was clearly not the case** during these previous returns.

C. Fulfillment in the New Testament

- The believing remnant of Israel eagerly awaited the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom (Luke 2:25; 2:38; 23:50-52).
- However, the nation of Israel rejected the Messiah (John 1:11; Matt 21:33-44; 27:33-35; Acts 3:13-15; Rom 9:30-33) and therefore the kingdom of God was taken away from her (Matt 21:43).
- During this period of “the hardening of Israel” (Rom 11:25) – also known as “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) – the nation as a whole will continue to reject her Messiah and live in spiritual darkness.
- This divine hardening will not be permanent, however, for the nation of Israel will be restored at the end of the present age in fulfillment of the covenant promises of the Old Testament.

THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

- The expectation of a **future restoration of the nation of Israel** is reaffirmed in a number of New Testament passages:
 1. Matthew 19:28 “And Jesus said to [His twelve disciples], ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”
 - The Recipients of the Promise (v. 28a) [[the 12 disciples, & the 12 tribes]]
 - The Timing of Its Fulfillment (v. 28b)

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: “Taken at face value, [Matthew 19:28] clearly states that Israel is destined to be restored in its twelve tribal divisions, and each tribe will be under the authority of a specific apostle. That...implies a national restoration in the New Testament.”

Acts 1:3 “To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

- For 40 days, Jesus instructs them as to the future. And their immediate question, after those 40 days assumes a literal future for Israel.
- The disciples pose one question: the timing of the restoration (“Lord, is it at this **time**...?... It is not for you to know **times** or **epochs** which the Father has fixed...”)
- If the disciples were so misinformed about the nature and recipients of the promised kingdom, one would expect Jesus to have set the record straight and provide the needed correction at this crucial moment in redemptive history.
- But Jesus provides no correction. Instead, He simply says: “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7).
 - IMPLICATION: The apostles were expecting the Messianic Kingdom prophesied in the OT to be restored to the ethnic nation of Israel some time in the near future, and Jesus affirms that there will be a future kingdom, although he does not inform them of the calendar date.

5. Acts 3:19-21 “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, 20 in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive **until the period of restoration** of all things about **which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets** from ancient time.”

- “Peter calls for corporate Jewish repentance so that the people would be forgiven and the Messiah would return and restore the kingdom to Israel” (Peter Goeman, “Implications of the Kingdom in Acts 3:19-21,” MSJ 26/1 [Spring 2015]: 80).

6. Romans 11:25-32 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.’ 27 ‘This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’ 28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are

beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

- The Unveiled Mystery of Israel’s Future Salvation (vv. 25-27)
 - The Hardening of Israel (v. 25a)
 - The Blessing of the Gentiles (v. 25b)
 - The Salvation of Israel (vv. 26-27)
 - The Coming of the Redeemer (v. 26b)
 - The Fulfillment of the Covenant (v. 27)
 - The Dual Status of Israel’s Present Rejection (vv. 28-29)
 - Enemies According to the Gospel (v. 28a)
 - Beloved According to their Election (v. 28b)
 - The Irrevocable Gifts (v. 29a)
 - The Irrevocable Calling (v. 29b)
 - The Divine Mercy of Israel’s Imminent Restoration (vv. 30-32)
 - God’s Mercy to the Gentiles (v. 30)
 - God’s Mercy to the Jews (v. 31)
 - God’s Mercy to All (v. 32)
- So then, in light of these NT passages and the unfulfilled nature of the biblical covenants, the Scriptures indicate that Israel awaits a literal future of restoration.

IV. The Salvation of All Israel in Romans 11:26

Romans 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB”

- There are generally 3 views concerning the identity of the “all Israel” that will be saved in Romans 11:26
 - (1) “all Israel” is the church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles who are saved throughout the present age
 - (2) “all Israel” is the elect remnant of believing Jews within the ethnic nation of Israel, which is saved throughout the present age
 - (3) “all Israel” refers to the ethnic nation of Israel, which will be saved at the end of the present age:

View	Identity of “All Israel”	Timing of Salvation
#1	The Church	Throughout Present Age
#2	The Remnant	Throughout Present Age
#3	The Nation	End of Present Age

A. Evidence for an Eschatological Salvation of the Nation

- Several contextual factors indicate that Romans 11:26 pictures a time at the end of the present age when the nation of Israel will be saved in fulfillment of the covenant promises of Yahweh in the Old Testament.

1. The Use of “Israel” in the New Testament

- In the New Testament, “Israel” refers to the ethnic nation of Israel as a corporate entity.
- The only two exceptions are in Rom 9:6a and Gal 6:16, where it refers to a believing remnant within the corporate nation.

2. Paul’s Use of “Israel” in Romans 9-11

- In 9 out of the 10 other uses of term “Israel” in Romans 9-11, it clearly refers to the ethnic nation as a corporate entity.
- The one exception is Paul’s use of “Israel” in Romans 9:6a, where it refers to the believing remnant.

3. Paul's Use of "Israel" in Romans 11:25

Romans 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to **Israel** until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in

- Paul's use of "Israel" is an indisputable reference to the nation of Israel, not the church and not the believing remnant within the nation.
- Therefore, only this view allows Paul's use of the term to remain consistent in vv. 26-27 ("all **Israel** will be saved...").

John Murray: "It is exegetically impossible to give to 'Israel' in [Romans 11:26] any other denotation than that which belongs to the term throughout this chapter."¹

4. Paul's Questions in Romans 11:1 and 11:11

Romans 11:1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Romans 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- Paul's questions address whether God has permanently rejected the ethnic nation of Israel as a whole.
- The answer is a firm, "May it never be!"

5. The Reversal of Israel's Present Calloused Condition

- Israel's present "transgression" and "failure" will give way to her "fulfillment" (v. 12).
- Israel's present "rejection" will give way to her "acceptance" (v. 15).
- The "natural branches" will be grafted in again (vv. 23-24).
- The "partial hardening" will be removed (v. 25) and give way to the salvation of "all Israel" (v. 26).

¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:96.

6. The Dual Status of “All Israel” in Romans 11:28

Romans 11:28 From the standpoint of the **gospel** they are **enemies** for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God’s choice* they are **beloved** for the sake of the fathers

- The First Half of Israel’s Dual Status (v. 28a)
 - Israel are **enemies** God because of her **rejection** of the gospel.
- The Second Half of Israel’s Dual Status (v. 28b)
 - Israel is simultaneously **elect**, and therefore, **loved** by God because of His promise to the patriarchs (to whom he spoke the covenants).
 - Donald Bloesch: “His rejection of his people is not final but only provisional. In the *No* of God’s rejection is hidden the *Yes* of his election.”²
- The Ultimate Basis of Israel’s Dual Status (v. 29)

Romans 11:29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

- Therefore, Israel still has a role in God’s plan because He is **faithful** to His covenant promises.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Matt Waymeyer, “The Dual Status of Israel in Romans 11:28,” *Master’s Seminary Journal*, 16/1 (Spring 2005): 57-71.

7. Paul’s Use of Isaiah 27:9 in Romans 11:26b-27

Romans 11:26–27 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”²⁷ “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

- Isaiah 27:9 refers to the ethnic nation.
- Isaiah 27:9 speaks of a literal, future day of restoration.

8. A Summary and Overall Context of Romans 9-11

² Donald Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory*, 201.

- The context of Romans 9-11

Romans 9:2–4 I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises,

Romans 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel

- God's promise to Israel has not failed (9:6a).

****Scott Hafemann:** "Romans 11:25–32 provides 'the last and perhaps the most important support' for Paul's assertion in Romans 9:6a. Why has God's word not failed? Because, just as He has promised, all Israel will be saved."³

- God never promised to save every Jew (9:6b-13).
- But does that mean that God is unjust (9:14a)?
- No, for God has the sovereign right to do as He pleases (9:14-29).
- But why have Gentiles attained righteousness while Israel has not (9:30-31)?
- The Jews refused to embrace Christ and the Gospel (9:32-10:21).
- In light of this rejection, has God permanently rejected Israel (11:1-2)?
 - Absolutely not, for:
 - Israel's present hardening is only partial (11:1-10).
 - Israel's present hardening is only temporary (11:11-32).
 - Israel's "transgression" and "failure" will give way to her "fulfillment" (11:12).
 - Israel's "rejection" will give way to her "acceptance" (11:15).

³<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/569543b4bfe87360795306d6/t/5a4d469b71c10b6917899c57/1515013805675/14hafemann.pdf>

- Israel's unbelief will turn to belief (11:23-24).
 - The current hardening will be removed at the end of the age (11:25).
 - And in this way, all Israel will be saved (11:26a).
- Therefore, it is clear that there exists a future and a future salvation of a group of ethnic Israelites

B. Summary of the Eschatological Salvation of Israel

- When the partial hardening of Israel is removed at the end of the present age (Rom 11:25):
- her present "transgression" will give way to her "fulfillment" (Rom 11:12)
 - her present "rejection" will give way to her "acceptance" (Rom 11:15)
 - and the natural branches will be grafted back in (Rom 11:23-24).
- In this manner, all Israel will be saved according to God's covenantal love and in fulfillment of His promises (Rom 11:26-27). As Yahweh vindicates the holiness of His own name through this restoration of Israel (Ezek 36:22- 23), His chosen nation will experience the following blessings of the New Covenant:
1. The Return to the Land (Ezek 36:24, 28a)
 2. The Renewal of the Land (Ezek 34:25-27; 36:29, 30, 34-35a)
 3. The Rebuilding of the Cities (Ezek 36:33, 35-36a)
 4. The Increase of the Population (Ezek 36:37b-38a)
 5. The Gift of Repentance (Ezek 36:31)
 6. The Forgiveness of Sin (Ezek 36:25, 29, 33; Jer 31:34c)
 7. The Transformation of the Heart (Ezek 36:26; cf. 11:17-21; Deut 30:6)
 8. The Provision of the Spirit (Ezek 36:27)

9. The Internalization of the Law (Jer 31:33b)

10. The Consummation of the Relationship (Ezek 36:28b; Jer 31:33c, 34a)

- ❖ Therefore, it has been thoroughly demonstrated that there exists a literal future restoration for ethnic Israelites. A natural, plain sense reading, according to authorial intent, of the many aforementioned passages demonstrates that Israel has a glorious future ahead at the return of Jesus Christ. The burden of responsibility is upon those who disagree to demonstrate how the many cited Scriptures must be understood in a spiritualized, or some other, manner such that the church is presently fulfilling Israel's promises in a spiritual way during this age of the Gentiles.

- ❖ For further study:
 - Michael J. Vlach. *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
 - H. Wayne House, ed. *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998.
 - Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, *The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2014.