

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Introduction

Premillennialism, or the eschatological position that maintains that the future earthly rule of Christ will be preceded by Christ's Second Advent, is often criticized as being a one-text belief system. According to this contention, the only support for Premillennialism is found in Revelation's depiction of the thousand year reign of Christ as found in Revelation 20:1-10. According to this common critique, if this passage did not exist, then there would be no biblical support for premillennial theology. Louis Berkhof notes, "The only scriptural basis for this theory [i.e.' premillennialism] is Revelation 20:1-6, after an Old Testament content has been poured into it."<sup>1</sup> Robert Strimple similarly criticizes premillennialists as "one-text premillennialists" for allegedly relying solely upon Rev 20:1–10 to support their theology.<sup>2</sup> However, premillennialism should not be so hastily dismissed since Revelation 20:1-10 merely represents the end of the matter. A future earthly reign of Christ is a concept that is well developed throughout the pages of the Old Testament while Revelation 20:1-10 merely adds the minor detail of the earthly kingdom's chronological duration, namely one thousand years. Nathaniel West well captures the notion that the doctrine of the future reign of Christ is a concept that is taught throughout the whole counsel of God's Word through the full title of his book "The Thousand Years in Both Testaments."<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that premillennialism is a well established Old Testament idea that is not at all dependent for its theological existence

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: With a Complete Textual Index*, 4th and rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 715.

<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Strimple, "Amillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 118.

<sup>3</sup> Nathaniel West, *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments* (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth, 1889).

upon the New Testament in general nor Revelation 20:1-10 in particular. This goal will be accomplished by showing the theological grounds for the future earthly reign of Christ from the Old Testament in the following broad areas: Edenic instructions, the Abrahamic Covenant and related sub-covenants, the Mosaic Covenant, the Times of the Gentiles, the Diaspora, Israel's regathering in unbelief, Israel's conversion through unprecedented distress, Israel's regathering in faith, and millennial conditions as foretold by the Old Testament prophets.

### **Eden**

The biblical prediction of a future kingdom begins as early as the Garden of Eden. Here, God placed Adam and Eve in a position of authority over God's creation. Genesis 1:26-28 says: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that Adam and Eve were given authority over the physical realm (fish, birds, living things that move on the earth). Here, God arranged for humanity's first couple to govern God's creation on God's behalf. The technical term for this hierarchy is the office of "Theocratic Administrator." This term simply refers to someone who governs for God. In other words, God ruled the world indirectly through the first Adam.

However, Satan soon took the form of a serpent with the specific goal of perverting and reversing this divinely ordained hierarchy. Instead of governing the

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural citations used throughout are taken from the NASB.

physical world for God, Adam and Eve were influenced by creation (the serpent) to rebel against God (Gen. 3). Such rebellion represented a top to bottom reversal of God's original intention for the office of Theocratic Administrator. Satan's success in inciting this rebellion effectively removed the office of Theocratic Administrator from the earth, as Satan then became the ruler of the world (Luke 4:5-8; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). What then is the story-line of the Bible? It is how this office will be restored through the future Messianic Kingdom. Just as God the Father originally intended to indirectly govern the physical world through the first Adam, He will one day govern the world through the Last Adam, God the Son.

The restoration of the physical kingdom or office of Theocratic Administrator as the dominant theme of the Bible has been recognized by numerous theologians. Note Charles Ryrie's explanation:

Why is an earthly kingdom necessary? Did He not receive His inheritance when He was raised and exalted in heaven? Is not His present rule His inheritance? Why does there need to be an earthly kingdom? Because He must be triumphant *in the same arena* where He was seemingly defeated. His rejection by the rulers of this world was on this earth (1 Cor. 2:8). His exaltation must also be on this earth. And so it shall be when He comes again to rule this world in righteousness. He has waited long for His inheritance; soon He shall receive it.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Abrahamic and Related Sub-Covenants**

The next major place in God's Word that speaks to the reality of a future Messianic Kingdom are those sections that reveal God's covenants with His special nation Israel.

#### *Reasons for the Abrahamic Covenant*

It is helpful to understand why God created and entered into a covenant with Israel. According to tradition, Nimrod, the leader of the

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<sup>5</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 511.

rebellion at the Tower of Babel (Gen 10:8-9), and his wife Semiramis became the founders of the mystery religion known as the Mother-Child Cult. Their son Tammuz born through an alleged miraculous conception was killed by a wild animal and miraculously raised to life. This event led to the worship of the mother (Semiramis) and the child (Tammuz). When God confounded the language at Babel consequently ushering in multiple ethnicities (Gen 11:1-9), this Mother-Child Cult was exported into every culture that followed. Although the names of the mother and the child were changed from culture to culture, these religions still epitomized the same idolatrous religious system that began at Babel. In Assyria, the mother was Ishtar and the child was Tammuz. In Phoenicia, it was Astarte and Baal. In Egypt, it was Isis and Osiris or Horus. In Greece, it was Aphrodite and Eros. In Rome, it was Venus and Cupid.<sup>6</sup> Given the idolatrous origin of these nations, God through Abram began a new nation independent of this universal impact at Babel. This nation, later called Israel (Num 24:17), would become His vehicle of exporting His messianic blessings to the world (Gen 3:15; 12:3).

#### *Abrahamic Promises*

God began His new work of creating a special nation through which His messianic and ultimately kingdom blessings would be realized through His calling of Abram (later re-named Abraham in Genesis 17:5) from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:31). Soon afterward Abram became the heir of numerous promises that God obligated Himself to perform through

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<sup>66</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons; or, the Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife*, 2nd American ed. (Edinburgh: Wood, 1862; reprint, New York: Loizeaux, 1959), 19-90. John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1983), 970.

Abraham and His physical descendants (Gen. 12:1-3). One of the more significant promises divinely bequeathed to Abram was the promise of land. Genesis 12:7 says, "The LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.'" At least *two* reasons make it apparent that this land was literal real estate on the earth. *First*, the land that God took Abram to is juxtaposed with the land that God took Abram from, which was the Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:31; Josh. 24:2-3). While no one doubts that Ur of the Chaldeans represented a place of actual physical geography, then neither should it be doubted that that land God promised to Abram and his descendants should also be construed in ordinary and literal terms. *Second*, God instructed Abram to walk throughout the land that he and his descendants would one day inherit (Gen. 13:14-17). Such an injunction borders on the impossible if actual real estate is not in view here. Such an ordinary construction of this land promise contributes to the expectation of an earthly kingdom. Walvoord explains:

It is true that Abraham's faith went beyond the promise of the physical land to that of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem in the eternal state, as indicated in Hebrews 11:10. But the promise of the land is obviously related to the temporal and will be fulfilled as long as the present earth lasts, whereas the promise of the eternal city had to do with the eternal state.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere Walvoord notes: "By so much also any spiritualization of Israel which would require fulfillment to the church in the present age or which would look to fulfillment in the eternal state would undermine not only the eschatology of Israel, but the program of eschatology as a whole."<sup>8</sup> The bottom line is that just as these land promises are not being fulfilled in the present Church Age, then neither can they be fulfilled in the

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<sup>7</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

Eternal State (Rev. 21–22) since that era will involve a new earth entirely (Rev. 21:1) rather than the present renovated earth as will be the case in the future Millennial Kingdom.

However, some might attempt to blunt the force of this argument by contending that the Abrahamic land promises could be fulfilled in the Eternal State since the Eternal State, like the Millennial Kingdom, merely represents a renovation of the present earth. Is there any validity to this argument?

### *The Eternal State*

While some today argue the new heaven and earth are simply a *renovation* of the present heavens and earth,<sup>9</sup> it is better to see them as a *new creation* entirely. In other words, the new heaven and earth will be an *ex nihilo* (something out of nothing) creation. Therefore, the new heaven and earth will be similar to God's creation of the original heavens and earth as recorded in Genesis 1. Several reasons make this contention tenable.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the present creation which is contaminated by sin (Rom. 8:20-22) that even extends into the Messianic kingdom (Isa. 65:20; Zech. 14:16-18; Rev. 20:7-10), the new creation will be completely free of sin and its influence (Rev. 21:4). Moreover, Peter's description of the final destruction of the present heavens and earth by fire (2 Pet. 3:7, 10-11, 13) seems incompatible with a renovation perspective. Many other areas of Scripture similarly speak of the complete destruction of the present world (Matt. 24:35; 1 Cor. 7:31; Heb. 1:10-12; 1 John 2:17). Also, the topography and geography of the coming new heaven and earth is described differently than the present heavens and earth. While the seas (Gen. 1:9-10) constitute close to seventy-five percent of the earth's surface, no

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<sup>9</sup> Some argue that the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22) will involve a renovated earth rather than a newly created one. See Michael J. Svigel, "Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth—Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It Ex Nihilo?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171, no. 684 (October-December 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas L. Constable, "Revelation," online: [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com), accessed 22 January 2013, 199-200.

sea will be present in the new world (Rev. 21:1b). Although the luminaries such as the sun, moon and stars are a part of our world (Gen. 1:14-19), such luminaries will be absent from the new world (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). Although the notion of a renovated earth may fit the transition from the present world into the earthly Messianic Kingdom, it seems incompatible with the transition from the Messianic Kingdom into the Eternal State.

Some maintain that the verb translated "passed away" (*aperchomai*) in John's description of the passing away of the present world does not convey total eradication. Revelation 21:1 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away..." However, this identical Greek word is used a few verses later in Revelation 21:4 in a context that speaks of complete elimination. Revelation 21:4 says, "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." "Passed away" in Revelation 21:4 means total elimination since it is speaking of sin and its consequences (tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain). If "passed away" means total elimination in Revelation 21:4, then why shouldn't John's use of the identical word a few verses earlier also not convey this same meaning.<sup>11</sup>

Others note that Peter exemplifies the destruction of the world through Noah's flood as a paradigm for how God will destroy the present earth (2 Pet. 3:6, 10-13). Thus, they argue that just as the transition from the prediluvian to the postdiluvian world involved a renovated earth, then the transition from the Millennial Kingdom into the Eternal State will also involve a renovated rather than a completely new earth. They base their argument on 2 Peter 3:6, "through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water." If such terminology does not mean eradication of the earth, then neither should it carry this meaning in Revelation 21:1a. However, Peter was not

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Hitchcock, *101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2012), 233.

speaking of the flood's impact upon the earth. Rather, he was explaining that the flood destroyed all of humanity (except the eight on the Ark). The Greek word *kosmos* translated "world" can sometimes refer to humanity (John 3:16) rather than to the physical earth. In sum, while the Messianic Kingdom will take place on the present earth, the Eternal Kingdom will involve a completely new earth. If this is true, then the only place in God's future program for the Abrahamic land promises to find their realization is during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-10) rather than in the Eternal State (Rev. 21-22).

#### *Abrahamic Covenant*

The next place in God's Word that speaks to the reality of a future Messianic Kingdom are those sections that reveal God's covenants with His special nation Israel. A covenant in ancient times is similar to a legal contract today, which binds the parties to an agreement to be performed in a specific way. In the biblical covenants, the God of the universe legally obligated Himself to fulfill specific promises directly to Israel and thus indirectly to the world. Let us briefly explain the content of these covenants and then note their contribution to the promised future earthly kingdom.

Israel's foundational covenant is known as the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21). Here, God took the existing Abrahamic promises found in Genesis 12-13 and ratified them into the form of an official ancient Near Eastern covenant. In fact, in Genesis 15:18, the Hebrew word *berith* translated "covenant" is used for the very first time in God's dealing with Abram and his descendants. God's covenantal obligations involve a specific group of people, namely Abram's physical descendants (Gen. 15:4-5). Here, God unconditionally promises three elements to Israel: *land* extending from modern day Egypt to Iraq (Gen. 15:18-21), *seed* or innumerable



descendants (Gen. 15:4-5; 22:17), and *blessing* (Gen. 15:1). There are several more truths about the Abrahamic Covenant that must be understood.

### **Literal and Reliable**

Each of these elements should be interpreted in a literal sense. The boundaries of the land are said to correspond to the distance between the Tigris and the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18-21), which were well known actual rivers in Abram's time. We should not look to the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22) for the realization of these promises since bodies of water in general seem absent from that future time period (Rev. 21:1). Furthermore, the seed promises should be literally construed since they are said to refer to heirs coming forth from Abraham's very own body (Gen. 15:4-5). These promises should also be understood as completely reliable since they emanate from a perfect God who is incapable of lying (Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). In fact, when God works in history to fulfill these promises, He does so primarily to vindicate His righteous name as a faithful God who keeps His Word (Exod. 2:24; Ezek. 36:22).

### **Basis of Israel's Sub-Covenants**

These three promises of *land, seed, and blessing* are amplified in subsequent covenants (or sub-covenants) that God made with the nation. The *land* provision is amplified in the Land Covenant (Deut. 29–30). That the Land Covenant represents its own separate covenant seems apparent from Deuteronomy 29:1, which says, "These are the words of the *covenant* which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, *besides the covenant* which He had made with them at Horeb" (italics added). The Land Covenant, among other things, promises the future eschatological regathering of the nation of Israel. This Land Covenant also should be construed literally since the eschatological regathering of Israel is mentioned right alongside Israel's scattering. Deuteronomy 30:3 says, "then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will *gather* you again from

all the peoples where the LORD your God has *scattered* you" (italics added). While most would interpret the scattering as a literal event in history, then the nation's regathering should also be interpreted as a literal event of the future.

Regarding the *seed* promises, from Abraham's many seed (Gen. 22:17) would ultimately come a singular seed (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16) or descendant who will procure all of the promises found in the Abrahamic Covenant for Israel consequently ushering in blessing for the nation and world. This seed aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant's promises is later amplified in what is known as the Davidic Covenant. After God rejected Saul, who was the nation's first king, God selected David from among Jesse's sons (1 Sam. 16:1). This selection led to David's anointing as the nation's second king (1 Sam. 16:13). In time, God entered into a covenant with David, which promised that through David's lineage would come an eternal house, throne, and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In other words, God through David's lineage would usher in an eternal dynasty and throne. The Old Testament continually reaffirms that there would eventually arise a Davidic descendant who would usher in all that was unconditionally promised to both Abraham and David (Ps. 89; Amos 9:11; Hosea 3:5; Isa. 7:13-14; 9:6-7; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24).

Walvoord well explains the literal import of these promises found within the Davidic Covenant:

The covenant with David is not only given twice in its major content—namely, II Samuel 7 and I Chronicles 17—but it is also confirmed in Psalm 89. In this and other Old Testament references there is no allusion anywhere to the idea that these promises are to be understood in a spiritualized sense as referring to the church or to a reign of God in heaven. Rather, it is linked to the earth and to the seed of Israel, and to the land...There is no indication that this kingdom extended to a spiritual entity such as the church nor that the throne in view is the throne of God in heaven rather than the throne of David on earth...Such a situation does not prevail in this present age and is not related here or elsewhere to the reign of Christ from the throne of His Father in heaven.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, 84-85, 87.

The *blessing* component is amplified in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). That God and Israel are the only parties to this covenant seems apparent from Jeremiah 31:31, which says, "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'" Here, God promised to write His laws on the hearts of the Jews. Once inaugurated, this eternal covenant (Jer. 32:37-40) will bring forth both regeneration (Jer. 31:33) and universal spiritual knowledge (Jer. 31:34) for Israel thereby permanently removing from them the necessity of the Mosaic Covenant (Jer. 31:32). Thus, the Abrahamic Covenant's promises of *land, seed, and blessing* are given greater clarity in the three sub-covenants that God entered into with the nation of Israel. When these three promises, and their subsequent amplification, are correctly interpreted, they call for a future earthly kingdom.

### **Unconditional**

In addition to being literal and reliable as well as the basis for the sub-covenants with Israel, it is also important to understand the Abrahamic Covenant's unconditional nature. A *conditional* promise rests on the performance of one of the contracting parties before the other party renders contractual service. An *unconditional* promise obligates a contracting party to act regardless of the performance of the other contracting party. The late prophecy scholar Dr. John F. Walvoord identifies *four* reasons as to why these covenantal promises are unconditional.<sup>13</sup> *First*, Walvoord notes the typical ancient Near Eastern, covenant-ratification ceremony, which God used to establish the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15). In this ceremony, severed animal carcasses were placed into two rows and the parties to the covenant passed through these rows. Such a solemn occasion testified to the fact that if the parties did not fulfill their obligations under the covenant, then they, too, were to be severed just as the animals had

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<sup>13</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1959), 149-52.

been (Jer. 34:8-10, 18-19). What is unique about the Abrahamic Covenant is that Abraham never passed through the severed animal pieces. After God put Abraham to sleep, God alone, as represented by the oven and the torch, passed through the animal pieces (Gen. 15:12, 17). This signifies that God alone will bring to pass all the promises in the Abrahamic Covenant unilaterally.

*Second*, there are no stated conditions for Israel's obedience in Genesis 15. If Israel had to do something before God could perform His obligations, such a condition would have been mentioned. Because there are no stated conditions for Israel to perform before God could perform, the covenant must solely rest upon God for performance.

*Third*, the Abrahamic Covenant is called everlasting (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19) and unchangeable (Heb. 6:13-18). Thus, the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant cannot rest upon the performance of fickle and sinful mortal men. Because only God is eternal (Ps. 90:2) and unchangeable (Mal. 3:6), He alone will bring the covenant promises into fulfillment. *Fourth*, the covenant is trans-generationally reaffirmed despite Israel's perpetual national disobedience. For example, the covenant is consistently reaffirmed to Abraham (Gen. 13:14-17; 22:17-18) despite his routine lies about Sarah being his sister (Gen. 12:10-20; 20). Abraham's obedience can only be described as partial obedience at best. Walvoord notes:

The fulfillment of God's purpose of bringing Abraham from Ur of Chaldees to the Promised Land was delayed and thwarted by Abraham's incomplete obedience in bringing his father and nephew Lot with him. Entrance to the land was delayed until his father died, and Lot continued to be a hindrance to him until he and Abraham separated.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the covenant is reaffirmed to Jacob (Gen. 28:14-15), whose very name means "deceiver," in spite of the fact that he cheated his own brother out of his birthright (Gen. 27). Furthermore, no matter how wicked each generation became (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-18),

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 101.

God perpetually reaffirmed the covenant to Israel (Jer. 31:35-37). If the covenant were conditioned upon Israel's performance, it would have been revoked long ago due to Israel's disobedience rather than continually reaffirmed.

### **Unfulfilled**

In addition, the covenant, even up to the present hour, remains *unfulfilled*. While some might make the argument that some parts of the covenant have achieved a past fulfillment, when construed literally, the bulk of the covenant remains unfulfilled thus awaiting a future realization. Some challenge the covenant's unfulfilled aspects by contending that it was fulfilled either in the days of Joshua (Josh. 11:23; 21:43-45) or during the prosperous reign of Solomon (1 Kgs. 4:20-21; 8:56).<sup>15</sup> However, several reasons make this interpretation suspect.<sup>16</sup> For example, the extended context indicates that the land promises were not completely satisfied in the days of Joshua (13:1-7; Judges 1:19, 21, 27, 29, 30-36). In addition, the land that Israel attained in the conquest was only a fraction of what was found in the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>17</sup> Also, the land promises could not have been fulfilled in Joshua's day since Israel had not yet conquered Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63). The conquest of Jerusalem would have to wait another four hundred years until the Davidic reign (2 Sam. 5).

Although Solomon gained a large percentage of the land, his empire only extended to the border of Egypt (1 Kgs. 4:21) rather than to the promised river of Egypt

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<sup>15</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2007), 52-53, 178-79.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel, 1994), 521-22, 631-32.; John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 82.

<sup>17</sup> See the helpful map showing what was promised in the Abrahamic Covenant in comparison to what was attained in the conquest in Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Numbers," online: [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com), accessed 13 January 2012, 98.

(Gen. 15:18) according to what God initially promised Abraham.<sup>18</sup> Regarding the notion that the land promises were fulfilled under Solomon's reign, Constable observes:

This does not mean that the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled in Solomon's day (Gen. 15:18-20), for not all of this territory was incorporated into the geographic boundaries of Israel; many of the subjected kingdoms retained their identity and territory but paid taxes (tribute) to Solomon. Israel's own geographic limits were "from Dan to Beersheba" (1 Kings 4:25).<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the Abrahamic Covenant promises that Israel would possess the land forever (Gen. 17:7-8, 13, 19). This eternal promise has obviously never been fulfilled as of yet due to Israel's subsequent eviction from the land a few centuries after Solomon's reign (2 Kgs. 17; 25). Furthermore, if the land promises were satisfied in Joshua's or Solomon's day, then why do subsequent prophets treat these promises as if they are yet to be fulfilled (Amos 9:11-15)? Certainly the New Covenant's promise of God writing His laws upon the hearts of Israel has never been fulfilled. Israel's national disobedience is well chronicled throughout the pages of Scripture. In fact, Israel largely remains a Christ-rejecting nation to the present day.

### **The Abrahamic Covenant's Contribution to the Future Earthly Kingdom**

Abraham died having never received any of the divine promises guaranteed in the Abrahamic Covenant. The only land that Abraham ever received was a small burial plot he purchased in Hebron for his wife Sarah (Gen. 23). The bottom line is that if the Abrahamic Covenant and its related sub-covenants are *literal* (interpreted in ordinary, earthly terms), *unconditional* (resting upon God alone for performance rather than Israel), and *unfulfilled* (never fulfilled historically thereby necessitating a future fulfillment), then there must be a future time in history in which God will make good on what He has

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<sup>18</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 533.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas L. Constable, "1 Kings," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1985), 497.

covenantally obligated Himself to do. God must do what He said He would do since it is contrary to His nature to lie, fabricate, or equivocate in any sense (Num. 23:19). Thus, such a future fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and related sub-covenants heightens the biblical expectation of a future, earthly kingdom.

### **Mosaic Covenant**

The next major place in God's Word that speaks to the reality of a future, Messianic Kingdom is the revelation of the Mosaic Covenant that God gave exclusively to national Israel (Ps. 147:19-20) at Mount Sinai. Despite four hundred years of bondage in Egypt (Gen. 15:13-16), God graciously redeemed and liberated His people through the Exodus. He then brought His redeemed people to Sinai and entered into a new covenant with them called the "Mosaic Covenant." The Mosaic Covenant also introduced a new component to God's covenantal dealings with Israel. This new element must be understood in order to comprehend the divine blueprint concerning a future, earthly kingdom. As argued previously, the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants are unconditional. In other words, they rest completely upon God rather than upon Israel's performance for their eventual fulfillment. By contrast, the Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 19–24) is conditional. Notice the terms "if" and "then" in Exodus 19:5-6: "Now then, *if* you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, *then* you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (emphasis mine). In other words, if Israel obeys the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, then God will bless the nation physically, materially, and spiritually.

The technical covenantal structure in the ancient Near East for this type of agreement is known as a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. Here, the suzerain, or a superior, enters into an agreement with an inferior, or a vassal. The vassal promises to come under the protective custody of the suzerain. The suzerain, in turn, promises to bless or curse the

vassal depending upon whether the vassal demonstrates loyalty or disloyalty to the suzerain by either obeying or disobeying the specific terms of the covenant text. Thus, all Suzerain-Vassal treaties had the following elements: a suzerain, a vassal, a covenant text that the vassal was obligated to follow, and a blessings and curses section spelling out the specific blessing and curses that the vassal would experience from the Suzerain depending upon the vassal's obedience or disobedience. In the case of the Mosaic Covenant, the suzerain is God, Israel is the vassal, the covenant text is the Ten Commandments and all of their applications as spelled out in the Mosaic Law (Exod. 19–24; Lev.; Deut.), and the blessings and curses for covenant obedience or disobedience are found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. In contrast to this suzerain-vassal arrangement, the afore-mentioned unconditional Abrahamic Covenant represents an ancient Near East covenant known as a "Royal Grant Treaty" where a king promises to unconditionally reward a subject.

If the Abrahamic Covenant and its related sub-covenants are unconditional and the Mosaic Covenant is conditional, then how does God deal with Israel under both of these covenants? The answer lies in understanding the difference between *ownership* and *possession*. Suppose that someone owns a vacation home and yet they are too busy working to visit this home. At this point, this person *owns* the home but does not *possess* or enjoy it. In the same way, the Abrahamic covenant gives Israel unconditional *ownership* of its various promises. Due to the Abrahamic Covenant's unconditional nature, no amount of disobedience on Israel's part can remove her *ownership* of these blessings. While Israel can be severely disciplined by God for disobeying the terms of the Mosaic Covenant (Lev. 26:14-46; Deut. 28:15-68), even resulting in the nation's conquest by foreign powers (Deut. 28:49-50), she can never forfeit *ownership* of the promises spoken of in the Abrahamic Covenant.

However, before Israel can *possess* or enjoy what she owns, she must obey the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, any given generation within Israel must meet the



conditions of the Mosaic Covenant in order to experience the blessings promised in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.<sup>20</sup> An important provision of the Mosaic Covenant is that Israel must enthrone the king of God's own choosing (Deut. 17:15). Such an enthronement will thereby satisfy the condition of obedience found in the Mosaic Covenant thus allowing Israel *to possess* rather than merely *own* the Abrahamic Covenant's blessings.

The Mosaic Covenant ultimately points toward Christ. In John 5:45-47, Jesus explained to the Jews of His day, "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" Here is what the whole picture looks like: While Israel *owns* the covenantal blessings found in the Abrahamic Covenant and related sub-covenants, she cannot *possess* or enter into these blessings until she complies with the condition found in the Mosaic Covenant. However, this condition can be satisfied through the nation's enthronement of the king of God's own choosing (Deut. 17:15), who is Christ (John 5:45-47).

How does all of this relate to the subject of a future earthly kingdom? Although the Abrahamic Covenantal promises and blessings are unconditionally guaranteed to come directly to Israel and indirectly to the entire world, these kingdom conditions will not manifest themselves until national Israel trusts Jesus Christ, her long-awaited Messiah-King. Because, there has never existed a Jewish generation who has complied with this condition, the Messianic Kingdom remains in a state of postponement or abeyance up until the present hour. However, one day, a future generation of Jews will comply with this condition resulting in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom of

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<sup>20</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 66-67, 85-86.

God on earth. It will take the events of the future Tribulation period to bring such a generation to faith in Christ thereby leading to the manifestation of the earthly, theocratic, Messianic Kingdom (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 12:10; Matt. 23:37-39; 24:31; 25:31).

### **Times of the Gentiles**

Despite Israel's covenantal structure, the Old Testament also predicted a difficult time that would come upon the nation in which she would be functioning without a Davidic king. Israel would ultimately be restored at the conclusion of this difficult era. Hosea 3:3-4 predicts,

Then I said to her, 'You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you.' For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

This difficult era began with the Babylonian Captivity, which initiated a dark time in Jewish history known as the "Times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24; Rev. 11:2). This era is defined as the period of time when the nation no longer has a Davidic king reigning on David's Throne. During this period, Judah would be trampled down by various Gentile powers. These powers include Babylon (605–539 B.C.), Medo-Persia (539–331 B.C.), Greece (331–63 B.C.), Rome (63 B.C.–A.D. 70), as well as the future, revived Roman Empire of the Antichrist (sometimes called "Rome Phase II"). Nebuchadnezzar, in a dream, saw this time period symbolized by a beautiful, dazzling statue. Each part of the statue represents a different Gentile power (Dan. 2). In his dream, Daniel saw the same period of time in the form of four grotesque beasts. Each beast pictured a different Gentile power (Dan. 7). To Nebuchadnezzar, who was the king of Babylon or the first Gentile power to trample down Judah, this period appeared beautiful. This perspective explains why Nebuchadnezzar perceived this era in the form of an attractive statue. To Daniel, a Jew, whose people would be trampled down by these

Gentile powers, this period was dismal. This perspective explains why he saw the Times of the Gentiles as represented by various ferocious beasts.

The Times of the Gentiles, which began with Nebuchadnezzar's deposing of Zedekiah and the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C., are marked by the following three characteristics: the lack of a Davidic king reigning on David's Throne in Jerusalem, Judah being trampled underfoot by a successive array of Gentile powers, and the termination of the earthly theocracy as signified through the departure of God's *shekinah* glory from the temple (Ezek. 10:4, 18-19; 11:23). The Times of the Gentiles will run their course and will eventually conclude with restoration of a rightful king reigning on David's Throne, and the return of the *shekinah* glory of God to the Millennial temple (Ezek. 43:1-5). This difficult period will end with the return of Jesus Christ to rule and reign from David's Throne in Jerusalem (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45; Matt. 25:31).

All of the other nations during the Times of the Gentiles, as depicted in Daniel 2 and 7, were literal empires possessing actual real estate that existed for specific time periods. Since this is so, then consistent interpretation also calls for literally interpreting the latter parts of Daniel's prophecy relating God's kingdom, which will eventually replace all of the previously mentioned pagan empires. Thus, God's future kingdom will also comprise an earthly realm possessing actual real estate (Gen. 15:18-21) for specific time duration (Rev. 20:1-10). While the Times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar's deposing of Zedekiah, it will terminate at the return and enthronement of Christ thereby inaugurating the long-awaited Messianic Kingdom.

Thus, only after the final kingdom of man (the revived Roman Empire of the Antichrist) has been terminated by Christ, will the Davidic kingdom be established on earth (Dan. 2:34-35, 43-45; 7:23-27). This fact alone should deter interpreters from finding a premature manifestation of the kingdom in the present Church Age. Unfortunately, "kingdom now" theologians ignore this chronology by arguing for a present, spiritual form of the kingdom, despite the fact that the kingdoms of man have not

yet run their course, the Antichrist and his kingdom have not yet been overthrown, and the Second Advent has not yet occurred. This Danielic chronology causes Unger to conclude:

...Daniel *neither* in the image prophecy of chapter 2 *nor* in the beast prophecy of chapter 7 *deals with the present age of the calling out of the church*, the period during which Israel is temporarily in national rejection...Daniel was given the prophetic vision of Rome up to the time of Christ's death (the two legs). The vision resumed with *the resumption of the divine dealing* with national Israel (after the completion of the church at the rapture) during the period between glorification of the church and the establishment of the Kingdom over Israel (Acts 1:6). Hence, the iron kingdom with its feet of iron and clay (cf. 3:33-35, 40, 44) and the nondescript beast of 7:7-8 envision not only Gentile power (1) as it was at the first advent, but (2) also the form in which it will exist *after the church period*, when God will resume His dealing with the *nation* Israel. How futile for conservative scholars to ignore that fact and to seek to find literal fulfillment of those prophecies in history or in the church, when those predictions refer to events yet future and have no application whatever to the church.<sup>21</sup>

### **Israel in the Diaspora**

While laying out the specifics related to the Times of the Gentiles, the Old Testament also adds an additional detail by predicting that part of Israel's suffering would include experiencing worldwide dispersion while out of her land. The Old Testament reveals that Israel would continue in unbelief and disobedience. Perhaps the height of this unbelief pertains to the Old Testament predictions regarding the nation's rejection of her own prophesied Messiah (Isa. 53; Dan. 9:26). As specified in the Mosaic Covenant, God vowed to bring a foreign nation against His own people (Deut. 28:49-50) as His instrument of discipline. Part of this discipline would also include worldwide dispersion. For example, Deuteronomy 4:27 predicts, "The LORD will *scatter you among the peoples*, and you will be left few in number *among the nations* where the LORD drives you" (italics added). Deuteronomy 28:63-65 similarly reveals:

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<sup>21</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1981; reprint, Chatanooga, TN: AMG, 2002), 1643.

It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and *you will be torn from the land* where you are entering to possess it. Moreover, the LORD will *scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth*; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. *Among those nations* you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul (italics added).

Prophecies of such a global magnitude could hardly have been satisfied with the events of the Babylonian Captivity. There, Judah was taken to a specific geographical area, namely Babylon, for the duration of the captivity. These verses from Deuteronomy cited above are predicting a global dispersion rather than a local confinement. These prophecies are better said to have found their realization in the events of A.D. 70 and beyond. At that point in time God brought discipline upon the unbelieving Israel through Titus of Rome and his destruction of the second Jewish temple. For the last two thousand years, the Jews have found themselves in worldwide dispersion, as specifically predicted by Moses. They did not begin to return back into their homeland until modern times.

### **Israel's Regathering in Unbelief**

Just as Israel's discipline and dispersion is predicted in the Old Testament, so is her eventual restoration. The Bible predicts two eschatological regatherings for national Israel. There is first a present regathering in unbelief when Israel returns to part of the land. This regathering will be followed by another future regathering when Israel will return to all of the land in faith. In this current regathering she is restored to part of the land. In the final regathering she will be restored to all of the land. The current regathering is a restoration to the land only. The second regathering will be a restoration to the both land and the Lord. The current regathering of the Jews that we are now seeing is setting the stage for discipline during the Tribulation period. The latter regathering will be after Israel is saved or regenerated and it will set the stage for the Millennial

Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Israel's conversion is simply the end of this prolonged process. According to this pattern, Israel not only has a prophetic program to fulfill after her conversion but she also has a prophetic destiny to complete prior to her conversion. Numerous passages speak of Israel's initial gathering in unbelief prior to the Tribulation period (Ezek. 22:17-22; Zeph. 2:1-2).<sup>23</sup> For example, Ezekiel 20:33-38 says:

“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. *I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered,* with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so *I will enter into judgment with you,*” declares the Lord GOD. “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and *I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me;* I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD (italics added).

Here we notice that Israel will be brought back to their land in unbelief so that a remnant can be separated and brought to faith in their Messiah. Obviously, such an eschatological event cannot transpire unless Israel is first restored to their land in unbelief. Similarly, Isaiah 11:11-12 states:

Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the *second time* with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth (italics added).

Fruchtenbaum well explains how this prophecy relates to Israel's regathering in unbelief:

But then the fourth view goes on to say that we really cannot be sure that the present Jewish state, as we see it today, is the fulfillment of those prophecies that

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<sup>22</sup> J. Randall Price, *Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy: God's Stage for the Final Drama* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1998), 219.

<sup>23</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel, 2003), 99-104.

spoke of the regathering in unbelief. Why not? Because they believe that it is possible to have several regatherings in unbelief before there is the specific one that fulfills the prophecies just discussed. But this passage in Isaiah shows that is exactly what cannot be: there cannot be several regatherings in unbelief *from the four corners of the earth*. The entire context is Isaiah 11:11–12:6. In this context, he is speaking of the final worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. Isaiah numbers the final worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for the messianic Kingdom as the *second* one. In other words, the last one is only the second one. If the last one is the second one, how many can there be before that? Only one. The first one could not have been the return from Babylon since that was not an international gathering from the four corners of the world, only a migration from one country (Babylonia) to another (Judea). The Bible does not allow for several worldwide regatherings in unbelief; it allows for one worldwide regathering in unbelief, followed by the last one, the one in faith, which is the second one. This text only permits two worldwide regatherings from *the four corners of the earth*. Therefore, the present Jewish state *is* relevant to Bible prophecy.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, Israel's entrance into a covenant with the Antichrist and the erection of the Tribulation temple (Dan 9:27) are obviously prophecies that she will fulfill while still in unbelief. Zechariah 12:10 also contains an implied prophecy of Jewish restoration to her land in unbelief when it says:

I will pour out on the house of David and *on the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn (italics added).

Notice the physical location of the Jews just prior to the Spirit being poured out upon them. Zechariah calls them "the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They obviously must already be regathered to Jerusalem in unbelief before the Holy Spirit can be poured out upon them.

Understanding the Tribulation period as a larger process whereby God takes the nation from unbelief to faith is necessary to counter a developing trend within evangelicalism that contends that God's hand cannot be on the modern state of Israel

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

because she is currently in unbelief.<sup>25</sup> Such a contention is inconsistent with biblical predictions of a twofold national re-gathering. Thus, any analysis that discounts God's present hand on the Jewish nation simply because Israel is currently in unbelief fails to take into account all of the biblical data. Furthermore, if faith and obedience are the criteria used to determine whether God's hand is upon modern Israel, then such a standard also forces one to conclude that God's hand was never upon the nation during the 1300 years of biblical history when the nation was in the land. Unbelief and disobedience characterized the nation during this era as well. In sum, the modern state of Israel, even in their present state of unbelief, could very well represent the initial gathering in preparation for the coming Tribulation period.

This view regarding the significance of the modern state of Israel is nothing new for traditional dispensational interpreters. Note the following quotes by prophecy scholar John F. Walvoord back in 1962 as he reflected upon the prophetic significance of the modern state of Israel. Keep in mind that he made these statements five years before the Six-Day War liberating Jerusalem and many of Israel's current territories.

Of the many peculiar phenomena which characterize the present generation, few events can claim equal significance as far as Biblical prophecy is concerned with that of the return of Israel to their land. It constitutes a preparation for the end of the age, the setting for the coming of the Lord for His church, and the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic destiny.<sup>26</sup>

Walvoord further explains:

The third and final dispersion began in A.D. 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the desecration of the entire land which followed in the next century. From this dispersion, Israel has begun to return in the twentieth century as witnessed in the establishment of the nation Israel. Two million of these people are now established in their ancient land. The present regathering being witnessed by our generation is the largest movement of the people of Israel since the days of

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<sup>25</sup> John Piper, "Land Divine?: We Should Treat the Israeli-Palestinian Dispute as We Would Any Other," *World*, May 11 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, 26.



Moses, and may be understood to be the beginning of that which will be completed subsequent to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom on earth.<sup>27</sup>

Elsewhere, Walvoord similarly noted:

The partial restoration of the nation of Israel to their ancient land in the middle of the 20th century should be recognized by all careful students of the Bible as a most remarkable event. It seems to be a token that God is about to fulfill His Word concerning the glorious future of His chosen people. As has been pointed out in previous discussion, the return of Israel to their ancient land and the establishment of the state of Israel is the first step in a sequence of events which will culminate in Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. The present return of Israel is the prelude and will be followed by the dark hour of their suffering in the great tribulation. This will be succeeded by the return of Christ, the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, and the exaltation of the people of Israel to a place of prominence and blessing.<sup>28</sup>

As Walvoord reiterates:

One of the most dramatic evidences that the end of the age is approaching is the fact that Israel has re-established her position as a nation in her ancient land. Israel today is in the proper place to enter into the covenant anticipated in Daniel 9:27 which will begin the last seven-year period leading up to the second coming of Christ. Even the modern city of Jerusalem built by Israel is occupying the precise area predicted in Jeremiah 31:38-40 and constitutes a fulfillment of this prophecy given twenty-five hundred years ago and never before fulfilled...The fact that in our day there is again movement and development in relation to this ancient nation is a sign that the stage is being set for the final world drama. Certainly as Israel's promises are being fulfilled before our eyes other aspects of prophecy such as the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the translation of living saints become a real and an imminent possibility. The hope of Israel is also the hope of the church.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the modern state of Israel, even in unbelief, represents a prophetically significant trend, which was predicted in the pages of the Old Testament. Israel's present existence is setting the stage for the ultimate completion of God's future kingdom program.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 130-31. For similar citations by Walvoord regarding the prophetic significance of the modern state of Israel, also see pages 67, 97, 113.

### **Israel's Conversion Through Distress**

Just as the Old Testament predicts the covenanted nation's time of discipline, Diaspora, and restoration in unbelief, it is also equally clear regarding Israel's ultimate restoration to her Messiah. However, such conversion will only be accomplished as the nation passes through a time of unprecedented distress. Deuteronomy 4:30 says, "When you are in *distress* and all these things have come upon you, in the *latter days* you will *return to the LORD* your God and listen to His voice" (italics added). Similarly, Joel 3:1 predicts a time when God will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem. However, the very next verse explains that such restoration will be accomplished through the distress of the nations coming against Israel for the purpose of dividing her land (Joel 3:2).

Israel's future time of distress ultimately leading to her restoration also figures prominently in Zechariah's prophecies. In the end times, Zechariah predicts that Jerusalem would become a cup of trembling that causes the reeling of the various nations of the earth (Zech. 12:2-3). In fact, the tension between Jerusalem and the rest of the world would become so severe that all the nations of the world would come to battle against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2). This time of future stress would become so severe that it will result in the death of two-thirds of the Jewish population. However, the remaining one third will be preserved and purified (Zech. 13:8-9) and brought to spiritual life (Zech. 12:10). These events will result in the Messiah physically returning to planet earth (Job 19:25), where His very feet will touch the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4), in order to rescue believing Israel from the wrath of the Beast and the Devil.

Perhaps the most critical passage on the subject of Israel's distress leading to her conversion is found in Jeremiah 30:7, which says, "Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it." The name "Jacob" refers to Israel since Jacob's name was changed to Israel in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). The time of unparalleled distress spoken of here is the future Great Tribulation Period. This identical time period is also depicted as a time of

unprecedented suffering in two other Old Testament passages (Joel 2:2; Dan. 12:1) as well as one New Testament passage (Matt. 24:21). Jeremiah 30:7 also explains that "he (Jacob or Israel) will be saved from it." Thus, this time of unprecedented distress will be the very instrument that God will use to bring the Jewish remnant to faith in Yashua (Jesus). This distress resulting in Israel's conversion will ultimately lead to her total restoration. Jeremiah 30:3 describes this restoration when it says, "For behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah." The LORD says, "I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it."

Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (Dan. 9:24-27) contributes the most specific chronological information about the future Tribulation by describing it as a remaining seven year period (Dan. 9:27) out of a total 490 year time period that concerns Israel. Daniel 9:27 even divides this future seven year period into halves and predicts the prophetic event, the Abomination of Desolation, which will transpire at the midpoint of this coming seven-year time period. However, the end result will be a politically and spiritually restored nation, whereby the six clauses spoken of in Daniel 9:24 will have become a reality for national Israel in her millennial glory. Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks again fits the familiar Old Testament theme of Israel's predicted national restoration only after and through a time of unprecedented distress.

### **Israel's Restoration**

Following her conversion through distress, the Old Testament also predicts that Israel will be settled in her own land in faith. As noted earlier, Deuteronomy 30:3 indicates that Israel's regathering will be just as literal and real as was her scattering. The subject of Israel's restoration is a consistent topic throughout the Major Prophets. The prophet Isaiah frequently mentioned the subject (Isa. 11:11; 43:5-7; 66:20). Isaiah 27:13 declares, "It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those

who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem." Jeremiah also contributed a large quantity of material toward this theme of Israel's ultimate restoration (Jer. 30:3, 10-11; 31:8; 32:37). Jeremiah 16:14-15 predicts:

Therefore behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no longer be said, As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them. For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.

Of this passage, Walvoord observes, "It should be noted that the regathering of Israel to their ancient land is here described as being a regathering to the last man, something that was not remotely approached in any previous return."<sup>30</sup> The physical and spiritual restoration of the nation is also a dominant theme in the writings of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:13; 39:28). Ezekiel 36:24-28 predicts:

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

It is interesting to note how frequently these major prophets stress the land that God have given to the nation's forefathers when prophesying Israel's ultimate restoration (Jer. 16:15; Ezek 36:28, etc...). The land of Israel figures prominently in these prophecies. Sadly, the land of Israel has often lost its significance or been marginalized in the eschatological thinking of many. For example, according to Progressive Dispensational progenitor Darrell Bock, his Progressive Dispensationalism is both "less land centered" and less "future centered" in comparison to traditional

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 67.

Dispensationalism.<sup>31</sup> Such a de-emphasis upon Israel's land is tragic in light of the stress that the Old Testament in general and the Major Prophets in particular place upon the future restoration of Israel to her own land. Yet the land should be emphasized since God Himself says, "The land is Mine" (Lev. 25:23). The land is something that God is passionate about. David Hocking writes, "Lest you think that God is a passive observer to all that takes place in the land of Israel, listen to the words of Deuteronomy 11:12, ' a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.'"<sup>32</sup>

The restoration of the Jews to their land and their Lord is also significantly dealt with by the various minor prophets, such as Zechariah (Zech. 10:10). Zechariah 8:7-foretells: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them *back* and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'" Amos, another minor prophet, conveys the finality of Israel's future restoration in Amos 9:14-15:

"Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says the LORD your God.

In fact, so voluminous is the subject of Israel's future restoration in the writings of the prophets that Thomas Ice observes, "Every Old Testament prophet, except Jonah, speaks of a permanent return to the Land of Israel by the Jews."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Darrell Bock, quoted in "For the Love of Zion," *Christianity Today*, 9 March 1992, 50.

<sup>32</sup> David Hocking, *Israel's Right to the Land* (Tustin, CA: Hope For Today Publishers, 2001). Kindle Edition.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Hitchcock and Thomas Ice, *Breaking the Apocalypse Code* (Costa Mesa, CA: Word for Today, 2007), 136-37.

These prophecies of restoration will be fulfilled accurately and literally for the simple reason that all of the other predictions regarding Israel's returns to the land were accurately and literally fulfilled. For example, Genesis 15:13-14 predicts that although Israel would be taken to Egypt, she would eventually return to Canaan four hundred years later. Such a return was literally fulfilled as described in the Book of Joshua. Moreover, Jeremiah predicted that although Judah would be taken into Babylonian Captivity, she would eventually return to the land of Israel seventy years later (Jer. 25:11; 29:10). Such a return was once again literally fulfilled as described in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Similarly, although Israel's worldwide dispersion was predicted (Deut. 28:63-65), her eventual return to her homeland after worldwide dispersion is also predicted (Isa. 11:11-12). If the first two predictions of returns from deportation were literally fulfilled, then why would the third return also not be similarly literally fulfilled? Based on the historical track record of Scripture, all prophecies related to Israel's future regathering should be taken at face value and as reliable promises.

### **Millennial Conditions Revealed by the Prophets**

The prophets also consistently portray the spiritual and political conditions that will exist upon the earth during the Kingdom Age once Israel has been restored.

#### *An Eternal Kingdom*

The coming Kingdom will be established by God Himself, not by man. It will be an Eternal Kingdom that will never be destroyed again. Daniel 2:44 says, "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." Daniel 7:27 conveys this eternal component of the kingdom, when it says, "Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the

dominions will serve and obey Him." If the Millennial Kingdom will only last for one-thousand years, then how can it be said to be eternal in duration? Mark Hitchcock provides this helpful analogy:

Christ will rule over His kingdom on this present earth for one thousand years, *and* He will reign forever. The future kingdom of God has two parts or phases. Phase one is the millennial reign of Christ on this earth (Revelation 20:1-6), and phase two is the eternal state (Rev. 22:5). As I once heard it described, the Millennium is the front porch of eternity.<sup>34</sup>

### *Christ's Direct Rule*

The kingdom will represent Christ's global rule over the earth. Just as God sought to rule over the First Adam, who in turn ruled over creation on God's behalf, this very structure will be restored. God the Father will rule over the Last Adam, Jesus Christ Who, in turn, will govern the earth on God the Father's behalf (Ps. 2:6-9; Dan. 7:13-14). Zechariah 9:9-10 says:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey...And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Micah 5:2, 4 similarly says:

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity...And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.

### *An Earthly Kingdom*

This coming Kingdom Age will be earthly in nature. After Christ's returns and sets His feet upon the earth in general (Job 19:25) and the Mount of Olives in particular

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<sup>34</sup> Mark Hitchcock, *101 Answers to the Most Asked Questions About the End Times* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2001), 212.

(Zech. 14:4), then He will reign over the whole earth. Zechariah 14:9 says, "And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one." Zechariah's prophecies should not be construed as finding their fulfillment in the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22), since they also portray a human unwillingness to submit to the Messiah's authority (Zech. 14:16-18). Such premature human rebellion will be a thing of the past in the Eternal State (Re. 21:4).

### *Land Promises Realized*

During this earthly Kingdom Age, God's specific promises regarding the land of Israel (Gen. 15:18-21) will find their realization. Ezekiel 47:13-23 anticipates this time period through its predictions of the specific division of the land amongst the various tribes of Israel. Once again, it's difficult to believe that Ezekiel's prophecies are looking toward the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22) since that time period predicts that the tribes will comprise the names after each of the twelve gates in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12) rather than each tribe possessing its own allotment of land. The Old Testament prophets also predict that once the Kingdom arrives, the land of Israel will never be divided again. After Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel was divided. **This division resulted in ten tribes forming the northern kingdom, or Israel, and the remaining two tribes forming the southern kingdom, or Judah (1 Kgs. 12).** In fact the consistent attempt by the pagan nations to continue to divide Israel's land is the very thing that will bring God's wrath upon them during the future Tribulation period (Joel 3:2). By contrast, the kingdom age represents a time period when the land of Israel will be united and experience no further division (Jer. 30:3). Ezekiel 37:21-22 says:

Say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms."



### *Israel's Preeminence*

The Kingdom Age will also represent a time period when God will fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel in general and the City of Jerusalem in particular. During the Millennium Israel will be the head over the nations rather than the tail (Deut. 28:13).

Notice the following predictions:

Isaiah 14:2:

The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.

Isaiah 49:22-23:

Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations And set up My standard to the peoples; And they will bring your sons in *their* bosom, And your daughters will be carried on *their* shoulders. Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet; And *you* will know that I am the LORD; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame."

Zechariah 8:23: "In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" Thus, theological systems that ascribe to "*a* future" for Israel do not capture the full import of what the prophets anticipate concerning the coming Kingdom. Throughout the Kingdom Age Israel will not merely have merely "*a* future." Rather, Israel will be "*the* future."

The City of Jerusalem will also be elevated both physically and spiritually to place of prominence relative to the nations of the earth during the Kingdom Age.

Jerusalem will no longer be a burdensome stone to the nations as she is in the present age (Zech 12:2-3), but rather will become a source of blessing for the entire world. Jerusalem will become the capital city of the Millennial Age (Isa. 24:23; Zech. 8:22; 14:16-18). For example, Isaiah 2:2-3 anticipates:

Now it will come about that in the last days The Mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above

the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

### *Millennial Temple*

The prophecies of Israel's millennial preeminence also seem to indicate that Jerusalem will not only be functioning in a place of political authority over the world, but she will also be exercising spiritual authority. The prophet Ezekiel contributes much to Jerusalem's millennial religious authority through his predictions that a functioning temple will be in operation throughout the Kingdom Age (Ezek. 40–46). Apparently, animal sacrifices will also be part of worship in this future temple. While much has already been written defending the literal nature of both the temple and its sacrifices,<sup>35</sup> it is sufficient at this juncture merely to point out that these prophecies regarding the millennial temple only fit the future millennial reign of Christ. It cannot be successfully argued that these prophecies are being fulfilled today without allegorizing or spiritualizing away their many details.

In addition, *two* reasons prevent them from being fulfilled in the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22). *First*, Ezekiel depicts the prince as having to offer up a sacrifice for himself (Ezek. 45:22). This could not be an Eternal State predication since sin of any kind will not be a reality in the Eternal State (Rev. 21:4). *Second*, when John described the Eternal State, he saw no temple in it (Rev. 21:22). If Ezekiel's prophecies regarding a millennial temple do not fit today nor the Eternal State, the only logical place for them to be fulfilled is during the Millennial Kingdom that precedes the Eternal State.

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<sup>35</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, 456-69.

### *Millennial David*

According to Jeremiah 30:9, the nation would no longer serve foreign oppressors but rather would be devoted solely to the service of the Lord and David, who the Lord would enthrone. It is common for interpreters to understand the reference to the resurrected millennial David (Hos. 3:5; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24; Isa. 55:3-4) as referring to David's greater son Jesus Christ (Luke 1:32, 69; Acts 2:29-30; 13:22-23, 34). However, such an interpretation cannot be supported from Jeremiah 30:9 and constitutes an impermissible reading of the New Testament back into the Old. If Jeremiah wanted David to be understood in a symbolic sense, he would have said so. Fruchtenbaum explains:

...nothing in the text indicates that *David* is to be taken symbolically. If the prophets wanted to refer to the messiah in connection with David, they used terms such as "Root of Jesse," "Branch of David," "Son of David," or "Seed of David." None of these expressions are used here. The text simply states, *David*. In keeping with literal interpretation, it is best to take the text as it reads, meaning the literal David, who, in his resurrected form, will function as the king over Israel and as a prince in subjection to the King of the world.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, David will be resurrected at the same time as all of the other Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:4) and rule in submission to Christ during the Millennium in a co regency form of government. "While Jesus, the Messiah, will reign over the entire earth, David will be resurrected to reign with Christ as vice regent over the nation of Israel."<sup>37</sup> Regarding the predictions of the millennial David, Walvoord similarly observes, "Though some have attempted to take this prophecy in less than its literal meaning, the clear statement is that David, who is now dead and whose

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>37</sup> Tim LaHaye, ed. *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2001), 875.

body is in his tomb in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29), will be resurrected.”<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere, Walvoord notes:

As in other passages, the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is linked with the return of Israel to the land following their time of Jacob’s trouble, as indicated in the preceding context. Here it is stated that they will serve Jehovah and David their king. There is no good reason for not taking this exactly as it is written, namely, that David will be raised from the dead and will with Christ reign over the people of Israel in the millennium. Even if David is understood to refer to Christ as David’s greater Son, it is still a clear reference to a future millennium rather than to a situation that exists today... It should be obvious that in Ezekiel’s days David had been dead over four hundred years and that this is a prophecy that David will be raised from the dead prior to the millennial reign of Christ and share with Christ the rule of the people of Israel. Such a situation is quite foreign to the present age...David resurrected from the dead will share this position of authority as a prince under Christ. Such an interpretation not only provides a literal fulfillment of many prophecies pertaining to it, but is fully honoring to the Word of God as that which is inspired infallibly by the Holy Spirit...David who is raised from the dead along with Old Testament saints has a part in the government of the people of Israel. This will also be shared by the twelve apostles, whom Christ assured participation in His government of Israel in the millennial state... One of the interesting aspects of the millennial government is the fact that resurrected David will apparently be a prince under Christ in administering the millennial kingdom in so far as it relates to Israel.<sup>39</sup>

### *Righteousness*

The kingdom will be an era characterized by righteousness (Isa. 2:4; 11:3-5; 16:5; 32:1; 42:3-4; Zech. 14:17). Isaiah 9:6-7 says:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Such righteousness is attributable to several factors. *First*, the New Covenant will be in effect for Israel thereby giving God's people an internal compulsion to obey via the

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<sup>38</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1999), 187.

<sup>39</sup> Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, 86-87, 97-98, 121.

indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 39:29). Ezekiel 36:24-28 predicts:

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

With the New Covenant inaugurated, the world will also experience the universal knowledge of God (Jer. 31:31-34). Isaiah 11:9 says, "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea." With the Bible's removal from our public schools and with more and more churches moving toward a seeker friendly spiritual diet, it is obvious that these prophecies of universal knowledge are not being fulfilled today. Walvoord notes:

It should be quite obvious that this is not a situation which exists today and in no literal sense are these millennial prophecies being fulfilled now. This could only be possible under the peculiar circumstances of the universal reign of Christ, the purging out of unbelievers at the beginning of the millennium, and the constant proclamation of the truth regarding Christ.<sup>40</sup>

*Second*, the resurrection of the Old Testament righteous saints will inaugurate the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2-3). *Third*, the Millennial Kingdom will begin with a mortal godly remnant that survived the Tribulation period (Ezek. 20:34-38; Zech. 13:8-9). Walvoord explains:

Israel's purging judgment at the end of the age will therefore not only include the trials of the great tribulation in which two thirds of the nation will perish, but will culminate in the judgment of God following their regathering in which all unbelievers who remain will be purged out. The millennial kingdom, therefore,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 122-23.

will begin with the godly remnant of Israel who have put their trust in the Lord and who will desire to follow the leadership of their Messiah and King.<sup>41</sup>

Through this godly mortal remnant, the earth will be repopulated resulting in a transference of the sin nature through the millennial generations (Ezek. 45:22; Zech. 14:16-18).

*Fourth*, the sin nature among mortal believers will be kept in check through the direct reigning of Jesus Christ who will rule with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:6-9; Isa. 11:4) and will mete out instantaneous punishment upon all millennial rebels (Zech. 14:16-18). Once again, these prophecies could not be speaking of the Eternal State since during that era the Messiah ruling with a rod of Iron will be unnecessary due to the absence of sin or rebellion of any kind (Rev. 21:4).

#### *Curse Curtailed*

The Millennial Kingdom will represent a time period when the Edenic curse will be restrained, yet not entirely removed. While death will apparently still be a reality among the mortals, long life expectations, similar to the kind experienced in the antediluvian era (Gen. 5:5, 27), will be the norm. Isaiah 65:20, 22 says:

No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be *thought* accursed...For as the lifetime of a tree, *so will be* the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.

Such prophecies are obviously not transpiring at the present time since in today's world since rare it is when someone actually reaches the age of one hundred (Ps. 90:10). Moreover, such prophecies could also not constitute the age of the Eternal State when death itself will be a thing of the past (Rev. 21:4). The only place where a prophecy

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 119.

like Isaiah 65:20, 23 could find its realization is during the millennial reign of Christ when the curse will be restrained and yet not eradicated entirely.

### *Peace*

The kingdom period will also be characterized by world peace (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:9; 65:25). Isaiah 2:4 predicts, "...And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war." Sadly, this verse is engraved on the United Nations building in New York. In so doing, the United Nations has ascribed to itself a messianic prerogative since only the true Messiah will be able to bring to pass this prophecy of world peace. In actuality, the United Nations will never be able to usher in lasting world peace. This verse will only be fulfilled upon the personal return of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom.

The absence of war and any armed conflict during the millennium will allow Israel to dwell in security during that era. Such security stands in sharp contradistinction to today and throughout most of Israel's history when her very national existence is routinely threatened. Amos 9:15 says, "'I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,' Says the LORD your God." Ezekiel 34:25 similarly predicts, "I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods."

So extensive will world peace be in that day that it will even encompass peace within the animal kingdom. Isaiah 65:25 says, "The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food." Animals will no longer devour each other since they will be changed from carnivorous to herbivorous during the Kingdom Age. The conflict between man and the animals will also become a thing of the past once the kingdom is established. Isaiah 11:8 says, "The

nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den."

### *Prosperity*

The Kingdom Age will also be a time of unprecedented global agricultural prosperity (Isa. 30:23-24; 35:1-2). Amos 9:13-14 predicts:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved. Also I will restore the captivity of my people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit."

A related point is that the Kingdom will also be a time of perfect social justice. This concept of social justice is abused by many today as they read the Marxist notion of mandatory wealth redistribution back into the phrase. However, when God establishes authentic social justice during the Millennial Kingdom, social justice will return to its origin definition of being able to keep the fruit of your own hard work without it being siphoned away under government coercion and being given to those who never earned it. Isaiah 65:22 predicts, "They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat."

### *Topographical Changes*

In addition to physical prosperity, other monumental agricultural and topographical changes will transpire upon planet earth with the establishment of the Kingdom. Examples of such profound topographical changes include abundant rainfall (Isa. 30:23; 35:7; Ezek. 34:26-27) and waters breaking forth in the wilderness and other barren places (Isa. 35:6-7). Another significant topographical change will include the Dead Sea coming back to physical life (Ezek. 47:1-12). A visit to the Dead Sea today demonstrates that this prophecy cannot be happening now. This prophecy also does not fit the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22) since during that time period John did not see "any sea"



(Rev. 21:1). The only place this prophecy logically fits is during the Millennial Kingdom. Furthermore, during the Kingdom Age the Sun will be seven times brighter than its current level of illumination. Isaiah 30:26 predicts, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*." Once again, such a prediction could not find its realization during the Eternal State. During that era luminaries, like the Sun and the Moon, will be absent (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). During the Millennial Kingdom other phenomena will also come to pass such as universal physical healing (Isa. 35:5-6) as well as instantaneous answers to prayer (Isa. 65:24).

### *Summary*

Because God is perfectly reliable, He cannot allow the present earth to go out of existence (Gen. 8:22) until all of these wonderful prophecies come to pass. Thus, Walvoord concludes, "Nothing comparable to this has ever been experienced in the history of man... Though the evidence seems to indicate that Israel will continue as a people into eternity, the millennium will be the final chapter of their history in the present earth."<sup>42</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As has been demonstrated, the doctrine of the future earthly reign of Christ is a concept that is well established in the pages of the Old Testament. The reality of this future, earthly kingdom has been proven through an examination of the following Old Testament areas: Edenic instructions, the Abrahamic Covenant and related sub-covenants, the Mosaic Covenant, the Times of the Gentiles, the Diaspora, Israel's regathering in unbelief, Israel's conversion through unprecedented distress of the Tribulation, Israel's regathering in faith, and the millennial conditions as foretold by the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 128.

Old Testament prophets. These areas of study all point to the future earthly reign of Christ. Unless interpreters re-write these passages through various contemporary hermeneutical methods, such as through "Complementary Hermeneutics"<sup>43</sup> or through the notion that the New Testament somehow changes the Old Testament, these Old Testament passages all convey the simple truth that Christ's Kingdom will be established upon the earth exclusively in the future. Because these prophecies neither fit today nor the Eternal State (Rev. 21–22), they look to a future earthly reign of Christ. This earthly reign will follow Christ's return but precede the Eternal State. The Old Testament points to this specific time period for the realization of these predictions.

As has been demonstrated, far from relying upon a single passage of Scripture to support their "one-text belief system," premillennialists instead rely on a wide range of Old Testament documentation for their theology. Therefore, premillennialists rely upon far more than just a single passage of Scripture (Rev. 20:1-10) to support their eschatological system. As Walvoord appropriately concludes, "The claim of the amillenarian that Revelation 20 is the only passage in the Bible which teaches an eschatology for Israel is certainly not sustained by the abundant evidence which has been cited from both the Old and New Testaments."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The "Complementary Hermeneutics" of so called "Progressive Dispensationalism" does not deny a future millennial kingdom. Rather, it argues that the New Testament adds kernels of truth to these Old Testament texts unforeseen by the Old Testament writer. This hermeneutical methodology allows Progressive Dispensationalists to maintain that the Davidic kingdom is "already" present in spiritual form today although the earthly kingdom as spoken of by the Old Testament is a "not yet" physical reality. Yet, such a theology becomes impossible if traditional Dispensationalists are correct in their assertion that the New Testament does not alter the Old Testament millennial passages in any sense. Not only does the New Testament not change them, but it does not even "complement" them by adding into them kernels of truth unforeseen by the Old Testament writers. Without the presupposition of "Complementary Hermeneutics" to support it the theology of "Progressive Dispensationalism" quickly evaporates.

<sup>44</sup> Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, 93.

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