

The Future of Israel and the World

*“By myself have I
sworn, saith the
LORD, . . . In thy
seed shall all the
nations of the
earth be blessed.”*

—*Genesis 22:16,18*

IN PART ONE IN OUR

consideration of this subject, we reviewed various events which have shaped the history of Israel. We saw that many of these were foretold in prophetic language by the Word of God, including their long period of Dispersion, their reestablishment as a nation in 1948, as well as the series of events beginning in 1914 which led to that momentous occurrence. In this article we will look at additional Scriptural testimony concerning the future of Israel and their role in God’s plan. We will also consider the glorious hope for all the world of mankind, which is peace, safety, and life, promised through the establishment of the righteous rule of Messiah’s kingdom. Let us, then, continue our examination of this important and timely topic.

BROUGHT BACK FROM THE SWORD

In the 38th chapter of Ezekiel there is an outline of conditions to prevail in Israel which are still future. The people are described as being at peace and dwelling safely, or confidently, having been “brought back from the sword.” (vs. 8) Today Israel has attained much of her present standing in the midst of military strife, and still depends upon her military strength for security in this war-threatened world.

Ezekiel’s prophecy reveals that at some point in time, following Israel’s return to her homeland, an aggressive army from the “north” under the leadership of a symbolic character named “Gog,” from the land of Magog, mounts an attack against the Israelites, which threatens their destruction. Prophecy reveals that when this occurs God will intervene on behalf of his people and deliver them from their enemies. This deliverance will be so marked and so manifestly of the Lord that it will result in his name becoming “known in the eyes of many nations.”—Ezek. 38:2,14-23

By this demonstration of God’s protection over them, the Israelites will come to realize that their return to the land promised them was accomplished by the providences of God. The Lord foretold, “So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; . . . and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD.” (chap. 39:7) From this point onward the Israelites will look to God for direction in their affairs. The world in general also will know that God has delivered his people and that Messiah is ruling over them.

THE NEW KING

When Israel's last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown, the Lord said, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:26,27) The one "whose right it is" is Israel's Messiah, the next to sit on David's throne, following the overthrow of Zedekiah.

Isaiah foretold the birth of the Messiah and his exaltation to rulership over Israel and the world. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."—Isa. 9:6,7

Prophesying further concerning the Messiah, Isaiah wrote, "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. . . . Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."—chap. 32:1,16-18

ALL ISRAEL

Our understanding of the future blessings to be enjoyed by Israel and the world would come far short of the glorious reality set forth in the Scriptures if those blessings were to be limited to those who are living at the time the Messiah imposes his rulership, or to those who might be born from that time forward. God's promises were made to all Israel, to every generation of Israelites. Included in those promises is Theodor Herzl, as well as the thousands of his fellow Zionists who hoped and toiled for the restoration of Israel to their land, even though these are now sleeping in death.

Throughout all the hundreds of weary years of the Dispersion there were ardent, God-fearing Jews who longed and prayed for the release of Israel from subservience to Gentile nations. The Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is a vivid reminder of the desperation with which the disconsolate Israelites endured their frustrations while they waited for evidence that God still loved them and in due time would deliver them. However, these too, are now all asleep in death.

The lot of Israel, even before the Dispersion, was not always a happy one. There were times when the nation enjoyed a measure of prosperity and peace, but other occasions when she was bled by war and oppression. However, God's promises of Messianic blessings were to these also, yet they died with no evidence of their fulfillment.

Moses said to the Israelites of his day, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deut. 18:15) This

is another promise of the coming Messiah, but those to whom it was made are all dead. However, this and other Messianic promises will be fulfilled to them, and to every generation of the Israelites, because they will be raised from the dead.

There are many promises which assure us of this. In a prayer to Israel's God, Moses said, as recorded by the psalmist, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." (Ps. 90:3) The Lord said to the Prophet Daniel that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) Restoration to life for all Israelites is promised in Ezekiel 16:55, and an assurance that their children shall be awakened from death is recorded in Jeremiah 31:15-17.

Concerning the time of Messiah's kingdom, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear [reverence] the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."—Isa. 29:22-24

Like all members of the fallen and dying race, Jacob's face waxed pale with illness and old age, and he finally died. According to Isaiah's prophecy, however, he will be restored to life, and he will see his "children"—every generation of them, down to the present time. Then his face will not "wax pale," since that will be the promised time of health and everlasting life, as well as peace and security for

Jacob, his descendants and for the whole world of mankind.

ISRAEL'S FUTURE PRINCES

In another prophecy concerning the Messiah, Isaiah foretold, "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." (Isa. 32:1) The psalmist prophesied that the "fathers" of Israel would become "princes in all the earth." (Ps. 45:16) The Lord stated, "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city."—Isa. 1:26

In this last prophecy, the Israelites are reminded of the various ways God had ruled over them. First, under the direction of Moses there were his assistants, the "counsellors." Then there was a period of 450 years during which they were ruled by judges. Following this came the period of the kings. David set up his government in Jerusalem, which was looked upon as their capital city. In the Messianic government there will be the counterpart of the counselors and judges, who will represent the king—the Messiah. Together these will thenceforth assist in enabling Israel to be called "the city of righteousness, the faithful city."

Those who will serve as Israel's "princes," representing the Messiah, will be the ancient faithful ones from each generation who proved worthy of this high trust which will be placed in them. Outstanding among these will, of course, be their former righteous leaders and prophets—their "fathers." These will be eminently qualified to represent the Messiah! One of these was the great

lawgiver, Moses, who laid down his life in service for his people. There was also Daniel who, as a Hebrew captive in Babylon, served as prime minister.

In a final message to Daniel, the Lord said, "Go thou thy way: . . . for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. 12:13) "The end of the days" here referred to is the end of the long period of persecution of the people of God. The promise is that Daniel will be restored to life and will then stand in his lot, undoubtedly as one of Israel's princes in the Messianic government.

The psalmist prophesied, "God reigneth over the heathen [the nations]: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." (Ps. 47:8,9) We read further concerning the "shields" or protections of the people in the Messianic kingdom: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9

"In that day," Isaiah continues, "there shall be a root of Jesse [the Messiah], which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the

outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”—vss. 10-12

The number of Israelites now gathered in the land promised to them by God is only a small portion of the total whom the Lord will eventually restore. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that Messiah’s rulership is to be for a thousand years. During that time, even those who are now held captive in death are to be restored to life, both Israelites and Gentiles. Surely, the future of Israel and the world is a glorious one—as bright as the promises of God!

NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION

To the followers of Jesus, the New Testament is an explanation and a confirmation of the Old Testament, the first five books of which is the Torah of the Jews. The New Testament presents Jesus as the Messiah of promise, the one who was to sit on David’s throne. (Luke 1:31-33) While Jesus died as the Redeemer of the world, he was raised from the dead by divine power, thus confirming our faith in all God’s promises to restore the dead to life.—Acts 17:31

Basic to every Jew is the promise God made to Abraham that through his seed “all families of the earth” would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:15-18) The New Testament presents Jesus as this promised “seed” of blessing. Paul wrote, “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”—Gal. 3:16

The New Testament explains that Jesus, after having provided redemption for the world by his

death, was raised from the dead and exalted to a plane of life higher than human so that now, like the angels, and like the great Creator of the universe, he is invisible to human eyes. Thus he will be the powerful, but invisible, ruler of the world.—Col. 1:15

Writing to the disciples of Christ, Paul said, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:27-29

This simply means that the true, self-sacrificing followers of Jesus will be rewarded with the privilege of sharing in his spiritual kingdom and, together with him, take part in the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as promised to Abraham. In Hebrews 3:1-6, the Apostle Paul explains that just as Moses was faithful over his “house,” so there is another “house” over which Jesus is faithful, and those in Jesus’ house are partakers of a “heavenly calling,” meaning that these are to be a part of the invisible ruling house of God.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul calls further attention to both of these groups. He names many of the ancient faithful ones, and outlines some of the hardships they endured in order to be worthy of a “better resurrection.” (vs. 35) To this he adds that “they without us [of the spiritual house] should not be made perfect.” (vs. 40) Thus, while the ancient faithful servants of God first proved their devotion and their worthiness to serve in the Messianic kingdom, they must wait, in

the sleep of death, for the completion of the spiritual “seed” of Abraham, before being raised to perfection of life to begin their work as “princes in all the earth.”

The earthly “seed” is made up largely of the natural descendants of Abraham, while the spiritual seed will be made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, this opportunity first went exclusively to the people of Israel, and after their rejection of Jesus it was extended to others.

The principal qualification mandatory for those who will serve in any capacity in the Messianic kingdom is heart devotion to the Lord and loyalty to the divine principles of righteousness, for which they would be willing to die if called upon to do so. This was a characteristic of all the Ancient Worthies. It was true of Jesus, and it is true of all his faithful followers.

SETTING UP THE KINGDOM

We can understand clearly the teachings of the Bible only by taking into account, and believing, its many promises concerning the resurrection of the dead. If our faith is able to lay hold upon these promises and believe them, then the Bible has a message of assurance and comfort for us. This is particularly true with respect to its prophecies pertaining to the setting up and work of the Messianic kingdom.

That the kingdom might become a reality, it was first necessary that Jesus be raised from the dead, for he is to be the divine ruler in that kingdom. Then, as the New Testament reveals, those who are to share with him in the spiritual phase of the

kingdom must also be raised from the dead. In each generation from Jesus' day until now, some have proved their worthiness for such a high honor. Concerning this group, we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: . . . they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."—Rev. 20:6

Then, as we have already noted, the Ancient Worthies, who will be the human representatives of the divine Christ, will also need to be raised from the dead. Jesus testified concerning these, "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom." (Matt. 8:11) Luke's account of this adds, "all the prophets," and explains that the people would come from the north, south, east, and west, and sit down before these as their instructors "in the kingdom of God."—Luke 13:28,29

FUNCTIONING OF THE KINGDOM

Thus will be the arrangements of Messiah's kingdom, in which he will be the divinely appointed ruler—the king. The generation of Israelites regathered to their land who are living when the great miracle of divine intervention for their protection takes place and who acknowledge Christ's sovereignty will be the first to receive the opportunity of blessing under the beneficent rulership of these Messianic kingdom arrangements. Those who show their loyalty to the new regime will cooperate in extending its blessings by their example of obedience.

A prophecy pertaining to this reads, "It shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the

heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days [of the Messianic kingdom] to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.”—Zech. 8:13-17

The divine principles of righteousness here set forth, which the Israelites will need to observe and obey in order to receive the blessings of Messiah, will also have to be observed by the people of all nations, that they, too, may receive the blessings of the kingdom. Those who do will be blessed and will likewise have the privilege of cooperating in that great project of blessing which ultimately will be extended to include “all families of the earth.”

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Another precious kingdom promise reads, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake: . . . But this shall be the covenant that I will make

with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—Jer. 31:31-34

A key element of this prophecy is the promise that God will put his law in the “hearts” of his people and write it in their “inward parts.” We believe that this describes the condition of man in the image of God. It was thus that Adam was created, and God’s promise is that through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom man is to be restored to this state of perfection and fellowship with God.

When originally created, man was given dominion over the earth. (Gen. 1:27,28) This dominion is also to be restored. Jesus assured us of this in one of his parables. He pictured the people of all nations being judged, some showing goat-like dispositions, while others were like sheep. To these sheep it will be said, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”—Matt. 25:34

A study of this parable indicates that the character qualification necessary for inheriting the original dominion given to man will be an unselfish interest in others. Selfishness has been a killing blight upon humanity throughout all the centuries of fallen man’s experience. Under the Messianic kingdom arrangements, love will replace selfishness. Then

the full meaning of the Law which God gave to ancient Israel through Moses will be recognized and accepted as the rule of life for all mankind. Moses gave that law its true meaning, saying, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18

With such a standard of righteousness as the guiding principle in the lives of all the people, having been redeemed from original sin and restored to perfection of life, what a glorious place this earth will be! In harmony with God's standards, those who refuse to obey and cooperate after being given sufficient time to respond positively to the kingdom arrangements, will not be permitted to live, for death will remain the penalty for willful sin. This means that there will be nothing to mar the happiness of the restored race.—Acts 3:22,23

While many of the wonderful Messianic kingdom promises are made, in the first instance, to the Israelites, the Bible assures us that they will also have a fulfillment in the people of all nations, for Israel was used by God as a prototype of the world.

RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS

All the prophets of God were eloquent in their forecasts of blessings coming to both Jews and Gentiles through the agencies of Messiah's kingdom. In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter describes the period when these prophecies will be fulfilled as "times of restitution of all things," which, he adds, "God hath spoken by the mouth of

all his holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20,21

When Peter thus summed up the meaning of the united prophetic testimony concerning Messianic kingdom blessings, he was addressing a Jewish audience, so he added, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” (Acts 3:25) Here Peter explains that God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth is to be fulfilled by the “restitution” of all things. We know that God confirmed his promise to father Abraham by his oath, and Peter tells us that he also confirmed it by the testimony of all his holy prophets.

Restitution means restoration to a former condition. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines the word that Peter used in this passage of scripture as “restoration of the perfect state before the fall.” Viewed in this manner, we see that the most important thing to be restored to the people is life. Because they transgressed the divine law, our first parents lost the privilege of living forever, and their children were born imperfect and dying. Sin and death have continued to reign over the earth ever since, causing untold sorrow and suffering among the people of all nations.

The Prophet David wrote of this long period of human suffering, describing it as a nighttime of weeping. As a prophet of God, however, David added the good news that “joy cometh in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5) In other words, the blight of sin and death is not to remain forever. As Jesus stated

concerning the grand purpose of his coming to earth: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”—perfect human life lost because of Adamic sin. (Luke 19:10) This is the essence of the restitution period’s purpose of which Peter spoke.

Isaiah, another of God’s holy prophets, described the future age of restitution as a day in which the inhabitants of the world would no longer say, “I am sick.” (Isa. 33:24) He also wrote that then blind eyes would be opened and deaf ears unstopped. (chap. 35:5) Additionally, he prophesied that the people would “build houses, and inhabit them,” and “plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.”—chap. 65:21,22

Truly, the future of Israel and the world is bright. The earth is to be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD.” (Hab. 2:14) There will be no more war, nor the fear of war. All will be economically and culturally secure, as symbolized in the prophecy of everyone dwelling under his own “vine and under his fig tree.”—Mic. 4:1-4

The ultimate and glorious result of the rulership of that world government will be peace between God and man, and among men, with the righteous laws of the Creator respected and obeyed by all mankind. The Prophet David eloquently foretold this. We quote: “Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.”—Ps. 85:11-13 ■