

# A FUTURE IN GOD'S PURPOSE FOR A REMNANT OF NATURAL ISRAEL

## EARLY WBTS TEACHING

Throughout the entire time of the leadership of C.T. Russell and a part of the presidency of J.F. Rutherford the following was the view of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS):

We find statements by both prophets and apostles which clearly indicate that in the times of restitution, Israel as a nation will be the first among the nations to come into harmony with the new order of things; that the earthly Jerusalem will be rebuilt upon her own heaps, and that their polity will be restored as in the beginning under princes or judges (Isa. 1:26; Psa. 45:16; Jer. 30:18). *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, p. 294.

## USAGE OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY BY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Yet WBTS publications since 1946 express the completely opposite view concerning Israel. This view is called Replacement Theology and in its extreme form concerns the teaching that Israel is **permanently excluded** from any future role in God's purpose and that the many unfulfilled prophecies pertaining to natural Israel are now to be applied to the Christian Congregation. The initial details leading to this teaching were first presented in about the year 144 C.E by the heretic Marcion because of his hatred for all things Jewish. The teaching was later developed and taught by Origen and was further developed by Augustine in conjunction with his allegorical interpretation of prophecy, all of which became early orthodox Catholic teaching concerning Israel and became known also as *supercessionism*.

### BASIS FOR CURRENT TEACHING BY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

❖ “Your **house** is abandoned to you. For I say to you, you will by no means see me from henceforth **until you say**, ‘Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name!’” (*Matt. 23:38, 39*).

The WBTS understands Jesus’ statement as **an irrevocable divorce decree**, indicating that God has no further interest in literal Israel or even a remnant of it. However, Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:38, 39 were directed to “the scribes (teachers of the Law) and Pharisees;” in other words to the religious leaders of Israel. Furthermore, the use of the word “until” by Jesus left the door open for these literal Jewish religious leaders to repent. So this is not an irrevocable divorce decree, but rather it is a *conditional* statement. It is parallel to Jeremiah 3:8 where God gives Israel a certificate of divorce, but in verse 12 He appeals to her: “*Do return, O renegade Israel...for I am loyal...I shall not stay resentful to time indefinite.*”

## WHY JESUS’ STATEMENT WAS NOT AN IRREVOCABLE DIVORCE DECREE

As most commentators note, the most natural contextual interpretation of the “house” in Matthew 23:38 that Jesus said would be abandoned to the Scribes and Pharisees would be ‘the temple.’ Metaphorically, this could also mean the Scribes and Pharisees loss of position in God’s favour. This would include other religious systems such as the Sadducees who failed to “say, ‘Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name!’” and so include all successor religious systems of Judaism up to the present day. So Jehovah was indeed finished with the religious systems and the sacrificial system of 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel. However, this is not the same as His being finished with the Jewish people forever.

NOTE: The “certificate of divorce” that Jehovah gave Israel (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:6-8) was figurative of their broken relationship; yet Jehovah had earlier promised that, in time, this relationship with them would be renewed (Hos. 2:16, 19-20), and it evidently had been renewed at least by the time of the later prophets.

## WHO ARE GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY?

The 'body of God's people' is made up of any individuals who are faithful to Him – starting with Abel, through Noah to Abraham and many in between. In time God chose to engage with the descendants of Abraham through Jacob and sought a bilateral covenant arrangement with them. Such a covenant was simply a codicil or legal supplement to the Abrahamic Covenant and was temporary and for the purpose of leading Israel to the Messiah, namely, Jesus and so that he might begin another phase toward the fulfilling of the Abrahamic Covenant. During his ministry Jesus likened himself to **a vine** which, along with its then Jewish branches, made up the 'body of God's people' (John 15:1-6); yet any one of the branches could be removed for not bearing fruit. Later the Apostle Paul likened the 'body of God's people' to a cultivated "garden **olive tree**" from which some Jewish branches could be "broken off because of their unbelief" and to which some Gentile branches could be grafted in (Rom. 11:16-22).

### *ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF CUTS THEM OFF*

Because the majority of Jews rejected their own Messiah they have lived **in unbelief**. So as a nation they lost their status as the people of God and contrary to the teaching of Dispensationalism unbelieving national Israel is not currently playing a role in tandem with Christianity. Jesus indicated this when he told the Jews:

- ❖ "But I tell YOU that many from eastern parts and western parts will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens; whereas *the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside*. There is where [their] weeping and the gnashing of [their] teeth will be" (*Matt.8:11, 12*)

Peter later reaffirmed that this was the case for the Jews because of their unbelief:

- ❖ "For it is contained in Scripture: "Look! I am laying in Zion a stone, chosen, a foundation cornerstone, precious; and no one **exercising faith** in it will by any means come to disappointment"... but **to those not believing**, "the identical stone that the builders rejected has become [the] head of [the] corner," and "**a stone of stumbling** and a rock-mass of offense." These are stumbling **because they are disobedient to the word**. To this very end they were also appointed"" (*1 Pet 2:6-8*).

It was because of being in the Mosaic Law Covenant that Israel had been constituted as the 'people of God,' and once that covenant became obsolete Israel lost any status it had as the 'people of God. This was demonstrated at the moment of Jesus' death, when the veil in front of the most holy was ripped from top to bottom. From then on individual Jews had to accept Messiah Jesus if they wished to be part of the 'people of God.'

### *NATIONAL ISRAEL IS CURRENTLY REPRESENTED AS BROKEN OFF BRANCHES*

- ❖ "What, then? The very thing Israel is earnestly seeking **he did not obtain**, but the ones chosen obtained it. The rest had their sensibilities blunted; ... 17 However, if some of the **branches were broken off** but you, although being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became a sharer of the olive's root of fatness, ... 20 All right! **For [their] lack of faith** they were broken off, but you are standing by faith. Quit having lofty ideas, but be in fear. For if **God did not spare the natural branches**, neither will he spare you" (*Rom. 11: 7, 17, 20*).

The fact the Paul says that "*God did not spare the natural branches*" of Israel tells us that he considered the Jews, as an unbelieving nation, to be no longer part of God's people. Nevertheless, the Christian Congregation has not permanently "replaced" the individual Jews because Paul said that:

- ❖ "They [*the Jewish branches*] also, *if they do not remain in their lack of faith*, **will be grafted in**; for God is able to graft them in **again**. For if you [*Gentiles*] were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into the garden olive tree, how much rather will these who are natural be grafted into their own olive tree!" (*Rom. 11:23, 24*).

## THE UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Sometimes this covenant given in Genesis 15:9-21 is appealed to as proof that national Israel would always be God's people. However, the Abrahamic covenant is with those who are the 'body of God's people' and not with those who "remain in their lack of faith" whether Jewish or Gentile. "For not all who [spring] from Israel are really "Israel." (Rom. 9:6).

## SPIRITUAL ISRAEL IS GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY

It is spiritual Israel which has become "the commonwealth of Israel" as explained by Paul:

- ❖ "Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ**, alienated from **the commonwealth of Israel** and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But **now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God **in one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints** and members of **the household of God**, *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone*, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **In him** you also are being built together into a **dwelling place for God** by the Spirit" (*Eph. 2:11-21 ESV*).

Clearly Paul does not mean that natural, unbelieving Israel which rejected its Messiah is "the commonwealth of Israel" because it is not "in Christ." So the term "the commonwealth of Israel" refers to the body of believing Christians – initially Jewish and later incorporating Gentiles:

- ❖ "For neither is circumcision anything nor is uncircumcision, but **a new creation** [is something]. And all those who will walk orderly by this rule of conduct, upon them be peace and mercy, even upon **the Israel of God**" (*Gal. 6:15, 16*).
- Again Paul is not referring to unbelieving Israel, but rather it is "the Israel of God" - the body of Christians which is "a new creation" and which is comprised of spiritual Jews:*
- ❖ "For **we are those with the real circumcision**, who are rendering sacred service by God's spirit and have our boasting in Christ Jesus "" (*Phil 3:3*).
  - ❖ "For he is not a Jew who is one on the outside, nor is circumcision that which is on the outside upon the flesh. But he is **a Jew** who is one on the inside, and [his] circumcision is that of the heart **by spirit**, and not by a written code" (*Rom. 2:28, 29*).

## 'GOD'S PEOPLE' ARE ONLY THROUGH CHRIST

- ❖ "YOU are all, in fact, **sons of God** through YOUR **faith in Christ Jesus**" (*Gal. 3:26*).
- ❖ "Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is **not another name** under heaven that has been given among men by which we must **get saved**" (*Acts 4:12*).
- ❖ "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (*John 14:6*).

Evidently it is only through Christ that one can be part of "the people of God" and therefore of "the Israel of God" and "the commonwealth of Israel." So, all natural Jews now and in the future must come to God through Christ if they wish to be part of "the people of God."

## THE FUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PRIESTHOOD WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE "ISRAEL OF GOD"

Jesus, as the Lamb of God, replaced the temple and its sacrificial system with himself. He also replaced the Old Covenant with the "New." Later the Apostle Peter showed that from the first century, the Christian Congregation as "*the Israel of God*" (Gal. 6:16) has replaced natural Israel as an unbroken continuation of 'the people of God' in terms of the priestly **functions** originally assigned to ancient Israel. Peter stated to Christians that:

- ❖ "You yourselves also as living stones are being built up **a spiritual house** for the purpose of **a holy priesthood**, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).
- ❖ "You are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**...that you should declare abroad the excellencies of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now God's people..." (1 Pet. 2:9, 10).

## NO-ONE HAS FREE REIGN TO APPLY THE PROPHECIES ABOUT ISRAEL TO THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

### *APPLYING PROPHECIES TO THE CONGREGATION*

Certainly Paul quoted several prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures and applied them to the Christian congregation e.g. Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 are quoted in Romans 9:25, 26. Yet both Paul and Peter in 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10 were under inspiration of God's spirit when making these applications. Therefore, no right is given anyone else to apply what was prophesied concerning Israel to the Christian Congregation. And, in fact, these same prophecies are not taken away from natural Israel, but still await a further fulfilment in them.

### *TOTAL REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY*

The WBTS has adopted the version of Replacement theology most accepted by the various Catholic churches. This version teaches that all the many promises made to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures are actually fulfilled only in the Christian Congregation, and not ever in Israel. So, there is a spiritualizing or allegorizing of these prophecies concerning any future restoration of Israel, such that they are reapplied to the Christian Congregation. The problems with this view are that:

- The Christian Greek Scriptures clearly teach that Israel and the Christian Congregation are different and that as "spiritual Israel" the Christian Congregation, in coming into existence only in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, can only appropriate to itself the promises made directly to it, including those that have already been made by the Christian writers. These are all found in the Christian Greek Scriptures and relate to the Abrahamic Covenant established before Israel existed.
- The spiritualizing/allegorizing of these prophecies is part of the amillennial approach to prophecy in contrast to the well established pre-millennial approach of Revelation 20:1-7 which the WBTS teaches. (Please see Volume 5 STUDY 1).
- Paul shows, in Romans 9 and 11, that the rejection of literal Israel is *temporary* whilst they are in unbelief having "had their **sensibilities blunted**" (Rom. 11:7) and that at the return of Christ a "*remnant ... will be saved*" because they will at that time accept Christ.
- Many of the promises that Jehovah made to Israel are unconditional, because He could foresee that a remnant of Israel would accept the Messiah at his return.
- The current rejection by God of literal Israel is *conditional* according to Romans 11:23, 25, 26. So later believing Israelites will then appropriate to themselves the unconditional promises God made to them.

- Finally, if one tries to replace the word *Israel* with the words *Christian Congregation* in the Hebrew Scriptures and in many of the 77 references to Israel in the Christian Greek Scriptures the thoughts become redundant and the passages becomes unreadable.

#### THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

In *The Old Testament Documents - Are They Reliable?* Walter Kaiser reveals the double standard in the most widely accepted version of Replacement Theology when he asks:

How, then, might we hear God in the prophets...Some have decided that the method of "replacement" could supply the answer, namely, **to replace the name Israel" in all the positive places where it occurs with the new value, "the church."** But this is no solution at all, since it must rewrite history and it contravenes even the Pauline expectation that God is not finished with Israel as yet (Rom 9-11). What is even more embarrassing for this suggestion is that it chooses to substitute the church for Israel only in those places where the reference to Israel is positive, **but not where it is negative.** But how can that be a consistent hermeneutic. p. 202.

This is the case with the WBTS which repeatedly applies the positive prophecies about Israel to itself and applies the negative ones to the churches of Christendom, who they refer to as the apostate 'spiritual Israel.' However, because these churches are a completely different entity to Jehovah's Witnesses the WBTS should be consistent and apply all of these 'Israel' prophecies to itself. Nevertheless, there is really no Scriptural basis for applying any of them to anyone else except literal Israel.

#### THE CUT-OFF BRANCHES OF ISRAEL CAN BE REGRAFTED

- ❖ "They also, if they do not remain in their lack of faith, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into the garden olive tree, how much rather will these who are natural be grafted into their own olive tree!" (*Rom. 11: 23, 24*).

#### AN EXAMPLE OF AN UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE TO ISRAEL

- ❖ "The spirit of the sovereign Lord Jehovah is upon me, for the reason that Jehovah has anointed me to tell good news to the meek ones. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to those taken captive and the wide opening [of the eyes] even to the prisoners; 2 to *proclaim the year of goodwill* on the part of Jehovah" (*Isa. 61:1, 2a*).

*This is the point at which Jesus finished his quotation in Luke 4:18-19. But Isaiah continued with:*

"and *the day of vengeance* on the part of our God; to comfort all the mourning ones; to assign to those mourning over Zion, to give them a headdress instead of ashes, the oil of exultation instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of the downhearted spirit; and they must be called big trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, for [him] to be beautified. And they must **rebuild the long-standing devastated places**; they will raise up even the desolated places of former times, and they will certainly **make anew the devastated cities**, the places desolate for generation after generation. "And strangers will actually stand and shepherd the flocks of YOU people, and the foreigners will be YOUR farmers and YOUR vinedressers. And as for YOU, the priests of Jehovah YOU will be called; the ministers of our God YOU will be said to be. **The resources of the nations YOU people will eat**, and in their glory YOU will speak elatedly about yourselves. Instead of YOUR shame there will be a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will cry out joyfully over their share. Therefore **in their land they will take possession** of even a double portion. **Rejoicing to time indefinite** is what will come to be theirs. For I, Jehovah, am loving justice, hating robbery along with unrighteousness. And I will give their wages in trueness, and **an indefinitely lasting covenant** I shall conclude toward

them. And their offspring will actually be known even among the nations, and their descendants in among the peoples. All those seeing them will recognize them, that they are the **offspring whom Jehovah has blessed.**” Without fail I shall exult in Jehovah. My soul will be joyful in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; with the sleeveless coat of righteousness he has enwrapped me, like the bridegroom who, in a priestly way, puts on a headdress, and like the bride who decks herself with her ornamental things. For as the earth itself brings forth its sprout, and as the garden itself makes the things that are sown in it sprout, in like manner the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will **cause the sprouting of righteousness and of praise in front of all the nations.**” (*Isa. 61:2b-11*).

In Luke 4:16-21 Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1 and the first half of verse 2 as being fulfilled in his day as “*the year of goodwill.*” The rest of Isaiah 61 was yet to be fulfilled during and after “*the day of vengeance.*” However, Luke 7:22 shows that these first events of Jesus’ healing ministry were applied by him in a quite literal way, and therefore indicating that all the events from “*the day of vengeance*” onward also are to be fulfilled in a quite literal way upon Israel. This means that any replacement theological application to the Christian Congregation certainly would be wrong. Hence, there will be a literal future renewing of “*the devastated cities*” of Israel “*in their land*” with “*rejoicing to time indefinite*” and “*the sprouting of righteousness.*” All of these events are shown to be after the first advent of Messiah (verses 1 and 2a). However, none of these things has yet been fulfilled.

#### FORETOLD FUTURE RESTORATION OF LITERAL ISRAEL

Paul explains in Romans 11 that, although unbelieving Israel is now excluded because of unbelief, this will not be permanently so, but at the return of Christ a substantial remnant of natural Israel, will accept Jesus as Messiah. Paul says that:

- ❖ “... a dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel **until** the (*fullness*’ KIT) of the people of the nations has come in, and *in this manner* [Gk. *houtos* “**thus**” or “**so**”] **all Israel will be saved.** Just as it is written: “**The deliverer will come out of Zion** and turn away ungodly practices from Jacob” (*Rom. 11:25, 26*).

Much of our understanding of this subject comes from an examination of the many quite literal restoration prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures which are later confirmed in Romans 11. Bible scholar Dr. Robert Shank states that:

There are in the Old Testament more than a hundred prophecies concerning the national restoration of Israel, a restoration that will involve regathering to the land, reconstruction as a political state, reception of the Messiah and spiritual renewal (“circumcision of the heart”), restoration of the Davidic kingdom, and a golden age of peace and prosperity under the reign of the Messiah. The passages are not to be interpreted as finding their fulfilment in the Church, for they speak of specific matters which could only have reference to Israel. They are not to be interpreted as having reference to heaven rather than the earth, for they pertain specifically to the earthly land of Israel and city of Jerusalem.

*Until the Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom, p. 79.*

#### NEVERTHELESS UNBELIEVING JEWS WILL NOT BE SAVED

Not every single Israelite will be saved; but only Israel as a people would be saved. The *New International Bible commentary* (p.1338) states that: “**All Israel** means the Jews as a collective whole, not the arithmetical sum of all individual Jews.”

This is because the term ‘Israel’ can be fulfilled in the sense of a remnant:

- ❖ “I will surely assemble **all of you, O Jacob**; I will gather the **remnant of Israel**” (*Micah 2:12*).

This is Hebrew parallelism showing that **all of you, O Jacob = the remnant of Israel**; and, in fact, a number of the prophecies concerning Israel's restoration concern only a remnant who will be survivors:

- ❖ “And it must occur in all the land,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “[that] **two parts in it are what will be cut off [and] expire**; and as for the third [part], it will be left remaining in it. And I shall certainly **bring the third [part] through the fire**; and I shall actually refine them as in the refining of silver, and examine them as in the examining of gold. It, for its part, will call upon my name, and I, for my part, will answer it. I will say, ‘It is my people,’ and it, in its turn, will say, ‘Jehovah is my God’” (*Zech. 13:8, 9*).

#### IT WILL BE A REMNANT OF ISRAEL THAT WILL BE SAVED

- ❖ “Moreover, Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Although the number of the sons of Israel may be as the sand of the sea, it is **the remnant that will be saved**. For Jehovah will *make an accounting on the earth, concluding it and cutting it short.*”” (*Rom. 9:27, 28*).

This does not refer to “*a remnant*” of Israel which accepted Christ “at the present time” i.e. in Paul's day (*Rom. 11:5*), but rather it refers to the saving of a remnant of Israel at the future time when Jehovah judges and destroys wicked mankind. In the ancient prophecies Jehovah states:

- ❖ “I shall positively *gather Jacob*, all of you; I shall without fail collect **the remaining ones of Israel** together. In unity I shall set them, like a flock in the pen, like a drove in the midst of its pasture; they will be noisy with men” (*Micah 2:12*).
- ❖ “And I myself shall *collect together the remnant of my sheep out of all the lands* to which I had dispersed them, and I will bring them back to their pasture ground, and they will certainly be fruitful and become many” (*Jer. 23:3*).

#### IS THERE REALLY A ‘REMNANT’ IN THE SENSE APPLIED BY JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES?

Because of using the allegorical approach the WBTS mistakenly applies the term ‘remnant’ **in the Hebrew Scriptures** to the remaining ones of the 144,000 (misapplied as being the total of all faithful anointed Christians) who are still on earth (currently about 10,000+). However, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the term ‘remnant’ is consistently applied to either literal Israelites or the remaining ones of the nations. Also in contrast to the way the WBTS applies this term or its concept **the Christian Greek Scriptures** applies it in several ways:

1. A repentant remnant of **Jews** responding to John the Baptizer's message (*Matt. 3:1-12*).
2. The relatively “few” **Jews** that responded to Jesus' message (*Matt. 7:14*).
3. The “chosen ones” who are initially from within **Israel** (*Matt. 20:16*).
4. Paul states that “at the present time there is a remnant [*of Jews*], chosen through undeserved kindness” (*Rom. 11:5*).
5. Paul insists that only a remnant of **Israel** will be saved (*Rom. 9:27*).
6. The remnant of the congregation in Thyatira (*Rev. 2:24-29*) and “a few names in Sardis” (*Rev. 3:4*); are those **Christians** who have remained faithful. Clearly the majority prove to be unfaithful.
7. The “remaining ones” of the woman's offspring is a body of **Christians** faithfully enduring the time of the end fierce persecution (*Rev 12:7-17*).

The only occurrences of the possible concept of a remnant that are not with reference to Israelites are: **#6** concerning a remnant of Christians in Thyatira who are contrasted with the majority of **unfaithful ones**; so this does not fit the WBTS teaching.

#7 concerning “**the remaining ones** of the woman’s seed” (verse 17). These Christians are Satan’s targets during the Great Tribulation which lasts for approximately 1,260 days. Therefore, they are only “**the remaining ones** of the woman’s seed” for that short period and not for over 90 years as per WBTS teaching. (Please see STUDY 14, THE FIRST RESURRECTION CANNOT HAVE BEGUN IN 1918, and Volume 5 STUDY 6, THE FUTURIST VIEW OF END TIMES EVENTS). Furthermore, the Greek word used here is rendered in modern translations and Greek-English lexicons as “*the rest of her offspring*” because they are not necessarily a minority as is the usual indication of the term “remnant” i.e. ‘what is left over.’ Rather, because the male child of verse 5 is the only offspring of the woman mentioned before “**the rest of her offspring**” and no other offspring are mentioned in between then the “**the rest of her offspring**” must be all individual Christians during the Great Tribulation. Also, the woman is herself being protected in **the wilderness on earth** for 1,260 days and so obviously is not in heaven as in WBTS teaching.

So the WTBS teaching rests on only #7 i.e. the single verse of Revelation 12:17. Yet it is evident that this verse does not speak of a remnant as part of a body of faithful living Christians because all others are dead until the future first resurrection. So no Scriptures portray a remnant in the way the WBTS does.

#### FULL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL WAS NOT AFTER RELEASE FROM BABYLON

The time of Israel’s gathering to *the land of promise* after the Exodus from Egypt was not a restoration because Israel as a nation had never previously occupied the land of Canaan. So the **first time of restoration** came after 539 B.C.E when the Jews were released from Babylon; yet it came as only a minor fulfilment of the many prophecies. So **the second time**, as noted in Isaiah 11:11 will be at the return of Messiah. Furthermore, this full regathering of Israel will include their spiritual restoration as prophesied in Jeremiah 24:7: “*they will return to me with all their heart.*”

- ❖ “And it must occur in that day that Jehovah will again offer his hand, **a second time**, to acquire **the remnant** of his people *who will remain over* from Assyria and from Egypt and from Pathros and from Cush and from Elam and from Shinar and from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. And he will certainly raise up a signal for the nations and gather the **dispersed ones of Israel**; and the **scattered ones of Judah** he will collect together from the four extremities of the earth”  
*(Isa. 11:11-12).*

The returning Jews in c.538 B.C.E. amounted to only 50,000 whilst the vast majority remained in Babylon and Egypt. These returning exiles remained in a low spiritual condition requiring that they be constantly encouraged by their leaders to rebuild the city and the temple (Ezra 9:1-4; Neh. 5:1-9; 13;7-11, 23-29). Other than the brief Maccabean period they remained under foreign domination right up to Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70. So *Shank* comments that:

The restoration prophecies remained largely unfulfilled in the post-captivity restoration under Zerubbabel. Nehemiah’s prayer (Neh. 1:5-11) was not fully answered in the return of a small remnant in his day, for the promised return is to include all Israel (Deut. 30:3, 4, Rom. 11:26).

#### *FUTURE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL WILL BE UNIVERSAL*

- ❖ “Jehovah your God must also bring back your captives and show you mercy and *collect you again from all the peoples* where Jehovah your God has scattered you. If your dispersed people should be **at the end of the heavens**, from there Jehovah your God will collect you and from there he will take you. Jehovah your God will indeed **bring you into the land** of which your fathers took possession, and you will certainly take possession of it; and he will indeed do you good and multiply you more than your fathers” (*Deut. 30:3-5*).

- ❖ “And I will let myself be found by YOU,’ is the utterance of Jehovah. ‘And I will gather YOUR body of captives and collect YOU together out of **all** the nations and out of all the places to which I have dispersed YOU,’ is the utterance of Jehovah. ‘And I will bring YOU back to the place from which I caused YOU to go into exile” (*Jer. 29:14*).
- ❖ “Now is when I [*Jehovah*] shall bring back the captive ones of Jacob and actually have mercy upon *all the house of Israel*; ... 27 When I bring them back from the peoples and I actually **collect them together out of the lands of their enemies**, ...when I send them **in exile to the nations** and actually bring them together upon their soil, so that I shall **leave none of them remaining there any longer...**” (*Ezek. 39:25, 27-29*).

The deportations by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians did not involve Israel’s or Judah’s dispersal to “**all nations**” and the return was only from Babylon. However, the much later invasions by the Romans in both A.D. 70 and 135 did lead to the Jews becoming scattered throughout “**all nations.**” Furthermore, the return was prophesied to be at the time of the end:

*THE REGATHERING OCCURS IN “THE LATTER DAYS”*

- ❖ “**In the final part of the days** YOU people will give YOUR consideration to it. 1 “At that time,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “I shall become God to all the families of Israel; and as for them, they will become my people.”<sup>8</sup> Here I am **bringing them from the land of the north**, and I will **collect them together from the remotest parts of the earth**. Among them will be the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and the one giving birth, all together. As a great congregation they will return here. With weeping they will come, and with [their] entreaties for favor I shall bring them. I shall make them walk to torrent valleys of water, in a right way in which they will not be caused to stumble. For I have become to Israel a Father; and as for E’phra·im, he is my firstborn.” Hear the word of Jehovah, O YOU nations, and tell [it] among the islands far away, and say: “The One scattering Israel will himself collect him together, and he will certainly keep him as a shepherd does his drove ... 12 And they will certainly come and cry out joyfully on the height of **Zion** and become radiant over the goodness of Jehovah, over the **grain and over the new wine and over the oil** and over the young ones of the flock and the cattle. And their soul will simply become like a well-watered garden, and no more will they languish again.” “At that time the virgin will rejoice in the dance, also the young men and the old men, all together. And I will change their mourning into exultation, and I will comfort them and make them rejoice away from their grief ... 28 “And it must occur that just as I had kept alert toward them to uproot and to pull down and to tear down and to destroy and to do damage, so I shall keep alert toward them to build up and **to plant,**” is the utterance of Jehovah” (*Jer. 30:24b-31:1, 8-10, 12, 13, 28*).
- ❖ “It is because for many days *the sons of Israel* will dwell without a king and without a prince and without a sacrifice and without a pillar and without an ephod and teraphim. Afterwards the sons of Israel will come back and certainly look for Jehovah their God, and for David their king; and they will certainly **come quivering to Jehovah** and to his goodness **in the final part of the days**”  
(*Hosea 3:4, 5*).

Professor of Hebrew A. B. Davidson tells us that:

Every prophet *predicts the return of Israel* to its land in the latter days. In the final state of the Kingdom of God on earth, the people will again dwell in their ancient heritages. Now this idea of the prophets must certainly be taken literally, if we desire to understand what they mean.

#### RESTORATION OF ISRAEL OCCURS WHEN MESSIAH HAS RETURNED

- ❖ “Look! There are days coming,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “and I will raise up **to David a righteous sprout** [*the Messiah*]. And **a king** will certainly reign and act with discretion and execute justice and righteousness *in the land*. In his days Judah will be saved, and **Israel itself will reside in security**. And this is his name with which he will be called, Jehovah Is Our Righteousness.” “Therefore, look! there are days coming,” is the utterance of Jehovah, “and they will no more say, ‘Jehovah is alive who brought the sons of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘Jehovah is alive who brought up and who brought in the offspring of the *house of Israel* out of the land of the north and **out of all the lands** to which I have dispersed them,’ and they will certainly dwell on their own ground” (*Jer. 23:5-8*).
- ❖ “And it must occur in that day that there will be **the root of Jesse** [*the Messiah*] that will be standing up as a signal for the peoples. To him even the nations will turn inquiringly, and his resting-place must become glorious” (*Isa. 11:10*)
- ❖ “And I will pour out upon *the house of David* and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of favor and entreaties, and they will certainly look to **the One whom they pierced through**, and they will certainly **wail over Him** as in the wailing over an only [son]; and there will be a bitter lamentation over him as when there is **bitter lamentation over the firstborn [son]**” (*Zech. 12:10*).

This is in the context of the Zechariah 12–14 end-time prophecy when Messiah visibly returns (Please see STUDY 2). Furthermore, because Christians didn’t pierce Jesus this must apply to literal Israel and so the Christian Congregation has not replaced Israel in terms of what was prophesied about it.

#### REGATHERING OF ISRAEL RESULTS IN PERPETUAL BLESSING

- ❖ “Here I am **collecting them together out of all the lands** to which I shall have dispersed them in my anger and in my rage and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and **make them dwell in security**. And they will certainly become my people, and I myself shall become their God. And I will give them **one heart** and one way in order to fear me always, for good to them and to their sons after them. And I will conclude with them an indefinitely lasting covenant, **that I shall not turn back from behind them, for me to do them good**; and the fear of me I shall put in their heart in order not to turn aside from me. And I will exult over them to do them good, and I **will plant them in this land** in trueness with all my heart and with all my soul” (*Jer. 32:37-41*).
- ❖ “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: “When **I collect together the house of Israel** out from the peoples among whom they have been scattered, I will also be sanctified among them in the eyes of the nations. And they will certainly **dwell upon their soil** that I gave to my servant, to Jacob. And they will actually dwell upon it **in security** and build houses and plant vineyards, and they must dwell in security when I execute acts of judgment upon all those treating them with scorn all round about them; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah their God””  
(*Ezek. 28:25, 26*).

#### THE NATIONS WILL BE DRAWN TOWARD SERVING ISRAEL

- ❖ “Arise, O woman, shed forth light, for you light has come and upon you the very glory of Jehovah has shone forth. For, look! darkness itself will cover the earth, and thick gloom the national groups; but upon you Jehovah will shine forth, and upon you his own glory will be seen. And **nations will certainly go to your light**, and kings to the brightness of your shining forth. “Raise your eyes all around and see! They have all of them been collected together; they have come to you. From far away your own sons keep coming, and your daughters who will be taken care of on the flank. At that time you will see and certainly become radiant, and your heart will actually quiver and expand, because to you the wealthiness of the sea will direct itself; the very **resources of the nations will come to you**. 10 And *foreigners* will actually build your walls, and their own kings will minister to

you; for in my indignation I shall have struck you, but in my goodwill I shall certainly have mercy upon you. “And your gates will actually be kept open constantly; they will not be closed even by day or by night, in order to bring to you the resources of the nations, and their kings will be taking the lead. **For any nation and any kingdom that will not serve you will perish**; and the nations themselves will without fail come to devastation. “To you the very glory of Lebanon will come, the juniper tree, the ash tree and the cypress at the same time, in order to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I shall glorify the very place of my feet. “And to you the sons of those afflicting you must go, bowing down; and all those treating you disrespectfully must bend down at the very soles of your feet, and they will have to call you the city of Jehovah, Zion of the Holy One of Israel”

(Isa. 60:1-5, 10-14).

*THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL WILL INVOLVE THE END-TIME JUDGEMENT OF NATIONS*

- ❖ “For, look! *In those days* and in that time, *when I shall bring back the captive ones of Judah and Jerusalem*, I will also **collect together all the nations** and bring them down to the low plain of Jehoshaphat; and I will put myself **on judgment with them** there on account of my people and my inheritance Israel, whom they scattered among the nations; and they apportioned out my own land ... 12 “Let the nations be aroused and come up to the low plain of Jehoshaphat; for there I shall sit in order to **judge all the nations round about**. “THRUST in a sickle, for harvest has grown ripe. Come, descend, for [the] winepress has become full. The press vats actually overflow; for their badness has become abundant. Crowds, crowds are in the low plain of the decision, *for the day of Jehovah is near* in the low plain of the decision” (Joel 3:1, 2, 12-14).
- ❖ “For, look! it is upon the city upon which my name is called that I am starting off in bringing calamity, and should YOU yourselves in any way go free of punishment?” “YOU will not go free of punishment, for there is **a sword that I am calling against all the inhabitants of the earth**,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies...A shout like that of those treading [the winepress] he will sing out against all the inhabitants of the earth.’ “A noise will certainly come clear to the farthest part of the earth, for there is **a controversy that Jehovah has with the nations**. He must personally put himself in judgment with all flesh. As regards **the wicked ones, he must give them to the sword**,’ is the utterance of Jehovah. “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Look! A calamity is going **forth from nation to nation**, and a great tempest itself will be roused up from the remotest parts of the earth. And *those slain* by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day *from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth*. They will not be bewailed, neither will they be gathered up or be buried. As manure on the surface of the ground they will become” (Jer. 25:29-33).

*THE REGATHERING WILL BE FOLLOWED BY CONVERSION AND BLESSING OF THE NATIONS*

- ❖ “Cry out loudly and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for here I am coming, and I will reside in the midst of you,” is the utterance of Jehovah. “And **many nations will certainly become joined** to Jehovah in that day, and they will actually **become my people**; and I will reside in the midst of you.” And you will have to know that Jehovah of armies himself has sent me to you. And Jehovah will certainly take possession of Judah as his portion upon the holy ground, and he must yet choose Jerusalem” (Zech. 2:10-12).
- ❖ “...but: “As Jehovah is alive who brought the sons of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands to which he had dispersed them!” and I shall certainly *bring them back to their soil, which I gave to their forefathers.*’ 19 O Jehovah my strength and my stronghold, and my place for flight in the day of distress, **to you the nations themselves will come** from the ends of the earth, and they will say: “Indeed our forefathers came to possess sheer falsehood, vanity and things in which there was nothing beneficial.” Can earthling man make for himself gods when they are no gods? “Therefore here I am causing them to know; at this one time I shall cause them to know my hand and my mightiness, and they will have to know that my name is Jehovah” (Jer. 16:15, 19-21).

- ❖ “Here I am **collecting them** [*Israel*] **together out of all the lands** to which I shall have dispersed them in my anger and in my rage and in great indignation; and I will bring them *back to this place* and make them dwell **in security**. And they will certainly become my people, and I myself shall become their God. And I will give them one heart and one way in order to fear me always, for good to them and to their sons after them. And I will conclude with them an **indefinitely lasting covenant**, that I shall not turn back from behind them, for me to do them good; ... and I will *plant them in this land* in trueness with all my heart and with all my soul” (*Jer. 32:37-41*)
- ❖ “In that day I shall **raise up the booth of David** that is fallen, and I shall certainly repair their breaches. And **its ruins** I shall raise up, and I shall certainly build it up as in the days of long ago, to the end that they may take possession of what is left remaining of *Edom, and all the nations* upon whom my name has been called,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, who is doing this ... 14 And I will **gather back the captive ones of my people Israel**, and they will actually build [the] desolated cities and inhabit [them], and plant vineyards and drink the wine of them, and make gardens and eat the fruit of them.’ “And I shall certainly **plant them** upon their ground, and they will **no more be uprooted** from their ground that I have given them,’ Jehovah...has said” (*Amos 9:11-12, 14-15*).

Although written in c.800 B.C.E Amos’ prophecy is still unfulfilled. In Acts 15:16-18 the disciple James applied the words of Amos 9:11 and 12 to the future Messianic age when he adapted the words: “In that day” to “after these things [*i.e. after Gentiles also became God’s people*] I shall return.” Most commentators understand this to refer to the future gathering of Israel. The booth of David probably refers to the House of David over which Messiah will rule. Edom is representative of all Israel’s previous enemies.

#### RESTORATION PROPHECIES IN ZECHARIAH COULD NOT CONCERN THE 537 RETURN

Zechariah wrote his book in 518 B.C.E., some 20 years after the Jews had left Babylon, thereby making his restoration prophecies have a different and later fulfilment:

- ❖ “This is what Jehovah has said, ‘I will return to Zion and reside in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem will certainly be called the city of trueness, and the mountain of Jehovah of armies, the holy mountain.’” “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘There will yet sit old men and old women in the public squares of Jerusalem, each one also with his staff in his hand because of the abundance of [his] days. 5 And the public squares of the city themselves will be filled with boys and girls playing in her public squares.’” ... 7 “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Here **I am saving my people from the land of the sunrise** and from the land of the setting of the sun. And I shall certainly **bring them in**, and *they must reside in the midst of Jerusalem*; and they must become my people, and I myself shall become their God in trueness and in *righteousness*’” (*Zech. 8:3-4, 7-8*).

NRSV renders verse 7 as:

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem.”

- ❖ ““And now I shall not be as in the former days to the remaining ones of this people,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies. ‘For there will be the seed of peace; the vine itself will give its fruitage, and *the earth itself will give its yield*, and the heavens themselves will give their dew; and I shall certainly **cause the remaining ones of this people to inherit all these** [things]. And it must occur that just as YOU became a malediction among the nations, O *house of Judah* and *house of Israel*, so **I shall save YOU**, and YOU must become a blessing. Do not be afraid. May YOUR hands be strong.’” (*Zech. 8:11-13*).

- ❖ “I will whistle for them and **collect them together**; for I shall certainly redeem them, and they must become many, just like those who have become many. And **I shall scatter them like seed** among the peoples, and in the *distant places* they will remember me; and they must revive with their sons and return. And **I must bring them back** from the land of *Egypt*; and from *Assyria* I shall collect them together; and to the land of Gilead and Lebanon I shall bring them, and no [room] will be found for them. And he must pass through the sea [with] distress; and in the sea he must strike down [the] waves, and all the depths of the Nile must dry up. And **the pride of Assyria must be brought down**, and the very scepter of Egypt will depart. And I will make them superior in Jehovah, and in his name they will walk about,’ is the utterance of Jehovah.” (*Zech. 10:8-12*).

All of the above prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures are full of literal statements pertaining to the future of Israel. So one cannot inconsistently take, for example, parts of Isaiah 60 and say that they must be spiritualized.

So looking back to **Jeremiah 32:37, 40, 41** we see a literal future fulfilment where Jehovah says:

- ❖ “Here I am **collecting them together out of all the lands** to which I shall have dispersed them in my anger and in my rage and in great indignation ... **40** And I will conclude with them an **indefinitely lasting covenant**, that I shall not turn back from behind them, for me to do them good ... and I will *plant them in this land* in trueness with all my heart and with all my soul.”

Only literal Israelites were dispersed by Jehovah; and yet this cannot refer to the restoration after 538 B.C.E because Jehovah did not conclude “*an indefinitely lasting covenant*” with them “*that I shall not turn back from behind them, for me to do them good.*” This is evident from the fact that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D.70. Furthermore, it was not in 538/7 B.C.E that Jehovah had planted “*them in this land in trueness*” because the Romans deported almost a million Jews.

#### JESUS DID NOT ALLEGORIZE NATURAL ISRAEL

- ❖ “*In the re-creation*, when the Son of man sits down on his glorious throne, YOU who have followed me will also yourselves sit upon twelve thrones judging (“*to govern*” Moffatt) the **twelve tribes of Israel**” (*Matt. 19:28*).

*Because this concerns events at the beginning of the Millennium there is no reason to spiritualize this statement. Almost all commentators view this as a simple reference to the literal twelve tribes of Israel.*

- ❖ “Lord, are you *restoring the kingdom to Israel* at this time?” (*Acts 1:6*).

*Jesus did not tell them that they asked about a wrong subject, but only that they were not to know the time for the restoring of the kingdom to Israel.*

#### THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

In his great time-of-the-end prophecy on the Mount of Olives Jesus spoke of the literal temple during the invasion of the literal Jerusalem which must therefore concern literal Jews. This is in keeping with the end-time prophecies in Zechariah 12 and 14.

#### LUKE DID NOT ALLEGORIZE NATURAL ISRAEL

- ❖ “This one...will be called Son of the Most High; and Jehovah God will give him the **throne of David** his father and he will rule as king **over the house of Jacob** forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom.” (*Luke 1:32, 33*).

*No Jew or Christian of the time would have imagined that the throne of David was to be anywhere else but in literal Jerusalem.*

- ❖ “After these things I shall return and *rebuild the booth of David* that is **fallen down**; and I shall rebuild its **ruins** and erect it again” (*Acts 15:16*).

To “*rebuild the booth of David* that is **fallen down**” and “rebuild its **ruins** and erect it again” is a reference to Amos 9:11 concerning literal Jerusalem and therefore things pertaining to literal Israel as discussed above and Peter references this restoration:

- ❖ “...that [God] may send forth the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven, indeed, must hold within itself **until** the *times of restoration* of all things of which God spoke **through the mouth of His holy prophets of old time**” (*Acts 3:20, 21*).

*From all of the 100 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures this restoration evidently involves literal Israel.*

#### JOHN DID NOT ALLEGORIZE NATURAL ISRAEL

- ❖ “Look! He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him, and **those who pierced him**: and all the tribes of the earth will **beat themselves in grief** because of him” (*Rev. 1:7*)

“The grief” mentioned here evidently precipitates the repentance of the whole of Israel as prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures and in particular the statements in Zechariah 12:10. So, in hindsight, this is obviously not referring to the people living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but to the community or corporate responsibility of Israel and of the Gentiles.

#### PAUL DID NOT ALLEGORIZE NATURAL ISRAEL

##### *NATURAL ISRAEL IS NOT PERMANENTLY REJECTED*

- ❖ “...for because of **the hope of Israel** I have this chain around me” (*Acts 28:20*).
- ❖ “I ask, then, God did *not reject his people*, did he? **Never may that happen!** For, I also am an **Israelite**, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God did *not reject his people* whom he first recognized (“foreknew” most versions).” (*Rom. 11:1, 2 NWT*).

*The fact that Paul notes his tribe indicates that he is referring to Israel in a natural way. The commentaries also show that this refers to an ethnic national identity.*

##### *THE BELIEVING REMNANT IN PAUL’S DAY*

- ❖ “Although the number of the **sons of Israel** may be as the sands of the sea, it is the *remnant* that **will be saved**” (*Rom. 9:27*).
- ❖ “In the same way [*that there was a remnant in Elijah’s day*] then, there has also come to be **at the present time a remnant** according to God’s gracious choice” (*Rom. 11:5*).

##### *UNBELIEVING ISRAEL EXCLUDED*

- ❖ “What, then? The very thing Israel was earnestly seeking he did not obtain, but the ones chosen obtained it. *The rest* had their **sensibilities blunted**” (*Rom. 11:7*).

*Although there was a remnant in the first century, this did not fulfil all of the prophecies of the final purpose for Israel.*

##### *EXCLUDED ONLY UNTIL MESSIAH RETURNS*

- ❖ “What I am saying is this: Was this stumbling to lead to their **final downfall**? *Out of the question!* On the contrary their failure has brought salvation for the gentiles, in order to stir them to jealousy. And if their fall has proved a great gain to the world, and their loss has proved a great gain to the gentiles – how much greater a gain will come when all is restored to them [“**their full inclusion**” ESV] ... Since their rejection meant reconciliation for the world, do you know what **their re-acceptance** will mean? Nothing less than life from the dead!” (*Rom. 11:11, 12, 15 NJB*). Also note *Ezekiel 37:1-14*.

- ❖ "... They [*natural Israel*] also, **if** they do not remain in their lack of **faith**, will be grafted in [*to the olive tree*]; for God is able to graft them in again ... a dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel **until** the (*'fullness'* KIT) of the people of the nations has come in, and ***in this manner*** [Gk. *houtos* "**thus**" or "**so**"] **all Israel will be saved**. Just as it is written: "**The deliverer will come out of Zion** and turn away ungodly practices from Jacob" (*Rom. 11:23, 25, 26*).

In an attempt to prove that these verses speak of spiritual Israel the WBTS makes much of the Greek word *houtos* as meaning "in this manner" or "in this way." These are perfectly correct translations. However, they do not support the WBTS interpretation because the context of "the dulling" of Israel is **until** the Gentiles have "come in." So there is a sequence here. 1) Natural Israel is dulled. 2) The Gentiles are gathered into Christianity. 3) At Christ's return a remnant of natural Israel repents, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah (*Zech. 12:10, 11*) and is re-grafted into the "*Olive tree*" of true Israel (*Rom. 11:16-24*) so that "*all Israel will be saved*."

#### THE NEW COVENANT

The promised New Covenant for "the house of Israel" (*Jeremiah 31:31*) was applied to those who became Christians (*Luke 22:20*). Does this mean that this promise will never be granted to natural Israel? No! From the future time of "all Israel's" corporate repentance and acceptance of the Messiah they too will be brought into the New Covenant.

#### THE REASONS THAT LITERAL ISRAEL STILL HAS A FUTURE

- ❖ "True, with reference to the good news they [*the unbelieving Jews*] are enemies for YOUR sakes, but with reference to [God's] **choosing** they are beloved **for the sake of their forefathers**. For the gifts and *the calling* of God are not things he will regret ('irrevocable' in many versions)" (*Rom. 11:28-29*).
- ❖ "But Zion kept saying: "Jehovah has left me, and Jehovah himself has forgotten me." Can a wife forget her suckling so that she should not pity the son of her belly? Even these women can forget, yet **I myself shall not forget you**. Look! Upon [my] palms I have engraved you. Your walls are in front of me constantly" (*Isa. 49:14-16*).

#### UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT

- ❖ "And yet for all this, while they continue in the land of their enemies [*as exiles*], I shall certainly **not reject them** nor abhor them so as to exterminate them, to **violate my covenant** with them; for I am Jehovah their God. And I will remember in their behalf **the covenant of the ancestors** whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt under the eyes of the nations, in order to prove myself their God. I am Jehovah" (*Lev. 26:44-46*).

"*The covenant of the ancestors*" involved inheritance and possession of the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates" (*Gen. 15:18; 17:7, 8; Ps. 105:8-11*). So Israel's failure to adhere to the terms of this covenant make no difference to God's being faithful to His word. He would never deny them possession of the land. However, the terms would have to be kept by Israel if they also wanted security (*Lev. 25:18*).

#### PERMANENCE OF ISRAEL

- ❖ "This is what Jehovah, ... has said: "***If these regulations could be removed*** from before me,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'those who are **the seed of Israel could likewise cease** from proving to be a nation before me always.'" This is what Jehovah has said: '***If the heavens up above could be measured*** and the foundations of the earth below could be searched out, **I myself also could reject the entire seed of Israel** on account of all that they have done,..." (*Jer. 31:35-37*).

## ISRAEL RETURNS TO THE LAND IN A STATE OF REPENTANCE

- ❖ “And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of favor and entreaties, and they will certainly **look to the One whom they pierced** through, and they will certainly wail over Him as in the **wailing over an only [son]**; and there will be a **bitter lamentation** over him as when there is bitter lamentation over the firstborn [son]” (*Zech. 12:10*).

Also see Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7.

## ISRAEL RETURNS TO THE LAND IN STAGES

### **Ezekiel 37:7, 8, 10-14:**

#### *FIRST PHYSICALLY*

- ❖ “And I prophesied just as I had been commanded. And a sound began to occur as soon as I prophesied, and here there was a rattling, and bones began to approach, **bone to its bone**. And I saw, and, look! upon them **sinews** themselves and **flesh** itself came up and **skin** began to be overlaid upon them above. But **as regards breath, there was none in them.**”

This is not a reference to the 1948 establishing of current Israel back into the land of Palestine, but rather a future re-establishing of them.

#### *THEN SPIRITUALLY*

**10** And I prophesied just as he had commanded me, and the ***breath proceeded to come into them***, and they ***began to live*** and stand upon their feet, a very, very great military force. And he went on to say to me: “Son of man, as regards these bones, they are *the whole house of Israel*. Here they are saying, ‘Our bones have become dry, and our hope has perished. We have been severed off to ourselves.’ Therefore prophesy and you must say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: “Here I am opening YOUR burial places, and I will bring YOU up out of YOUR burial places, O my people, and **bring YOU in upon the soil of Israel**. And YOU will have to know that I am Jehovah when I open YOUR burial places and when I bring YOU up out of YOUR burial places, O my people.”’ ‘And I will ***put my spirit in YOU***, and YOU must come to life, and I will settle YOU upon YOUR soil; and YOU will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have spoken and I have done [it],’ is the utterance of Jehovah.”

### **Ezekiel 11:17-20:**

#### *FIRST PHYSICALLY*

- ❖ “Therefore say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: “I will also collect YOU from the peoples and **gather YOU from the lands** among which YOU have been scattered, and I *will give YOU the soil of Israel*.”

#### *THEN SPIRITUALLY*

**18** And they will certainly come there and remove all its disgusting things and all its detestable things out of it. And I will give them **one heart, and a new spirit** I shall put inside them; and I shall certainly remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, in order **that they may walk in my own statutes** and keep my own judicial decisions and actually carry them out; and they may really become my people and I myself may become their God.”

*The same pattern can be found in Ezekiel 36:24-27 and Jeremiah 23: 3-4.*

## LITERAL ISRAEL WILL BE THE LEADING NATION AMONG THE MORTAL NATIONS IN THE FUTURE MILLENNIUM

- ❖ “And Jehovah will indeed put you **at the head and not at the tail**; and you must come to be only

on top, and you will not come to be on the bottom, because you keep obeying the commandments of Jehovah your God, which I am commanding you today to observe and to do.” (*Deut. 28:13*).

- ❖ “And many peoples and mighty nations will actually come to seek Jehovah of armies **in Jerusalem** and to soften the face of Jehovah.’ “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘It will be in those days that **ten men out of all the languages of the nations** will take hold, yes, they will actually **take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew**, saying: “We will go with YOU people, for we have heard [that] God is with YOU people”” (*Zech 8:22, 23*)

#### MISAPPLIED TEXTS

##### *Romans 2:28, 29*

Do not Paul’s words that only being a “spiritual Jew” of “the seed of Abraham” is what matters mean that God has forever finished with natural Israel?

REPLY: Although Christians are certainly spiritual Jews this does not exclude natural Israel as a whole from also, at a single future time, converting. As above Romans 9-11 shows that there is a future for “Israelites according to the flesh.” Clearly at the point of the conversion of Israel “according to the flesh” each individual becomes a believer in Jesus as Messiah.

##### *Matthew 21:42, 43*

- “Jesus said to them: “Did YOU never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone that the builders rejected is the one that has become the chief cornerstone. From Jehovah this has come to be, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? This is why I say to YOU, **The kingdom of God will be taken from YOU** and be given to a nation producing its fruits.”

Here Jesus was not talking to all Jews but only to the Jewish religious leaders up to that time. The *New International Bible commentary* (p.1143) states that:

The kingdom will be taken from the disobedient Jewish leaders; their rejection of the prophets and the Son makes them liable to judgment.

##### *Galatians 3:27-29*

- “For all of YOU who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female; for YOU are all one [person] in union with Christ Jesus. Moreover, if YOU belong to Christ, YOU are really Abraham’s seed, heirs with reference to a promise”

Just as this passage does not say that there is no longer any distinction between male and female so, too, it does not say that there is no longer any distinction between Jew or Greek. Furthermore, because this statement does not block *individual* Jews from “*belonging to Christ*” neither will it interfere with the fulfilment of the many prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures and Romans 11 where it is foretold that *a remnant of national Israel* will repent and accept Jesus as Messiah when he returns. Until that time unbelieving Jews are not Abraham’s seed.

#### A PRACTICAL OBJECTION - THE LAND WILL NOT BE LARGE ENOUGH FOR THE NEW POPULATION

REPLY: The area of land that Israel currently occupies is relatively small compared to all that was promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:18). In addition to this complete area of land, God promised a further expansion:

- ❖ “Make the place of your tent more spacious ... for to the right and to the left you will break forth, and your own offspring will **take possession even of the nations**, and they will inhabit even the desolated cities” (*Isa. 54:2, 3*). (Also see Deut. 32:8, 9).

## CONCLUSION

It is clearly wrong to allegorize the plain literal statements of the Scriptures because it would be left to the human interpreter to decide what is and what is not allegorical. Therefore, because full Replacement Theology is based on allegorization it tends to undermine God’s faithfulness to His literal promises and therefore impugns His character. A corollary to this is that if Israel is not going to get what Jehovah has unconditionally promised it, then perhaps even Christians will not get what Jehovah has unconditionally promised them. Replacement Theology also means that the real and full import of the Abrahamic Covenant is lost in contravention of the statement made by Paul:

- ❖ “Further, I say this: As to the [*Abrahamic*] covenant previously validated by God, the Law that has come into being four hundred and thirty years later does **not invalidate it**, *so as to abolish the promise*. For if the inheritance is due to law, it is no longer due to promise; whereas God **has kindly given it to Abraham through a promise**” (*Gal. 3:17-18*).

### *GOD KEEPS FAITH WITH ISRAEL IRRESPECTIVE OF HER DISOBEDIENCE*

- ❖ “In this manner God, when he purposed to demonstrate more abundantly to *the heirs of the promise* the **unchangeableness of his counsel**, stepped in with **an oath**, in order that, through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to the refuge may have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope set before us” (*Heb. 6:17, 18*).

Sadly, Replacement Theology allowed some of the early church fathers to discount Israel and to blame her alone for the death of Jesus rather than the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman authorities. This attitude continued through much of early church history accompanied by the many instances of anti-semitism, along with separation from and hatred of Jews generally. With Constantine’s declaring of the church as the official religion of the Roman Empire in A.D. 321 outright persecution of the Jews began and culminated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century holocaust.

Also sadly, Jehovah’s Witnesses fell into this trap with the writings of Joseph Rutherford from 1946 by his discounting any future for Israel and so applying all Hebrew Scripture prophecies to the ‘anointed’ class of Jehovah’s Witnesses (other than most of those which clearly apply to Christ). If one tries to read entire sections of prophecy, for example from Isaiah, in this misapplied way it tends to be difficult and eventually becomes meaningless, so that the reader does not get the real benefit of these amazing prophecies about Israel.

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