

THE LAND PROMISE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

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1. The Views of Replacement Theology

A. Postmillennialism

The Postmillennialist equation of the Church with Israel is the presupposition by which prophetic passages in both testaments are interpreted. On that basis, Postmillennialists deny that there is to be a final restoration of Israel into the land. Many prophetic passages that speak of the Jews or Israel are interpreted as being, or will be, fulfilled in the Church. Hodge presents six arguments why there can be no final restoration of Israel to the land.

Hodge's first argument is to state that the "literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the restoration of Israel and the future kingdom of Christ, cannot by possibility be carried out."¹ It should be pointed out that Hodge did insist on a literal interpretation of the prophecies that concern the national salvation of Israel, but resorts to an allegorical approach concerning the restoration prophecies.

Hodge's second argument is based on his assumption that the Bible frequently uses allegories, and since these are allegorical or symbolic, so are the prophecies of the final restoration of the land.²

Hodge's third argument is based on what he perceives as constituting the true Israel: the Church.³

Hodge's fourth argument is also based on a denial of the distinction between Israel and the Church.⁴

Hodge's fifth argument reads:

The Apostles uniformly acted on this principle. They recognize no future for the Jews in which the Gentile Christians are not to participate. As under the old dispensation proselytes from the heathen were incorporated with the Jewish people and all distinction between

¹ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:808-809.

² *Ibid.*, 3:809.

³ *Ibid.*, 3:809-810.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:810-811.

them and those who were Jews by birth, was lost, so it was under the Gospel. Gentiles and Jews were united in undistinguished and undistinguishable membership in the same Church. And so it has continued to the present day; the two streams, Jewish and Gentile, united in the Apostolic Church, having flowed on as one great river through all ages. As this was by divine ordinance, it is not to be believed that they are to be separated in the future.⁵

Hodge's sixth argument is based on a misunderstanding as to what those who believe in a literal restoration actually teach.⁶ Perhaps there were some in Hodge's day who taught that the restoration of Israel meant a position of pre-eminence over "the Church of the future," but that is not the position of mainline Premillennialism in either Covenant Theology or Dispensationalism. True, Israel will be "the head and not the tail" over the Gentile nations, but this is not saying the same thing as being head over the Church. Hodge recognizes that the belief in a final restoration of Israel is very much a part of Premillennialism, but he objects to this on the grounds that there is no authority for this belief "in the didactic portions of the New Testament."

Boettner also interprets prophecy on the basis that the Church is Israel. Also, like Hodge, Boettner denies that there will ever be a literal restoration of the Jews to their land:

When Ezekiel says that Israel is to be restored to her land forever (37:24–28), he indicates clearly that those words are not to be taken literally. He says: "And my servant David shall be king over them ... David my servant shall be their prince for ever" (vv. 24, 25). Jeremiah likewise says that David is to be their king (30:9). If we take that literally, then David must be raised from the dead to be the millennial king in Palestine,—David, and not Christ. The literalists say that David is here used as a symbol for Christ. But that is not what the Bible says. To take David as a symbol for Christ would be to "spiritualize" the prophecy away. If the other parts of the prophecy are literal this must be too.⁷

Of course what he states is true with many Dispensationalists. How do others, like myself, take *David* literally in that he will rule over Israel under the Messiah just as Church Saints rule over the Gentiles under the Messiah.

⁵ Ibid., 3:811.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Boettner, *Millennium*, pp. 89-90.

In another work Boettner makes a confession:

This disagreement arises primarily because of the different methods of interpretation. It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, 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

His admission is that if one reads the Bible and accepts the literal meaning of the words, then the Dispensationalist is correct. He insists, however, that the Bible cannot be taken this way. To prove it, he claims that the Old Covenant, which is the Old Testament, has no bearing on the Church, and the Church can only teach what is taught in the New Testament:

The old order died when Christ died. No requirements from the Old Covenant are binding on the Christian except the moral principles that are repeated in the New Covenant. The Old Testament is our *history* book. It is *not* our *law book*.⁹

After dealing in a scattered way with Israelology in the first three hundred pages, Boettner devotes a whole chapter to the subject in chapter XV entitled, "The Jews and Palestine."

In his opening paragraph, he denounces the belief that a restoration of the Jews to the land is part of God's divine program.¹⁰ Boettner is not very happy with the re-establishment of the Jewish State. Boettner not only blames the Jews for their own problems in the Diaspora, but he also blames them for all the problems in the Middle East.¹¹ While admitting that the Arabs are not perfect, he still puts the majority of the blame on the Jews. In harsh terminology Boettner denies that the Jews have any right whatsoever to their own land. In fact, he claims that the Jews do not belong anywhere: "The mere fact that these people are Jews does not in itself give them any more moral or legal right to Palestine than to the United States or any other part of the world." So, the Jews don't belong anywhere! The Jews do, however, exist to this day, and this fact seems to be an embarrassment to Boettner. The continued existence of the Jews does not sit well with his form of Postmillennialism. What would Boettner do with the Jews? He wants them to disappear but, fortunately, does not resort to Hitler's approach. Rather,

⁸ Loraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁰ Boettner, *Millennium*, p. 310.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 314-315.

he chooses assimilation.¹² To Boettner's dismay, the Jews have re-established their own country. He must therefore deny that this is in any way related to Bible prophecy or that the Jews are still a covenanted people of God.¹³

Boettner's work was published in 1957 when Israel was quite small. Apparently, he feared that Israel might expand even to the biblical borders and so issued a disclaimer in advance:

It may be that in years to come the Jews will possess a larger part, or even all, of Palestine. We do not know. But if they do they will secure it as other nations secure property, through negotiation, or purchase, or conquest, not by virtue of any as yet unfulfilled prophecies or promises. There are no such prophecies or promises.¹⁴

Therefore, the State of Israel is a work of men and not God:

As these things bear upon the re-establishment of the State of Israel, we must say that this project, carried out almost exclusively by unbelieving Jews, is not of God in the sense that it was foretold by His prophets or that His blessing is upon it. Rather it is a humanistic project, which in all probability is headed for increasingly serious trouble. Although the Jewish people have a consuming zeal for the land of Palestine, their real need is not Palestine, but Christ. And never will they find real peace, individually or as a nation, until they turn in faith to Him.¹⁵

B. Amillennialism

Because they only recognize one covenant, the covenant of grace, Covenant Amillenarians not only refuse to recognize the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants to be distinct, but they also fail to recognize the New Covenant as being distinct. Berkhof refuses to see any major differences of the various administrations of the covenant of grace in the Old Testament dispensation. He also fails to see any real difference between the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation.¹⁶ Because he insists on only one covenant of grace, Berkhof cannot admit any *essential* difference between the Old Testament dispensation and the New Testament dispensation. The fact that the New Testament speaks of a *new* covenant is

¹² Boettner, *Millennium*, p. 315.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 382-382.

¹⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 299-300.

dismissed as meaning that "its administration differs in several particulars from that of the Old Testament." That is also true between the administrations of the covenant with Noah, the covenant with Abraham, and the covenant at Sinai. For Berkhof, the New Covenant is "new" not because it is another covenant, but because "its administration differs in several particulars."

Cox follows the same logic. As a Covenant Theologian, he holds that there is only one covenant operative today, and that is the covenant of grace. It is obvious, however, that the Scriptures speak of a number of covenants which are separate and distinct from one another, and even distinguishes the "old" covenant from the "new" one. Cox's explanation is:

It would seem that when the Bible speaks of "old" covenant and "new" covenant, it is a matter of accommodation. That is to say that God is accommodating his language to the understanding of finite man. For, to be sure, God is all-knowing, and in his mind there has always been but one plan for the salvation of man....

Every inspired writer who spoke in the Scriptures of *old* and *new* covenants could well have added the words of Paul, "I speak after the manner of men ..." (Rom. 6:19). For in God's sight there has always been but one eternal plan, which he has unfolded through a progressive revelation to man....

However, from man's perspective, that plan has been unfolded in sections as he was able to grasp it, and these integral parts of God's eternal whole have been referred to (by accommodation) as *the covenant of Abraham, the Mosaic Covenant, the New Covenant* (Jer. 31:31), and so forth.¹⁷

In other words, when the Bible speaks of different covenants, it does not really mean different covenants. Such language was necessary for the purpose of "accommodation" so that man can understand what is happening. These separate covenants, like the Abrahamic, Mosaic, New, etc., are all merely facets of the same covenant, the one covenant of grace. Otherwise, man would not have been able to understand God's revelation. But was ancient man really that ignorant? Certainly if a biblical writer said that there was only one covenant to be revealed in stages, it would have easily been understood. Cox is trying to fit that which the Bible reveals into this theology and has to explain away the plurality of the covenants.

¹⁷ William E. Cox, *Biblical Studies in Final Things* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1966, reprint ed., 1975), pp. 4-5.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant

If there is only one covenant, the covenant of grace, then obviously there can be no distinctively Jewish covenants. In dealing with the Abrahamic Covenant, Cox states:

First of all, the covenant with Abraham was not given to a Jew, nor was it given exclusively *for* Jews. This may come as a shock to many who have been reared on clichés and “Jewish theology.” Abraham had been called out of Ur of the Chaldees and had received the covenant long before Israel as a nation came into existence. Let us bear in mind that Israel as we know it today originated with Jacob, who lived two generations after Abraham:

What the *spirit* of the Old Testament teaches is that the old covenant people was made up *primarily* (but not entirely) of Israelites. God arbitrarily chose that nation to be an example to the world. He gave them special training and insight in order that they might be a “peculiar people” and evangelize the entire world. But this we need to learn (the futurists ignore it), *Israel failed God!* (See Rom. 9:31, 32; 10:21). Since the covenant was conditional, the contract is broken, and God is not bound to *Israel as a nation*. His covenant now is with the faithful remnant, and with the Gentile believers; these two groups constitute the Christian church, which today is the Israel of God. (Gal. 6:16).¹⁸

These statements are made in opposition to the obvious emphasis in the Abrahamic Covenant on a singular nation that will physically descend from Abraham (Jews, Israel) and the emphasis that both Abraham and his descendants will inherit the land of Canaan. Cox makes a strong effort to deny the Jewish nature of the covenant so that he can reach his conclusion (1) that God is not bound to Israel as a nation, (2) that His covenant is with the Church, and, (3) that this Church is the Israel of God.

When Cox turns to the New Covenant, the same line of thinking is evident:

A whole host of New Testament scriptures show conclusively that the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31–34) was established with the church made up of both Jews and Gentiles without distinction
...

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Although the covenant was made with Judah and Israel of the Old Testament, it was fulfilled in the spiritual Israel of the New Testament, that is, the church.¹⁹

Jeremiah 31:31 clearly predicts that the New Covenant is made with both houses of Israel which is as clear as the Bible can say that it is made with national Israel. This Cox admits; but he then insists that in actuality, the covenant was not made with the house of Judah and with the house of Israel, but with the Church, which Cox claims is "the spiritual Israel of the New Testament." This is repeated by Cox later:

Although the covenant was made with Judah and Israel of the Old Testament, it was fulfilled in the spiritual Israel of the New Testament, that is, the church. Even this, however, was prophesied in scriptures such as Zechariah 2:11.²⁰

2. Israel Today

Covenant Amillennialists deny that Israel today has any biblical right to the land. Allis raises the issue in his preface.²¹ It is important to note that his work was first published in 1945, soon after the Nazi Holocaust, but before Israel became a state in 1948. Allis allows his covenant amillennial theology to determine his view of a national home for the Jews. Because the idea of a national restoration of Israel is foreign to this theology, Allis is opposed to this on any grounds: religious, political, or social. Branding the Jew as a "world problem," Allis denies that the solution to the problem is a national home for the Jews.

Because of his amillennial approach, Allis sets up an either/or proposition that need not be so. The option is that the "Christian statesman and the Christian churchman" must either support Zionism, or "offer the Jew salvation within her fold." This either/or proposition is a result of Amillennialism, for Dispensationalism can allow for both options at the same time. Allis is a good example of someone whose theology definitely colors his thinking about the Jewish question. Allis is correct when he states that the "answer given by the churchman will determine his conception of the duty of the Church toward the Jew," and that the "answer given by Christian statesmen will determine their attitude toward Zionism and the political and national aspirations which it fosters and hopes to realize." How one responds to these issues will differ if he is amillennial or if he is dispensational.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

²¹ Allis, *Prophecy*, vii-ix.

The preface sets the tone for the way Allis treats Israelology throughout his work, especially rejecting the dispensational approach to the same topic. His Israelology is sometimes tinged with anti-Semitism.

In a chapter entitled, "The Jewish Remnant," Allis reveals clearly what he dislikes about Dispensationalism:

For in saying this he has placed his finger on the sore point in Dispensational teaching, the exaltation of the Jew per se. In their glorification of the Jew and the rosy future they assign to him, Dispensationalists vie with Zionists. The future belongs to the Jew!²²

For Allis, the dispensational position on a future for Israel, the Jewish people, is "the sore point." This is not the first time that Allis has linked Dispensationalism with Zionism in a negative way. Again, it is hard to escape the feeling that Allis is anti-Semitic which, to a large extent, helped determine his theology.

The amillennial view concerning prophecy states that whatever has been promised to national Israel has already been fulfilled. Concerning the Abrahamic Covenant, Allis points out that this covenant contains three main features: the seed, the land, and the nations.²³ Allis sees the first two facets as having already been fulfilled even before the first coming, while the third facet is in progress.²⁴ As to the "seed aspect," Allis claims that this has already been fulfilled based on the language of 1 Kings 4:20, 1 Chronicles 27:23, 2 Chronicles 1:9 and Hebrews 11:12. However, the original promise was never limited to a short period of time such as "the golden age of the Monarchy," but was viewed as something that would be continually true. As to the "land" aspect, Allis also claims that this has already been fulfilled in the days of the Monarchy, because "the dominion of David and of Solomon extended from the Euphrates to the River of Egypt." Allis states:

Consequently, we may say that, in the respects in which the Abrahamic covenant particularly concerned Israel, it can be regarded as having been fulfilled centuries before the first advent, while in its universal aspect, in which it concerned all the nations of the earth, it was scarcely fulfilled at all during the Old Testament period.²⁵

²² Ibid., p. 219.

²³ Ibid., pp. 56-67.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

That Allis objects to the dispensational view of the kingdom precisely because of its Jewish nature comes out again later:

Dispensationalists vie with those of the circumcision in proclaiming the greatness and glory that is in store for the Jews as an earthly people on this earth. And salvation for all the inhabitants of the earth for all ages to come will literally be "of the Jews." This Judaizes human history to an appalling degree. And in so doing it sadly disparages the Christian Church.²⁶

Concerning the prophecies of the restoration of Israel, Hoekema sees all such prophecies as already fulfilled in history:

Prophecies of this sort may be fulfilled *literally*. As we have just seen, all the prophecies quoted about the restoration of Israel to its land have been literally fulfilled, either in the return from Babylonian captivity under Zerubbabel and Joshua (in 536 B.C.), or in a later return under Ezra (in 458 B.C.).²⁷

C. Summary

To summarize what Replacement Theology (such as Covenantal Post-Millennialists and Covenant Amillennialism) teaches on the issue of the Land and Israel's restoration to the Land, they present three different positions. First, that the Land promises were fulfilled under Joshua based on Joshua 11:23. The dispensational response will be presented later in this paper. The second view is that the Land promises were fulfilled under David and Solomon. It will be shown later in the paper that the prophecies of a final restoration were made well after the time of David and Solomon. The third view is that all the restoration prophecies were fulfilled with the return from Babylonian Captivity. But there are prophecies that clearly prophesy of a restoration to that Land from which they can never again be a forced exile or dispersion from the Land and the return from Babylon simply cannot be a fulfillment of such a prophecy in light of A.D. 70 (Jeremiah 24:24b; Amos 9:14-15).

²⁶ Ibid., p. 251.

²⁷ Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, p. 149.

II. THE VIEW OF DISPENSATIONISM

There are four primary facets to Israel's final restoration: the regeneration of Israel, the regathering of Israel, the possession of the Land, and the reestablishment of the Davidic Throne. Each facet is based on a specific covenant and each of these covenants is fully developed in later prophetic revelation. This paper will focus on the Land facet of Israel's final restoration.

A. The Abrahamic Covenant in the Book of Genesis

The final restoration of Israel encompasses two aspects: the total boundaries of the Land and the productivity of the Land. The basis for this facet of the Abrahamic Covenant is found in various passages of the Book of Genesis.

The very beginning of the Abrahamic Covenant is Genesis 12:1-3:

¹Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto the land that I will show you: ²and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and be you a blessing; ³and I will bless them that bless you, and him that curses you will I curse: and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

At the time the covenant was initially made, Abram was simply told to leave for a land that God would show him. At this point, Abram is promised only to be shown a land and nothing more.

When Abram arrived in the land, God again revealed Himself in Genesis 12:7:

And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto your seed will I give this land: and there built he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.

In this verse, the promise is stated in such a way that it is Abram's seed that is to possess the Land. So from this passage alone, it might be concluded that Abram himself was never to possess the Land.

But that is not the case, as another passage on the Abrahamic covenant makes clear in Genesis 13:14-17:

¹⁴And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward: ¹⁵for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may your seed also be numbered. ¹⁷Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto you will I give it.

Although for the time being, the area for grazing was divided between Abram and Lot, ultimately all the land that Abram could see is to be possessed by him, according to verses 14-15. The promise is clearly made that the Land is to be possessed by Abram personally as well as by Abram's seed. Yet Abram died never having possessed any part of the Land, except for a few wells and a burial cave, which he had to purchase with good money. In order for God to fulfill His promise to Abram, two things have to occur: first, Abram must be resurrected; and second, the Land must be restored to Israel. Because Abram's seed is to possess the Land as well, the population will greatly increase at that time. Abram was then directed to walk throughout the Land in order to get to know it very well, for, according to verse 17, some day he will possess it.

In the above passage, Abram was told that all the land he could possibly see would be possessed by him, but no exact boundaries were given. Later however, as God confirmed the covenant, the exact boundaries were given in Genesis 15:12-21. At the time of the signing and the sealing of the Abrahamic Covenant, God spelled out the future history of Abram's seed prior to their initial possession of the Land in verses 12-16:

¹²And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. ¹³And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵But you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full.

God then signed and sealed the covenant in verse 17: *And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces.*

God then declared the boundaries of the Land in verses 18-21:

¹⁸In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, ²⁰and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, ²¹and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.

The borders are to extend from the Euphrates River in the north to the River of Egypt in the south. There is no problem with the identity of the Euphrates River in the north, but there has been some confusion over the identity of the River of Egypt. Some have identified it as being the same as the Brook of Egypt mentioned in other passages. At times, both have been identified with the Nile River, making it the southern border. But none of these suppositions is correct. The Brook of Egypt and the River of Egypt are not the same. The latter refers to a continuous flowing river, while the former is a *wadi*, a dry river bed that only has water in it periodically during the rainy season. The words for *river* and *brook* are two different Hebrew words, also forcing one to keep the two distinct. The Brook of Egypt is the modern *Wadi-el-Arish* running south to north in the central Sinai Peninsula. Just as the *River of Egypt* is not the same as the Brook of Egypt, neither is it the Nile River. If that were the case, the Israelites would have already been in the Promised Land before they ever left Egypt! Rather, it refers to one of the "fingers" or branches of the Nile River. As the river flows from the south to the north before reaching the Mediterranean Sea, it enters an area known as the Nile Delta, where it breaks up into a number of fingers or branches. The easternmost finger was known as the River of Egypt. Today, the River of Egypt is along the line of the modern Suez Canal. Hence, according to this passage, Israel's southern boundary is to extend down to about where the Suez Canal is today. This raises some questions concerning consistency with other passages. This passage gave the southern boundary as the River of Egypt, while the passages in the Prophets, when dealing with the Jewish settlements of the Land in the final restoration, gave the southern boundary as the Brook of Egypt. But this is not really a contradiction. Rather, it is simply the difference between the extent of possession and control in contrast to the extent of actual settlement. In the final restoration of the Land, Israel will possess all the way south to the River of Egypt and will control down to the area of the modern Suez Canal. But as far as where the

Jews will be living, the actual boundary of settlement will extend only as far south as the Brook of Egypt or the modern Wadi-el-Arish.

Genesis 17:1-21 is a further revelation of the Abrahamic Covenant and concerning the Land verse eight states: *And I will give unto you and to your seed after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.* God affirms that *all the Land of Canaan*, is to be given to both Abraham and his seed. Verses 19-21 states God will confirm the covenant only to Isaac and not Ismael.

Abraham had a total of eight sons but the covenant is reconfirmed through Isaac only in Genesis 26:2-5:

²And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell you of: ³sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and I will bless you; for unto you, and unto your seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father; ⁴and I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto your seed all these lands; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; ⁵because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Isaac is commanded to stay in the Land and not to leave it, for it is to Isaac and to Isaac's seed that the Land will be given. It should be noted that the promise is not merely to Isaac's descendants, but to Isaac himself. This would require Isaac's future resurrection and possession of the Land. As for Isaac's seed, it will be greatly increased in population. It is to Isaac, not to Ishmael or to the six sons of Keturah, that the Abrahamic Covenant is reconfirmed.

Isaac had two sons, but the Abrahamic Covenant is reconfirmed only to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15:

¹³And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed: ¹⁴and your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you, whithersoever you go, and will bring you again into this land: for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

It is to Jacob, not to Esau, that the covenant is now reconfirmed. The promise is made that the Land will be given to both Jacob and Jacob's seed. So again, the possession of the Land is not a promise to the seed only, but to the individual Jacob as well. For this reason, Jacob must also be resurrected and possess the Land. As stated in the previous passage, the seed will be greatly multiplied at that time. As for Jacob himself, who was now departing from the Land, God will bring him back in his own lifetime. Then in Genesis 31:13, God instructs Jacob to return to the Land.

Therefore, it is on the Abrahamic Covenant, which is reconfirmed through Isaac and Jacob and then to all of Jacob's descendants (Gen. 49), that the fact of Israel's ownership of the Land is based.

B. The Continuity of the Covenant

Because the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, it is still very much in effect though it has remained largely unfulfilled. The ultimate fulfillment will come during the Kingdom Age. The unconditional nature of the covenant is affirmed and reaffirmed a number of times. For example, although it is clear that Israel in Egypt and Israel in the wilderness was not a righteous nation, since the majority constantly had a tendency to rebel and murmur, yet God rescued them and brought them into the land on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant. Exodus 2:23–25 states:

And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them.

Exodus 6:2–8 reaffirms:

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned...And I will bring you in unto the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am Jehovah.

This is further reaffirmed in Nehemiah 9:7–8, 1 Chronicles 16:15–19, 2 Chronicles 20:7–8, and Psalm 105:7–12.

In conjunction with the choosing of Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, he was almost disqualified because of his failure to circumcise his son in Exodus 4:24–26:

And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Jehovah met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me. So he let him alone. Then she said, A bridegroom of blood art you, because of the circumcision.

It was on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant that God finally brought Israel into the Promised Land as God's last words to Moses made clear in Deuteronomy 34:4:

And Jehovah said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto your seed: I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over thither.

Although Israel in the land had a long history of disobedience and idolatry, and although God frequently disciplined the nation, yet He promised the nation would always survive on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant. On that basis, Moses pleaded with God to spare Israel from His divine wrath in Exodus 32:11–14:

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swearst by your own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people.

It was on the basis of this covenant that Jesus taught the fact of the resurrection when confronted by the Sadducees who did not believe in it. Matthew 22:23–33 is another key passage often missed in these discussions. Among the differences between Pharisaic Judaism and Sadducean Judaism was the issue of the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees believed that when the Messiah came, there would be a resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in any future resurrection. Sadducees enjoyed asking the Pharisees tricky questions to make them look stupid and often succeeded. Here they tried to ask Jesus a trick question for the same

purpose. They presented a case of a couple who had seven sons. The oldest son married a woman but died without children. So in keeping with the Mosaic Law, the second son married her, but also dies without children. So again in keeping with the Mosaic Law the third brother married her but also died with no kids. In the course of time, all seven brothers were married to the same woman, all died without producing a child, and after a while, she also passed away. And now the question: In the resurrection, whose wife is she going to be since all seven were married to her?

In response, Jesus did not quote the three classic passages from the Hebrew Bible that clearly taught resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19; Job 19:25-26). And why not? Another difference between Pharisees and Sadducees was this: Pharisees believed one could derive doctrine from any part of the Hebrew Bible, be the Law, the Prophets, or the Writings; but the Sadducees denied that option and taught that every doctrine must have its origin in the five books of Moses. It was then possible to illustrate the doctrine from the Prophets and from the Writings, but the origin had to come From the *Torah*. They saw no indication of the resurrection in the Law and therefore rejected that doctrine. So while quoting Daniel, Isaiah, or Job, while authoritative for the Pharisees, it was not authoritative for the Sadducees.

So what the Messiah quotes is Exodus 6:3 where God said to Moses: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob...* This was the biblical formula for what we now call the Abrahamic Covenant. But where in that covenant did God promise a resurrection? It is found in very simple principle: If God makes promise to an individual, and that individual dies before the promise is fulfilled, God is then obligated to raise that person back to life. Why? Because every promise of God must be fulfilled, and it must be fulfilled to whom the promise was made. According to Hebrews 11, this was the principle in the mind of Abraham when he was asked to sacrifice Isaac. Why was Abraham so ready to plunge the knife into Isaac's throat? Because by that point of time in his spiritual journey, Abraham knew that this was a promise keeping, covenant keeping God. By this point of time promises were made concerning Isaac that remained unfulfilled. So Abraham knew that if he indeed killed Isaac, God would raise back to life because every promise of God be fulfilled to whom the promise was made.

As already shown, the Abrahamic covenant promised the Land not only to the descendants of the Patriarchs, but to the Patriarchs themselves. By the time they died what did they own? One burial grave they had to pay good money for, a plot of land near Shechem they had to pay good money for, and several wells. That was the extent of their real estate holdings. So how will God's promise be fulfilled to them: God must raise them back to life and

bring them into the Messianic Kingdom. And so it will be according to Matthew 8:11:

¹¹ And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:

The author of Hebrews 6:13-20 derived his assurance of salvation on the basis of this covenant.

Finally, it is on the basis of this covenant that the final restoration will occur, according to Leviticus 26:40-42:

And they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that, because they walked contrary unto me, I also walked contrary unto them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Just as God fulfilled His promises to Israel in the past, He will do so again in the future because of the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

While a covenant may be signed and sealed at a specific point of time, this does not mean that every provision goes immediately into effect. Three things happen. Some go into effect immediately, such as the changing of Abram's and Sarai's names and circumcision. Some go into effect in the near future, such as the birth of Isaac (25 years) and the Egyptian sojourn, enslavement, and the Exodus (400 years). Some go into effect in the distant prophetic future, such as the possession of all of the Promised Land by the Patriarchs and their descendants. Therefore, the fact that some prophecy were not fulfilled in the past does not mean they will not be fulfilled in the future. On the contrary, in the future they will be fulfilled.

The content of the Land Covenant is found in Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20. Although this covenant is within the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy 29:1 clearly shows that the Land Covenant is distinct from the Mosaic Covenant:

These are the words of the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

Deuteronomy 30:1–10 states the key provisions of the Land Covenant. Verses 1-5 of this passage relate some of the Lord’s promises to His people, Israel:

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, whither Jehovah your God hath driven you,² and shall return unto Jehovah you God, and shall obey his voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul;³ that then Jehovah your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the peoples, whither Jehovah your God hath scattered you.⁴ If any of your outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jehovah your God gather you, and from thence will he fetch you:⁵ and Jehovah your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and he will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers.

The covenant was made between God and Israel. Eight provisions can be gleaned from it. First, Moses prophetically spoke of Israel’s coming disobedience to the Mosaic Law and subsequent scattering over all the world (29:2–30:1). All remaining provisions speak of various facets of Israel’s final restoration. Second, Israel will repent (30:2). Third, Messiah will return (30:3). Fourth, Israel will be regathered (30:3–4). Fifth, Israel will possess the Promised Land (30:5). Sixth, Israel will be regenerated (30:6). Seventh, the enemies of Israel will be judged (30:7). Eighth, Israel will receive full blessing, specifically the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (30:8–10).

The special importance of the Land Covenant is that it reaffirmed Israel’s title deed to the land. Although she would prove unfaithful and disobedient, the right to the land would never be taken from her. While her enjoyment of the land is conditioned on obedience, ownership of the land is unconditional. Furthermore, it shows that the conditional Mosaic Covenant did not lay aside the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. It might be taken by some that the Mosaic Covenant displaced the Abrahamic Covenant, but the Land Covenant shows that this is not true. The Land Covenant is an enlargement of the original Abrahamic Covenant. It amplifies the land aspect and emphasizes the promise of the land to God’s people in spite of unbelief.

The Land Covenant received its confirmation centuries later in Ezekiel 16:1–63. In this very important passage concerning God’s relationship to Israel, God recounts His love of Israel in her infancy (vv. 1–7). Israel was chosen by God and became related to Jehovah by marriage and hence became

known as the Wife of Jehovah (vv. 8–14). Israel, however, played the harlot (vv. 15–34); therefore, it was necessary to punish Israel by means of dispersion (vv. 35–52). Yet this dispersion is not final, for there will be a future restoration to the Land on the basis of the Land Covenant (vv. 53–63).

C. The Present Outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant promised a seed, land, and blessings among its many provisions. The seed was to develop into a nation, and so it did at the foot of Mount Sinai. Today, Israel is a scattered nation but still a nation. Just as Israel remained distinct in Egypt, the Jewish people have remained distinct throughout the Church Age. No other nation that lost its national homeland and was dispersed for centuries survived as a distinct entity. On the contrary, where they scattered they intermarried and disappeared into a melting pot. Not so the Jews, whose distinctive history is easily traceable throughout the years of Jewish history. The fact that Jews have continued to survive as a people in spite of so many attempts to destroy them shows that this covenant has continued to operate.

As for the land, within the confines of the Church Age there has been no real independent government in the land since A.D. 70. The land has been overrun many times and ruled by many people, but always ruled from somewhere else. It has been controlled by Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, and Britons. Even under Arab control, no independent Arab government was ever set up; it was ruled from somewhere else: Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Amman, etc. Though renamed "Palestine" by Hadrian, there never was a Palestinian state with a Palestinian government or a Palestinian flag. The first time an independent government was set up in the land since A.D. 70 was in 1948 with the State of Israel. The history of the land also shows that the Abrahamic Covenant continues to be fulfilled with the people of Israel.

Many Covenant Theologians insist that God's promises to Israel concerning the land have already been fulfilled and use passages such as Joshua 11:23 as evidence:

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Jehovah spoke unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land had rest from war.

However, this verse, like all verses of Scripture, must be kept in context and must be viewed within the Book of Joshua as a whole. Keeping in mind that originally the Book of Joshua did not have chapter divisions, the verse simply states a fact which is then followed by exceptions to the fact. Joshua 11:23 is followed immediately by chapter 12 which lists the Canaanite kings killed by Israel. Joshua 13:1–6 shows that a great deal of territory did not fall into the hands of the Israelites and is a sizable exception to the statement of Joshua 11:23. Nor did much of this territory fall into Jewish hands in the immediate future following Joshua. Jerusalem remained under Jebusite control (Josh. 15:63) until David (2 Sam. 5:6–9), and the city of Gezer was held by the Canaanites (Josh. 16:10) until Solomon (1 Kings 9:16). The Tribe of Dan had to move because they could not take their territory from the Philistines. While David and Solomon extended Jewish control close to the borders of the Promised Land, it was not total since Phoenicia (Lebanon) retained its independence to the very end. Even if Phoenicia had fallen, it would not have fulfilled the covenant promises for under David and Solomon most of the non-Jewish territory, such as Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, etc., was merely under military control and they had to pay tribute (1 Kings 4:21). This is hardly a fulfillment of a promise which concerned actual possession and settlement in the land and not merely military control. This did not happen under Joshua as the context of 11:23 clearly shows. The first chapter of Judges, recording events which took place after the death of Joshua (1:1), records how various tribes failed to take the land allotted to them (1:19, 21, 27, 29, 30, 31–32, 33, 34–36). Never in Old Testament history did Israel possess, dwell, and settle in all of the Promised Land. Nor did it ever happen in Jewish history since. Furthermore, Judges 2:20–23 states:

²⁰ And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel; and he said, Because this nation have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; ²¹ I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations that Joshua left when he died; ²² that by them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of Jehovah to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. ²³ So Jehovah left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

So either Judges 2:23 contradicts Joshua 11:23 or Judges 2:23 contradicts the covenantalist interpretation of Joshua 11:23. If Joshua 11:23 is understood in the context where it is found, then all passages complement each other.

To summarize, the Promised Land remains only a Land of Promise never as yet fulfilled. Mere military occupation does not fulfill the promise. Only Jewish settlement in all of the Promised Land can fulfill the covenantal promise. Furthermore, they must live in all of the Promised Land in peace to fulfill the promises of God. There must be a restoration from which they can never be forcefully exiled again. This awaits the Messianic Kingdom.

D. The Prophetic Future of the Abrahamic Covenant and the Land

Israel's final restoration was further developed in both the Law and the Prophets. It will be necessary to survey those passages that deal with the prophetic development of the Abrahamic Covenant.

As far as the Law is concerned, Leviticus 26:40-45 states that, following the regeneration of Israel, God will fully carry out the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant concerning the Land. On the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant, He will restore to them the Land that has lain desolate for so long. In another part of the Law, Deuteronomy 30:5 states that the possession of the Land is also part of the Land Covenant.

The prophets of Israel developed this facet even further in both the Major and Minor Prophets. Among the Major Prophets, following her regeneration, the regathering of Israel is another high point of prophetic revelation to be found in many of the Prophets. Isaiah describes the final regathering as the second of two worldwide regatherings of Israel in Isaiah 11:11-12:6. Although many commentators identify the first regathering as the return from Babylonian Captivity, this could hardly be described as a worldwide regathering. The first worldwide regathering is the one in unbelief prior to the Great Tribulation and has been happening since 1948. This first regathering is in unbelief in preparation for judgment. The regathering described in verse 11a is the second one, in faith in preparation for the millennial blessings. In verse 11b, this regathering is not merely from the local nations of the Middle East, but from all over the world, according to verse 12. Isaiah continues to develop certain characteristics of Israel's final regathering. First, in verses 13-14, the unity between Israel and Judah will be restored and Ephraim's envy of Judah will cease. This envy had developed over the placing of the House of God in Judah (Ps. 78:9-11, 67-68). The unity of Israel and Judah will enable them to overcome their opponents. Secondly, the final regathering will be accompanied by miracles, according to verses 15-16. The term *the tongue of the Egyptian sea* refers to the Gulf of Suez. This passage states that it will dry up, while the Euphrates will be smitten and split up into seven smaller streams, making it easy to cross. Just as a highway was made for Israel at the Exodus, there will be a

similar one in the final regathering. Immediately after the Exodus, Israel sang the song found in Exodus 15:1-18. In the same way, after the final regathering, Israel will sing the song found in Isaiah 12:1-6. The song is in two stanzas. In the first stanza, verses 1-3, Israel gives a thanksgiving to God for turning away His anger. They now realize that salvation is in Jehovah, who has poured out the waters of salvation. In the second stanza, verses 4-6, they wish to make known God's deeds to the whole world, so they give thanks, sing, and shout out loud of God's goodness.

The prophet later emphasized the totality of the regathering in Isaiah 27:12-13, for, one by one, every Jew will be brought back into the Land of Israel. As in the previous Isaiah passage, the key locality of the regathering will be from the Middle East nations since, as a result of the fall of Israel in the middle of the Tribulation, the majority of the Jews will be located in this vicinity and it is here that they will have suffered the most. And so the Jews will be taken one by one out of Egypt and Assyria, modern Iraq. Jews are still to be found in various Arab countries suffering tremendous persecutions. But in the regathering, they will be rescued from the land of their enemies. The regathering will be from all over the world, but with special emphasis on the Middle East nations.

Isaiah 27:12 brings out the first aspect of the possession of the Land, its total borders. The northern boundary, the Euphrates River, and the southern boundary, the Brook of Egypt, are possessed for the first time in all of Israel's history. Israel will be able to settle in all of the Promised Land.

The second aspect of the possession of the Land, increased productivity of the Land, is stressed in Isaiah 30:23-26. The Land will be well watered and will produce abundant food for both men and animals. Furthermore, there will be a tremendous increase of light, with the moon shining as brightly as the sun, while the light of the sun will be increased seven times what it is today. It will be a time of healing all physical infirmities.

As for the deserts of Israel, Isaiah 35:1-2 states:

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. ²It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God.

The magnitude of the final regathering is described in Isaiah 43:5-7:

⁵Fear not; for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west; ⁶I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth; ⁷every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yea, whom I have made.

As far as locality is concerned, the regathering will be worldwide, and to emphasize this fact, all four points of the compass are mentioned in verses 5-6. Then the magnitude is illustrated in verse 7 by the usage of three words: *created*, *formed*, and *made*. These three words are used interchangeably in the creation account of Genesis 1-2. Hence, from God's perspective, the final regathering will be on the magnitude of the original Creation.

Isaiah later brought out the productivity aspect again in chapter 65:21-24. With the possession of the Land of Israel, not only will the Jews be able to build houses and plant vineyards and crops, but they will also enjoy the work of their hands, for no enemy will take it from them. Furthermore, they will enjoy it until a ripe old age.

The comparative magnitude of the final regathering with previous works of God is something also pointed out by Jeremiah the Prophet. In Jeremiah 16:14-15, it is compared with Exodus:

¹⁴Therefore, behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that it shall no more be said, As Jehovah lives, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; ¹⁵but, As Jehovah lives, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries whither he had driven them. And I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

Throughout Jewish history, the Exodus has been considered the high point of Jewish history but, after the final regathering, this will change. In the future, it will be the final regathering of the Jews that will become the high point of Jewish history.

Later, the prophet stated in Jeremiah 23:3-4:

³And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴And I will set up shepherds over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, says Jehovah.

From all over the world the Jews are to be regathered into the Land, where they will produce much fruit. Furthermore, God will provide righteous leaders who will feed the people with righteousness, justice, and understanding. There is another comparison with the Exodus in verses 7-8.

One other passage that speaks of the regathering is Jeremiah 31:7-10. Following the regeneration of Israel, all of the Jews will be regathered, regardless of their state of health and regardless of their location. There will be no hindrances whatsoever to the regathering, for the same God who was able to scatter them will also be able to regather them.

Jeremiah also stressed the greater productivity of the Land in the final restoration. In Jeremiah 31:1-6, he wrote that, because of God's everlasting love for His people, He intends to restore and build them again. There will be a time of plenty once again for Israel and the hills of Ephraim will echo with the call to come and worship God in Jerusalem. Later, Jeremiah returned to the theme in verses 11-14. After the redemption of Israel, they will be restored to the Land that will produce abundantly and give joy to all the inhabitants of the Land.

Ezekiel picked up the same motif in Ezekiel 11:14-18. The same God who scattered Israel has every intention of regathering them back into their own Land so that regenerate Israel can cleanse the Land of all pollution. Later, the prophet restated this doctrine in Ezekiel 36:24.

Ezekiel again picked up the motif of the possession of the Land in Ezekiel 20:42-44 and stated that Israel is to be brought back into their land in accordance with the promises of God to the forefathers in the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel will turn away from her sins of the past and will detest them and now serve God alone. Later, in chapter 28:25-26 the prophet adds that, following the regeneration and regathering, Israel will then possess the Land in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant. The security in which Israel will live and enjoy the works of her hands is then emphasized. Along with the element of increased production, the security aspect is the theme of Ezekiel 34:25-31. Because there will no longer be any wild beasts in the Land, Israel will be able to enjoy the Land in total security. The rains will

come in their proper time and in proper amounts thereby increasing production. Not only is Israel to be secure from the wild beasts, but also from all her enemies of the past. None will come to destroy the crops. In every way, Israel will be rightly related to God and will be His peculiar possession. Nor is this the end of the subject, as the prophet continued in Ezekiel 36:8-15 that, in spite of years of desolation, the Land is to be tilled again and populated for the inhabitants of the Land will be greatly increased. Israel will again possess the Land, and the production of the Land will be tremendous. Later in verses 28-38, Ezekiel declared that Israel will again possess the Land as a result of her regeneration. The reproach of Israel will be removed, and she will detest her past sins. It is not for Israel's glory that the regeneration and the tilling and rebuilding of the Land will occur, but for God's own glory among the nations. As for Israel, the population will increase and the desolate places will be rebuilt.

The repossession of the Land is also promised in the Minor Prophets. Joel 2:18-27 states that God will be jealous for His Land, and this burning jealousy will bring about a great productivity in the Land. The Land will be secure from any further invasions, and it will produce abundantly. The rains will come at the proper time seasons and in proper amounts, causing a tremendous amount of surplus in their storages and recuperation from all previous losses due to pestilences. Israel will never again be ashamed, but will have a special relationship to God. Later in chapter 3:18, the prophet declared that there will be an abundance of water in the Land.

The Minor Prophets were not remiss in speaking of the regathering. One such prophecy is found in Amos 9:14-15. The emphasis of Amos is on permanency. Israel is to be regathered in order to rebuild the Land. In the final regathering, God will plant them in the Land so that they will never again be uprooted and dispersed out of the Land.

The Prophet Zephaniah, whose whole theme was one of judgment, closed his book with a promise of the final regathering in Zephaniah 3:18-20. The judgment meted out against Israel is the result of her sins. These judgments will not have a destructive effect, but a corrective one. Once correction takes place, the regathering will indeed occur, and the final regathering will cause Israel to be a name and a praise among the Gentile nations.

Zechariah is the final prophet of the Old Testament to speak of the regathering. In Zechariah 10:8-12, he portrayed the final regathering in terms of hissing, which is the call of a shepherd for his sheep. The regathering will be a result of the redemption and regeneration of Israel. While the regathering is to occur from around the world, there will be a

special emphasis on the Middle East nations. Once all the Jews are regathered, they will never again depart from the Lord.

In the New Testament, the final regathering revealed by the Old Testament prophets is summarized in Matthew 24:31.

And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

With the background of Isaiah 27:12-13, *Yeshua* (Jesus) stated that the angels will be involved in the final regathering and they will bring the Jews back into the Land. As to locality, the emphasis is on the worldwide regathering. The Matthew passage is a rather simple summary of all that the prophets had to say about the second facet of Israel's restoration. Its purpose was to make clear that the worldwide regathering predicted by the prophets will be fulfilled only after the Second Coming. In the parallel passage, Mark 13:27, a detail is added. With the additional background of Deuteronomy 30:3-4, *Yeshua* added that the regathering will be from the uttermost part of the earth, referring to living Israel, and the uttermost part of Heaven, referring to resurrected Israel.

Within the period of the Messianic Kingdom, Israel is a major theme of the Old Testament prophets. Indeed, it was the high point of Old Testament prophecy and every writing prophet—with the exception of Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Malachi—had something to say about it. The last two prophets did make reference to the Second Coming and the Tribulation, which, in the wider context of the Prophets, implied a kingdom to follow. To spiritualize and allegorize away such a great amount of Scripture is to confuse the whole science of interpretation. There is no reason to spiritualize any of these prophecies any more than there is reason to do so with the first coming prophecies of the Messiah, those prophecies that deal with His virgin birth, His birth in Bethlehem, His death, or His physical resurrection.

For the first time in Israel's history, the Jews will possess and settle in all of the Promised Land, and it will again be subdivided into the twelve tribal divisions. But these tribal divisions will be different than those described in the Book of Joshua. This portion of the Book of Ezekiel can be subdivided into five sections describing Israel in the Messianic Kingdom.

The first section, Ezekiel 47:13-14, states that the division of all of the Promised Land will be the final fulfillment of God's covenant promises.

The second section, Ezekiel 47:15-20, deals with the boundaries of the Land in the Millennium. In verses 15-17, the northern boundary will extend from the Mediterranean Sea, incorporating much of modern-day Lebanon and parts of modern-day Syria over to the Euphrates River. The eastern border will move south from the Euphrates River, incorporating the Golan Heights and portions of Syria almost up to Damascus, and continue south to the Jordan River where it exits from the Sea of Galilee. In verse 18, the border will then run along the river all the way down to the southern end of the Dead Sea. In verse 19, the southern border will move from the southern end of the Dead Sea, incorporating the Negev and parts of Sinai all the way along the Brook of Egypt, the modern *Wadi-el-Arish*, to the point where it reaches the Mediterranean Sea. And in verse 20, the Mediterranean Sea will serve as the western border.

The third section, Ezekiel 48:1-7, describes the northern division of the Land as subdivided for seven of the Twelve Tribes. The tribes will be settled running north to south in the following order: Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah. The western and eastern borders will parallel each other.

The fourth section, Ezekiel 48:8-22, describes the Holy Oblation. But Ezekiel now notes the exact location of this Millennial Mountain of Jehovah's House. The Mountain of the Holy Oblation will be situated at the south of Judah's border and will serve as the dividing line between the seven northern tribes and the five southern tribes.

Then the fifth section, Ezekiel 48:23-29, describes the division of the Land for the remaining five tribes. Again, running from north to south, the tribes will be settled in the following order: Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad; running along the southern border in verses 28-29.

To summarize this section, for the first time in Israel's history, she will possess all of the Promised Land while the Land itself will greatly increase its productivity and be well watered, all on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant.