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The Prophetic Promise of the Land in the New Covenant
Randall Price

Introduction

A critic of Israel once asked a Jew, “Why couldn’t you Jews just accept a country like Uganda? Why do you have to go back only to Israel? Equal to the question, the Jew replied, “Why do I go all the way across the country to see my grandmother, when there are plenty of old ladies nearby?” This rejoinder, in the style of rabbinic banter, reminds us that for the Jew, despite the cost and the controversy, there is no place in history to which he belongs except that one place that is his God-given earthy inheritance, the Land of Israel. This conviction, so unwelcomed by the politicians, has been a particular stumbling block for secularists:

What are we, finally, to make of this doctrine of The Land which gives theological significance—as it has been crudely put—“to a piece of real estate”? Many Jews, no less than Gentiles, have dismissed it as a bizarre and anachronistic superstition, unworthy of serious consideration. To many rationalists, and even humanists, especially since the Enlightenment, in a rational universe the doctrine is an affront. This response is generally coupled with the assumption that the doctrine is simply an aspect of that other doctrine of “chosenness” or “election” that —so it is claimed—has irrationally and arrogantly afflicted (a verb chosen advisedly) the Jewish people, the particularism of The Land being, in fact, an especially primitive expression of the unacceptable particularism of the Jewish faith.”¹

Yet, for the serious student of Scripture, the Land doctrine cannot be easily dismissed. It remains an undeniable fact of Holy Writ, a fact Old Testament theologian Walt Kaiser, Jr. reminds us of when he addresses this recognition within the Christian community:

Christian theologians are once again reclaiming the fact that “the land is central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith,” and therefore, as W. D. Davies warned, “it will no longer do to talk about Yahweh and his people, but we must speak about Yahweh and his people *and his land*.” Likewise, Gerhard von Rad summarized the situation by saying, “Of all the promises made to the patriarchs it was that of the land that was the most prominent and decisive.” In fact, few issues are as important as that of the promise of the land to the patriarchs and the nation of Israel: the Hebrew word *‘erets* is the fourth most frequent substantive in the Hebrew Bible.²

¹ W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Pr, 1992), 127.

² Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6-12),” in *Israel the Land and the People*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 209.

These comments are generally accepted by both Jewish and Christian scholars as accurate with respect to the Old Testament or the Old Covenant. The Land of Israel was the stage for the great drama of salvation history and the Nation of Israel was at the center of this stage serving as the Chosen People for the LORD's demonstration of His Presence and power in that history. However, everything changes when we move to the New Covenant, and for Christian scholars, to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the language used for predicted events associated with the New Covenant, often within the same context as the language used to describe known historical events, is said to be hyperbolic or symbolic since the description portrays a surreal utopia for an Israel of the last days. In the New Testament, nothing like this is encountered, unless one includes the Apocalypse (which everyone knows is symbolic), and the New Covenant is seen as a distinctly Christian experience. The Old Covenant has been replaced by the New Covenant, Israel has been replaced by the Church, and the mission has moved from the limited territory of a place in the Middle East to the entire world. Reformed scholar O. Palmer Robertson says, "When the Christ actually came, the biblical perspective on the "land" experienced radical revision."³ Colin Chapman explains this revision as a result of a new Christocentric interpretation that he believes was taught by Jesus Himself:

Jesus seems to be silent about the subject of the land because for him the theme of the kingdom of God took the place of the theme of the land and everything else associated with it in the Old Testament. He used language from the Old Testament about the land, the ingathering of the exiles to the land and the redemption or restoration of the nation of Israel to describe his own ministry.⁴

For those who have been taught to think that the final goal of the redemptive program is the Church and that all of the types and shadows of the Old Covenant were intended to yield this ideal, it is inherently wrong and patently absurd to not view everything under the New Covenant in terms of the church. Christ came to end the Old Covenant under which national Israel was the experiment, and the New Covenant and the Church is the final result. There is simply no possible concept of an Israel in the New Covenant that is not the Church. The primitive and earthly beginnings of ethnic distinctions and territorial boundaries have reached their ordained spiritual and heavenly goal in the Church. Its corporate unity can allow no ethnic distinctions (all its members are and only Christians) and its universal mission cannot be limited to a focus in the Middle East. Under this New Covenant, everyone is the chosen people and everywhere is the holy land.

Although an unbiased reading of the text would lead to a literal interpretation of a future kingdom for a spiritually restored Israel in the historical Land of Israel, no such unbiased reading is possible due to the constraints of hermeneutical approaches that have captivated and now control the thinking of the majority of contemporary scholarship and the pastors, teachers, apologists, and missionaries they educate in their classrooms and through their writings as well as all of the Christians under their influence who seek to understand the scriptures. This is also important for the reason offered by George Orwell in 1984: "Who controls the past controls the

³ O. Palmer Robertson, *Understanding the Land of the Bible: a Biblical-Theological Guide* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1996), 11.

⁴ Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land? the Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 175.

future: who controls the present controls the past.” Therefore, before coming to our own study, it is necessary to consider and critique the hermeneutical issues they put forth concerning the Land and the New Covenant.

Hermeneutical Issues Concerning the Land and the New Covenant

New Testament scholars and systematic theologians have the most trouble with the Land promises because they are not the focus of the New Testament and they tend to dismiss them as having any continuing significance in light of the New Covenant program they interpret as global and Christ-centered, not land-centered. However, since they recognize that the Old Testament is the foundation of the New, and the Scripture used by the founders of the Church, they must find a way to explain its New Covenant program that sees Israel’s restoration to the Land as essential the fulfillment. Old Testament scholars have a better understanding of these texts and also wrestle with how to reconcile them with the New Testament revelation. However, because of their academic training in higher criticism of the Bible and their need to conform to denominational creeds that are non-futurist, they typically view the prophetic texts as idyllic aspirations fulfilled historically under the Old Covenant or hyperbolic “restoration language” that was intended to find fulfillment in Christ and the Church. Consequently, the name given to their interpretive approach is the “New Covenant Perspective.”

The Literary Motivation Interpretation

Eugene March, Professor of Old Testament at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, explains this perspective in contrast to the futurists school of interpretation:

The simplest version of the argument among Christians is that all the words of the prophets must be fulfilled because the prophets were predicting the future. Some prophecies have been fulfilled, but many have not. Among the latter is the prediction that at the end of time or at the beginning of the messianic age, the people of Israel—scattered abroad when their nation was destroyed as punishment from God—will be gathered and returned to their former land. Sometimes in this view, the return is seen as the beginning of a time when Jews will be converted to Christianity or at least will acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah. For others, the ingathering of Jews is simply a sign of the end time, when Christians will be delivered from this evil world before final judgment falls on all nations.

On the surface, the argument is persuasive if the texts in question are read according to the presupposed theology. But a number of criticisms may rightly be lodged against this interpretation. First, the texts are taken out of their literary and historical contexts and understood as predictions, when in fact they were words of accusation and hope directed to particular audiences of real people. These were not mysterious words that would only be understood thousands of years after they were uttered. The whole notion is based on a misunderstanding of the character and intention of the biblical prophets and their work ...

Much more could be said in criticism of this position, which is vigorously advocated by some Christians known as “dispensationalists” and others known as “premillennialists” ... The fundamental error, however, is to read texts intended to engender hope and consolation too literally. The words were intended to assure God’s people of ongoing divine care and compassion. They may help us articulate a vision, but they do not constitute a deterministic program we can use to predict God’s time.”⁵

However, the literary contexts for these prophecies are concerned with desperate historical conditions (desecration, destruction and exile). Moderns can scarcely appreciate the degree of defilement the punishment of exile from the Land imposed on the Jewish People.⁶ Could words designed to address such needs really engender hope and consolation if they could not be taken literally? The hope of the exilic and post-exilic communities was for a real restoration, whether in the near or far future. God’s promise for Israel’s future deliverance was often compared with His past deliverances (e.g., the exodus). If the Prophet’s audience interpreted divine intervention as real history, why should they not interpret the future promise of deliverance in the same manner? Hyperbolic rhetoric and literary devices may satisfy modern literary critics, but they did nothing for a people who needed to count on God for the future of their Nation. Can we seriously believe that the prophets’ (or worse, God’s) words to Israel never intended a historical fulfillment of restoration in the Land, but only a reassurance of the LORD’s care and compassion? If the promise was only meant to be words of encouragement, how was this encouragement to be realized? It could hardly have been realized in the 6th century B.C. return from exile since by the prophet’s own assessment this was disappointing on almost every level (nationally, politically, socially, and spiritually).⁷

The Cosmic Reinterpretation Interpretation

Others scholars who share a non-literal interpretation for these prophecies concede that the Prophets thought in literal terms, but that this was a misunderstanding later corrected by the New Testament’s transformation of the nationalistic concept of land to a cosmic scope under the New Covenant. This is explained by Lisa Loden, Director of Programs for the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, when she asks:

⁵ W. Eugene March, *Israel and the Politics of Land: a Theological Case Study* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 69, 70.

⁶ To be sent out of the Land was to be sent into a place without God, i.e., the world of idolatry: “So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I shall grant you no favor” (Jer. 16:13). The Nation had been warned of this awful state of ritual defilement as a consequence of covenant violation in Deut. 4:27-28.

⁷ The books of Ezra and Nehemiah and their prophetic contemporaries Haggai and Zechariah record the fact that only a remnant of those in exile returned to Judah and once there failed to complete the Temple (Ezra 3:6; Hag. 1:2-9, yet constructed their own homes, failed to repair the breaches in the walls (Neh. 1:3), and in violation of the Mosaic legislation, had not separated from the ritually unclean peoples of the neighboring lands, but had even married foreign wives (Ezra 9:1-2; 10:10-44), labored and traded on the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-21), and engaged in usury (Neh. 5:1-9), as well as other social sins (Zech. 7:9-10). Looking to a future restoration in the last days (Zech. 8-14), these prophets’ sought to encourage the Jewish communities by focusing on the eventual fulfillment promised their Nation (with which they shared a corporate solidarity) in the Land. If God could be trusted with the future, he could be trusted with the present.

How does this perspective affect an understanding of the return to the land described by Ezekiel and other prophets? In the nature of things Old Testament writers such as Ezekiel could only employ the images with which they and their hearers were familiar. In their case, the idea of restoration to the geographical land from which Israel had been deported represented the fulfillment of their fondest hopes. Yet in the context of the realities of the new covenant, this land must be understood in terms of the newly recreated cosmos about which the Apostle Paul speaks in Romans.”⁸

This viewpoint fails to observe that the Prophets also predicted the creation of a new heavens and earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22), but also, and like Paul, the deliverance from the curse imposed on the present earth (Zech. 14:11; Rom. 8:18-25). Hebrew University of Jerusalem Professor Moshe Greenberg makes the observation that a cosmic reinterpretation of the Old Testament hope in the Land cannot be maintained in light of the necessary bond of the Jewish People with the holy Land that defines them as a holy people:

Christians and Muslims, it is commonly said, differ from Jews in the nature of the holiness ascribed to the Land of Israel: the former have holy memories and holy places here, while for Jews the Land itself is holy. To Jews, every other land is an exile, but whatever happens here is significant, and the people living in the land are called to be a holy people. In general, human beings are not equally at home everywhere. To say that someone is equally at home everywhere is to say that he is not at home anywhere.”⁹

The consequence of such a view that forces a reinterpretation of the Old Testament, effectively nullifying its central promise of the Land to national Israel, is well stated by Menahem Benhayim, former Israel Secretary of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel of Israel:

In dealing with the theology of the Land in the context of Scripture, we must therefore not be tempted to do what the heretical Marcionites did—namely throwing out the earlier Scriptures as a relic from another ‘god’ and therefore quite irrelevant to Christians. Nor should we do what classical Christian theology has often done—namely transferring ‘Israel’ (the people and the Land) entirely to the spiritual realm. This may seem a more elegant way, but it still results in Israel being effectively irrelevant. (Unfortunately for such theology, the Jewish people and the biblical Land, have refused to accommodate to this scheme by becoming extinct or irrelevant.) Instead a realistic hermeneutic or ‘interpretation’ of the

⁸ Lisa Loden, “Knowing Where We Start: Assessing the Various Hermeneutical Approaches,” in *The Bible and the Land: an Encounter*. Eds. Lisa Loden, Peter Walker, Michael Wood (Jerusalem, Israel: Musalaha, 2000), 77-78. In this statement the author is critiquing the [Reformed] New Covenant position with particular attention to Peter Walker’s comments in *Jesus and the Holy City*. Ed. Peter Walker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 313.

⁹ Moshe Greenberg, “Theological Reflections – Land, People and State” in *People, Land and State of Israel: Jewish and Christian Perspectives*. Ed. Malcom Lowe (Jerusalem: The Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, 1989), 25.

people and the land of Israel will relate, not just to the ‘extended’ meanings of Scripture, but also to its plain meaning.”¹⁰

Christological Transformation Interpretation

Another interpretive view, although one underlying all Christian non-literal views, is the position that the New Testament lens, which is focused on Christ, is the means to read and understand the Old Testament, which is focused on Israel and the Land. Representing this view as “the accepted and normative Christian interpretation,” religious ethicist Christopher Wright declares:

In New Testament theology the Christian Church, as the community of the Messiah, is the organic continuation of Israel. It is heir to the names and privileges of Israel, and therefore also falls under the same ethical responsibilities—though now transformed in Christ. Therefore the thrust of Old Testament social ethics, which in their own historical context were addressed to the redeemed community of God’s people, needs to be directed first of all at the equivalent community—the Church.”¹¹

In response, it should be noted that the early Jewish Church did not possess this lens as they did not yet have a New Testament and nothing in the recorded teaching of Jesus, which was drawn from the Old Testament, offers a methodology for such a transformation. No where does Jesus declare that the Church will be the organic continuation of Israel, bear its titles and privileges, and fall under its ethical responsibilities. These were imbedded in the Mosaic Law that had been an exclusive conditional covenant with the Nation and which was largely rejected and replaced by throughout the history of the Church. Where then is this transformation except in the minds of those church fathers, who in seeking to distance themselves from the Jewish People who they regarded as apostate enemies to the Faith, sought to take their recorded blessings for themselves.

Present Fulfillment Interpretation

Swinging the hermeneutical pendulum the other direction, some in the Christian Zionist movement have attempted to find a literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the present-day events surrounding the formation of the modern State of Israel, finding the 1948 rebirth of the State fulfilling Isaiah 66:8, Israeli sovereignty over east Jerusalem in 1967 fulfilling Luke 21:24, and the reclamation of the Negev as fulfilling the blooming deserts of Isaiah 35:1 and 51:3. However, others in their own camp have countered that while such events may be significant in God’s preparation for future fulfillment,¹² they do not meet the conditions for present literal fulfillment:

¹⁰ Menahem Benhayim, “Reckoning with God’s Choice: The Election of a Land and a People” in *The Bible and the Land: an Encounter*. Eds. Lisa Loden, Peter Walker, and Michael Wood (Jerusalem, Israel: Musalaha, 2000), 85.

¹¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), xvii-xviii.

¹² Contending that historic events in the reestablishment of the modern State of Israel do not meet the criteria of fulfillment of particular prophetic texts in New Covenant contexts does not preclude the interpretation that this worldwide return fulfills the initial return to the Land in such texts as Isa. 11:11a. For supportive data on this issue see Eugene J. Mayhew, “Current Status of the Worldwide Return and the other Promised Lands,” *Michigan Theological Journal* (Spring/Fall 1994) 5:86-104.

From this perspective on Ezekiel's prophecy, it would seem evident that the return of the Jews to the land in the twentieth century should not be regarded as a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. Their re-formation as a state in 1948 involved no opening of graves, no resurrection of the body, no in-pouring of the Spirit of God, and no affirmation of Jesus Christ as the Lord of the covenant. However the restoration of the state of Israel may be viewed, it does not fulfill the expectation of Ezekiel as described in this most vivid prophecy. Instead, this picture of a people brought to newness of life by the Spirit of God naturally leads to a consideration of the role the land in the new covenant."¹³

The gulf that divides the non-literal New Covenant perspective of the Reformed school and the literal futurist interpretation of the New Covenant in Dispensationalism is too wide for any hermeneutical bridge to cross. Reading the text christologically and transformationally so that every prophetic statement in the Old Testament about the Land is applied to the global mission of the Church is not spiritual, but anti-spiritual, for it robs God of the glory He has planned for Himself in history by a demonstration of His sovereign mercy in restoring national Israel (Ezek. 36:23, 36; Rom. 11:28-36). The New Covenant itself is stripped of its distinct features related to the Land, the allotment of Tribal inheritances, the Temple and the priesthood, and the witness of Israel to the nations of God's reversal of Israel's condition is nullified. How can these features be envisioned as even "spiritually fulfilled" by a marginal Jewish remnant within the predominately Gentile Church? However, the fact that God has preserved a remnant of national Israel in the Church according to His gracious choice is the present assurance of the fulfillment of His promised future work when the full number of the Gentiles has been added to the Church and the hardening of national Israel leads to national repentance and the full blessings of their New Covenant (Rom. 11:25-27).

Reasons Why the Land Must be Literally Restored to National Israel Under the New Covenant

In accordance with a dispensational hermeneutic that respects a consistent literal interpretation of prophecy within historic contexts, let us consider the historical and theological arguments for the necessary future restoration of national Israel to the Land under the New Covenant.

A. Historical Reasons

If literal fulfillment is expected of the New Covenant prophecies concerning Israel in the Land it is impossible to find precise fulfillment in any past possession, return or restoration experienced by the Nation. The primary texts related to this are at the time of the Conquest when Israel first possessed the Land promised to Abraham and the time of the return from the Babylonian exile.

Necessary to Realize Fully the Promised Boundaries of the Land

¹³ O. Palmer Robertson, "Leaving the Shadows: A New Covenant Perspective on the Promised Land" in *The Bible and the Land: an Encounter*. Eds. Lisa Loden, Peter Walker, and Michael Wood (Jerusalem, Israel: Musalaha, 2000), 76-77.

Despite the claim by the Reformed school that the full promise of the Land was fulfilled with the Conquest under Joshua (Josh. 21:43), National Israel never realized at any time in the past the possession and occupation of the entire Promised Land (Gen. 15:18-21; 17:8; Num. 34:1-15; Deut. 1:7-8). It is commonly argued that fulfillment came with the conquest of the Land under Joshua based on the statements in Joshua 21:43-45: “So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.” However, it is clear that much of the Land still remained to be possessed in Joshua’s day (13:1-6, 13) and even Jerusalem could not yet be totally possessed (15:63). Later statements in the book also state this fact (23:1-13; 24:1-28). But, though possession of the Land and rest was incomplete at that time, the Conquest had begun the process and this was assurance that God’s good word of promise to Abraham and his descendants would be fulfilled.

There was also a failure to possess the promised boundaries with the return of a Jewish remnant from Babylon to Judah in 538 B.C. First, a paltry return of less than 50,000 from one place, though noble and a evidence of faith in God’s promised deliverance through the Persians at the conclusion of the 70 year exile, cannot seriously merit the scale of regathering from the four points of the compass predicted for the new Covenant return (Isa. 11:12; 56:8; Ezek. 36:22; Zeph. 3:10; Zech. 8:7; 10:8-12). Second, “the enemies,” the “people of the land” (Samaritans) possessed the boundaries of Samaria (Ezra 4:2-5) and the Persians had hegemony over the entire country (Ezra 4:6, 12-13, 16, 20-22; 5:3). This was followed by a succession of foreign occupiers and rulers from the Greeks to the Romans, in fulfillment of Daniel’s vision of Gentile domination (Dan. 2:37-43) from the time of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem until the advent of Messiah and the establishment of the messianic kingdom (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13, 26-27; 8:19-25). The fulfillment of national Israel’s possession of the original boundaries promised to Abraham require Israel’s regaining independent rule over the entire country beyond what they have ever historically occupied (including the present modern State) since the country is free from enemies on every side and is paradoxically the head of all nations on earth.

Necessary to Realize the Full Promise of Rest in the Land (Deut.; Ezekiel 38)

The divine promise was also of “rest” in the Land. This “rest” was freedom from the threat of attack by enemies and translated to a security that permitted Israel to function offensively in its witness of holiness to the nations (Deut. 14:2), rather than defensively. Such uninterrupted rest in the Land was not realized at the time of Joshua’s Conquest since in the later time of David and Solomon the same claim is made to have given Israel another temporary rest from its enemies (2 Sam. 7:1, 11; 1 Kings 8:56; 1 Chron. 22:9).¹⁴ The promise had been conditioned upon obedience to the covenant stipulations and this was repeatedly set before the people in Moses’ final instructions to the Nation (Deut. 4:40; 5:33; 6:18; 7:12-15; 8:6-10; et.al.). So long as it was possible for Israel to defile the Land by its sin (Ezekiel 36:22), divine discipline would use Gentile nations to threaten the Land and remove the condition of rest. Worse, judicial exile meant a postponement of rest until the people could return to the Land (the promised place of

¹⁴ For an explanation of such “fulfillment” as a “periodic installment type of fulfillment” see Walt Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 128-130.

rest).

The return from exile, though a return to the Land, was not a return to rest in the Land. It has already been noted that foreign enemies had occupied parts of the Land during the time of the Babylonian Captivity, and that the entire boundaries of the Land were under the control of the Persian government. The efforts of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were to afford some measure of rest (security) in Judah, but, this came at the cost of constant diligence and preparation to wage war (Neh. 4:11-20). This has continued to be the state of affairs for Israel during the times of the Gentiles until the present day.

Therefore, in order to fully fulfill this promised provision of the Land Covenant, it will be necessary for National Israel to live in the Land as a righteous Nation with no fear of future interruption of rest from its own actions or that of enemies. The New Covenant with national Israel promises such fulfillment. War will be abolished and all possibility of waging war removed (by the destruction of weapons of war), Isaiah 2:4. Israel will be unable to repeat its act of national disobedience because the entire Nation will experience spiritual regeneration and be enabled to fulfill their Chosen status as a holy people (Isa. 61:6; Jer. 31:33-34; 33:8; Ezek. 36:25-29a; 37:14). Moreover, there will be no enemies for Israel (Ezek. 39:26), for all of the nations that once threatened the capital of Jerusalem with war will now come to Jerusalem for worship (Isa. 2:3; 27:13; 60:3, 7, 14; 62:2, 7-9; 65:25; 66:18-22; Jer. 33:9-11, 16; Zech. 14:16). These conditions have no correspondence, even by analogy, in the Church Age, for under this phase of the New Covenant its people have reason to be disciplined (1 Pet. 4:15-17) and have enemies on every side (2 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 4:12-14; 5:8-10; 5:9), even from among the Jews (Rom. 11:28). For this reason, the next phase of the new Covenant will complete the promise with permanent, unhindered, and uninterrupted rest in the Land.

B. Theological Reasons

Since the New Covenant is one of the four unconditional covenants made by God with national Israel, it is necessary to set forth the arguments at this point why the New Covenant remains national Israel's New Covenant and its promised fulfillment has not been transferred to the Church. The summary of these arguments has been well made by Arnold Fructenbaum:

First, they are literal covenants and their contents must be interpreted literally as well. Second, the covenants God made with Israel are eternal and are not conditioned by time. Third, it is necessary to re-emphasize that these are unconditional covenants, which were not abrogated because of Israel's disobedience. Because these covenants are unconditional and totally dependent upon God for fulfillment, they can be expected to have an ultimate fulfillment. The fourth thing to note is that these covenants were made with a specific people: Israel. This is brought out by Paul in Romans 9:4: . . . *who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises* ... This passage clearly points out that these covenants were made with the covenanted people and are Israel's possession. This is brought out again in Ephesians 2:11-12: *Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called*

Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. The four unconditional covenants belong to the people of Israel and, as this passage notes, Gentiles were considered *strangers from the covenants*. Fifth, while a covenant is made at a specific point of time, not all of the provisions go immediately into effect. At the time a covenant is signed or sealed, three things happen: some do go immediately into effect; some go into effect in the near future; and some go into effect only in the distant or prophetic future.¹⁵

With an understanding of the continuing active status of the New Covenant as national Israel's promised covenant, we may consider some of the theological reasons why it is necessary for national Israel, not the Church, to fulfill the New Covenant only in the Land, not throughout the world, as this covenant stipulates.

Necessary for Theocratic Theodicy (Vindication of God's Sovereignty over the Land)

The shameful situation of national Israel as rejected by God and scattered among the nations requires an ultimate explanation. For the Jewish People, enduring savagery, despoilment, and worse: forced defilement in foreign lands through persecution, pogrom, and holocaust, one answer to their suffering has been the fact that they were "Chosen." This, of course, has only strengthened the feeling that something is not right with God. Another answer might be that they agreed to a covenant and failing to obey its stipulations received what they deserved. However, if God chose them and made unconditional promises to them for blessing and prosperity *in the Land*, how can He be vindicated in light of the reality that most of their existence has been *outside* of the Land? The Prophets especially focused on this problem because their prophetic messages dealt in large measure with the historical contexts of the Assyrian deportation of Israel and the Babylonian destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the exile of the people.¹⁶

The answer given by the Prophets was theocratic theodicy¹⁷ under the New Covenant. A proleptic preview of this has been demonstrated with a remnant of national Israel and a remnant of the Gentile nations in the Church.

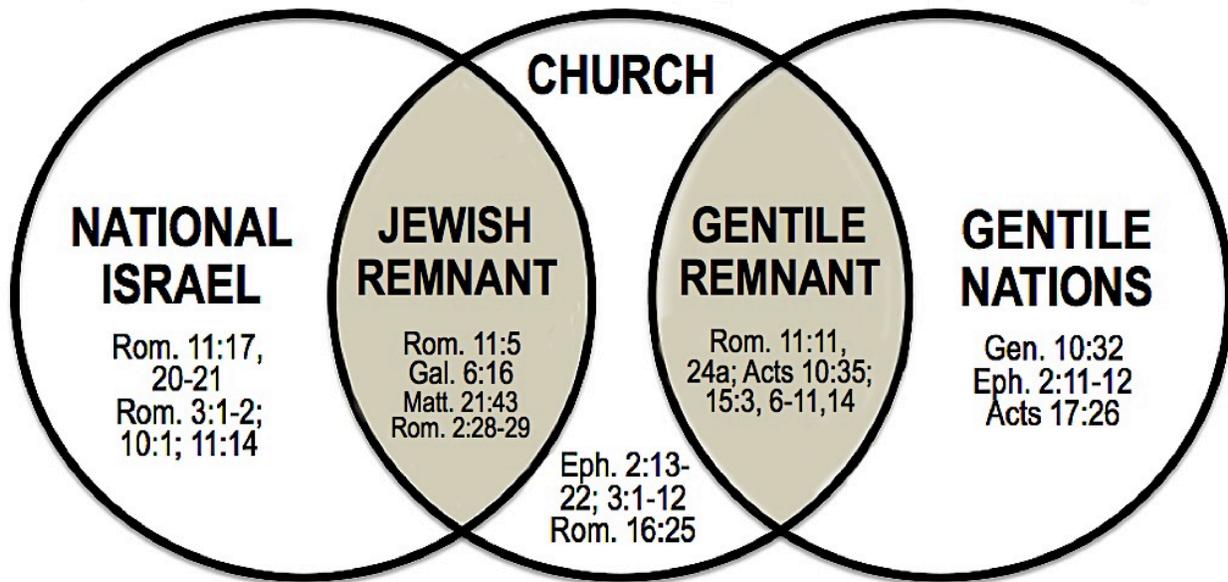
¹⁵ Arnold Fructenbaum. "Israel's Right to the Land" (A paper presented to the Pre-Trib Study Group,), pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ "Within the biblical canon the Former Prophets constitute a monumental theodicy, an almost heroic attempt to exonerate the deity for permitting the defeat of Jerusalem and the exportation of a large number of Judeans to Babylonia." James L. Crenshaw, "Theodicy and Prophetic Literature," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*. Eds. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 236

¹⁷ The term "theocratic theodicy" is composed of the two terms derived from the Greek *theos* ("God") + *kratos* ("rule") and *theos* ("God") + *dike* ("justice"). This term explains the need to vindicate God in His seemingly failed plan with respect to ruling the world through a holy people in a holy Land. Theologically, God established His rule over the earth and through mankind at Creation, but was interrupted by the Fall. This rule was resumed through a Chosen People, but again interrupted by divine discipline that judicially hardened the Nation and prevented corporate repentance. The resulting exilic condition for Israel (and present problem for the modern State of threats from the nations) has resulted in the "God of Israel" being misunderstood and maligned by the nations. The final and ultimate resumption of this rule will be with national Israel under the New Covenant in the time of Restoration (Millennial Kingdom). It will be this reversal of national Israel's condition that will vindicate God before the Nation and the nations.

Relationship of Israel and the Gentiles in the Church

"Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy" (Romans 15:8-9)



The relationship of the Jewish and Gentile remnants as part of the “all Israel” (Rom. 11:26) and “all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3) is explained as a necessary (though unexpected) part of the divine program in Acts 15:16-18 based in part on the prophecy of Amos 9:11. It was already understood that Messiah would not return and bring the promised restoration until national Israel repented (Acts 3:19-21). Now, it is understood that Messiah will not return until “after” (vs. 16) the remnant of Gentiles (“the full number,” Rom. 11:25) have been brought to faith. For that reason national Israel has been partially and temporarily hardened and experienced rejection that the Gentiles might be included in the program of salvation (Rom. 11:11-15, 25).¹⁸ Therefore the normative situation for the Church Age will be national Israel in a hardened condition (Acts 28:25-27; Rom. 11:25; cf. Jn. 12:37-40 based on Isa. 6:9-13), a remnant of Israel saved (Acts 28:24; Rom. 11:5; cf. Jn. 12:42), and a remnant of the Gentiles saved (Acts 28:28). During Israel’s time in the Land a remnant of national Israelites had salvific priority and comparatively few Gentiles were saved and brought into national Israel. During the Church Age this is reversed, with salvific priority extended to the Gentiles and comparatively few Jews saved and brought into the Church. However, Gentile inclusion serves a greater purpose in the divine plan in provoking national Israel to jealousy and thereby causing them to seek this salvation first extended to them (Rom. 11:11, 14; cf. Acts 15:11). Therefore, Gentile conversion during the present Intercalation helps prepare national Israel (and the Gentile nations) for the greater inclusion under the future New Covenant. Salvation has been recognized as a key element of the coming Kingdom by as diverse theologians as Ladd: “The Kingdom of God stands as a

¹⁸ Since Gentile salvation on this order did not occur in Israel’s past, and since all of the nations that enter the Millennial Kingdom will have been saved in the Tribulation, the only time for an inclusion of a remnant of the Gentiles with a remnant of national Israel is during the Church Age.

comprehensive term for all that the messianic salvation included”¹⁹ and Kaiser: “The kingdom of God is both a soteriological as well as an eschatological concept.”²⁰

The spiritual inclusion in the present era will find the addition of the national and physical inclusion in the future era. However, this mediatorial role performed by the remnant of the nations during the Church Age, within the period of Gentile dominion over national Israel, will be reversed in the Mediatorial Kingdom, with national Israel having the dominion and serving in a mediatorial role for the nations. Those that were formerly excluded are now included as the times of the Gentiles give way to the time of Israel’s restoration. Though not as clear, it appears that the transitional period during the Tribulation that prepares Israel and the nations for the messianic advent and the Millennial government will see a partial experience of the coming mediatorial role for Israel as the Gentile nations are judged with respect to their relationship during this time with the believing remnant of national Israel (Matt. 25:32-46), see chart below:

Israel and the Land under the New Covenant

	TIMES OF THE GENTILES		TIME OF ISRAEL’S RESTORATION
	CHURCH AGE	TRIBULATION	MILLENNIUM
National Israel	Presently excluded Remnant included	Provisionally included via Remnant of national Israel (Jer. 30:7b; Zech. 12:10-13:1)	Included (as head) Deut. 28:13; Isa. 12:6; 60:14-16; 62:2
Gentile nations	Presently excluded Remnant included	Provisionally included via Remnant of national Israel (Matt. 25:32-46)	Included (as tail) Isa. 2:3; 60:10-12; Zech. 9:23
Land	Under divine discipline (Daniel 8:19; Luke 21:24)	Under divine wrath (Rev. 6-19)	Restored and Renewed (Isa. 27:6; 60:21; 62:4; Ezek. 36:34-36)

While only the spiritual provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant have been enjoyed in implementation of the New Covenant since Pentecost, the full provisions of all of the biblical covenants will be experienced by national Israel and mediated to the nations in the Millennial Kingdom. The vindication of God’s relationship with national Israel and the Land will require a reversal of their ritually defiled status caused by Israel’s sin that polluted the Land and the negative witness in their being exiled from the Land and the Land becoming unclean due to both Israel’s idolatry and the presence of foreign occupation that furthered the idolatrous contamination.

Reversal of Ritual Defilement in the Land (Ezekiel 36:21-22, 36-38; 37:25-26)

¹⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), p. 70

²⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 2009), p. 140.

The status of the Land as holy and the fact that it could be de-sanctified by the actions of the nation of Israel and the resultant discipline from foreign invasion threatened the recognition of God's theocratic status. For example, Jeremiah records God's verdict concerning Judah's actions: "And I brought you into the fruitful land, To eat its fruit and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, And My inheritance you made an abomination" (Jeremiah 2:7). Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (New York) Professor of Bible Harry Orlinsky, explains the reason this relationship between God and the Land:

There is the aspect of holiness that was associated in the Bible with the Land, and the exclusive status of Jerusalem as the only Holy City—a status that Jerusalem never lost among the Jewish people ... To the biblical writers, the holiness of the Land derived immediately and directly from the holiness of God Himself, that is to say, God is holy and His presence [*kavod*, "glory"] and abode are holy, and they generate holiness; and so the Land (as His people) is holy and must be maintained unmarred and undefiled by wrongdoing."²¹

The Prophet Ezekiel makes this clear when he records the LORD's own explanation of the theological dilemma created by national Israel's violations of the covenants: "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. "And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight" (Ezekiel 36:21–24).

National Israel's actions required divine discipline in accordance with the stipulated covenantal punishment of exile (Lev. 26:23-25, 31-33; Deut. 3:25-27; 2 Chr. 36:16-17; Jer. 5:14-15; et. al.). Yet this necessary judicial action allowed the nations to falsely assume that God was like their local deities. The conquest of his land and the exile of his people implied he was powerless to prevent either. Habel links the LORD's rule over the Land with the demonstration of His sovereignty, noting:

"The allocation of a piece of YHWH's universal domain to Israel and the establishment of Israel as a people in that land are crucial steps in the public demonstration of YHWH's sovereignty over all lands. In Deuteronomy, the text presents YHWH as a deity seeking to prove these claims to universal dominion."²²

²¹ Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Biblical Concept of the Land of Israel: Cornerstone of the Covenant between God and Israel" in *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives*. Ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 52.

²² Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 37.

On the day that the LORD restores the Land to national Israel He will, in the Land, effect ritual purification for the Nation to reverse their unclean condition so both He and they may dwell in holiness in the Holy Land.²³

The review of Israel's sinful history in Ezekiel 36:16-17 is brief and to the point: "when Israel was living on their own Land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds" (vs. 17a). The purpose of this summary is to exonerate God for the judgment of exile, but also to demonstrate that the ground for national Israel's salvation and restoration can only be based on God's sovereign grace. Verse 17 to reveals the condition of the people is "defilement" (Hebrew *tame*).²⁴ Verses 18-21 explain that the nation had specifically defiled the Land by idolatry (verse 18).²⁵ As a result, "the Land became defiled and God punished it and it expelled its inhabitants" (cf. Leviticus 18:25). Israel's unholy character caused it to be removed from the "holy" land. This retributive judgment broke the covenantal triad that existed between God, the people, and the land, and resulted in the profanation of the Lord's Holy Name by the nations (vss. 20-21), a situation requiring both restoration (for Israel and the Land) and vindication (for the LORD). This will be achieved in a reversal of the condition, emphasized in the original text by opposing synonyms of exile that correspond in thought and rhyme to the wording used for the promise of return and restoration in verses 19 and 24. This correspondence reveals the divine intervention that characterizes the restoration of Israel under the New Covenant in vss. 25-28:

I *scattered* them among the nations (19a), I will *take* you from the nations (24a)

I *dispersed* them among the lands (19b), I will *gather* you from all the lands (24b)

From Israel's perspective, the exile threatened the prophetic fulfillment of the historical covenants that depend on Israel's possession of the Land. From the divine perspective, the necessity of divine judgment by exile resulted in God's holy Name being profaned by Israel in the midst of the nations by which and to which the Nation was exiled (verses 20-21). Israel's exile made the nations think Israel's God was impotent resulting in a "profanation" of God's holy Name. The seriousness of this offense can be seen in the meaning of the verb "profane" (Hebrew *chalah*), which means, "to pollute, defile, profane, violate, desecrate, make

²³ This point is emphasized by Seock-Tae Sohn who notes the requirement for this cleansing in Num. 19:4ff. Seock-Tae Sohn, *The Divine Election of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 239.

²⁴ This term, found twice in this verse and again in verses 18 and 29, means, "to render ceremonially unclean." The historical associations of the word in the Old Testament are with sin that defiles or pollutes by contact. In Leviticus, for example, it describes illicit sexual activity that has defiled the land and its inhabitants (18:23, 25, 27; 19:29) and ritually unclean animals that will render unclean whatever touches their carcasses (11:24-43). The simile of a "menstruous (unclean) woman" is also employed (verse 17c) to depict the "unapproachableness" of Israel (cf. Isaiah 64:6).

²⁵ God "poured out" His wrath on Israel because they had "poured out blood upon the Land" (a metonymy of effect for the cause) "and had defiled it with idols." The use of the phrase "pouring out wrath" is usually associated with the judgment of idol worship and may have in mind a particular idolatrous practice such as child sacrifice (16:20, 21, 36; 23:37; 33:25).

common."²⁶ In the ancient Near East the fortunes of a nation and its deity were inseparable and the relationship between a god, a people, and a land was intimate. A god who did not vindicate himself in the arena of history was no god at all. Israel's exile had made the nations view Israel's God as only a local deity that could be derided just as his people. W. F. Lofthouse explained this problem by noting that "sin is not only evil in itself, but it compels God to do what men are bound to misunderstand."²⁷ The exile was interpreted by the nations as stemming from God's impotence, inferiority, inability, abandonment, or unfaithfulness to protect His people and Land. Therefore, instead of Israel's history moving towards the prophetic goal of the nations' recognition of Israel's Sovereign LORD, the exile had taken matters in the opposite direction and ruined Israel, and especially God's, reputation among the nations.

Before the restoration of national Israel can be accomplished (verses 33-38) the problem of divine profanation must be resolved through divine sanctification (verses 22-23) by bringing national Israel under the New Covenant (verses 24-32). This will reverse the nation's opinion about the nature of Israel's God through the worldwide regathering and unparalleled restoration of Israel and the Land. Anything less would only confirm Israel's God as a powerful local deity, but that He must be acknowledged by the nations as the only and true Sovereign (verse 23b). This requires a supernatural restoration physically and spiritually, which is initiated by a return to Israel's "own Land" (verse 24). This confirms that there can be no fulfillment of any of the prophetic promises of the past unless Israel is restored to her Promised Land. The next verses (25-27) describing Israel's national regeneration and restoration under the New Covenant, reveals that this spiritual fulfillment cannot take place apart from the physical return to the Land. Likewise, the inward renewal of the people in these verses results in outward renewal of the Land of Israel (verses 29-30).

It is also important to remember that the New Covenant was to be made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31) not with the Church. While the Church *partakes* of the spiritual blessings of this covenant through the Gentile inclusion made that "all of the families of the earth" would be blessed "in Israel" (Genesis 12:3; cf. Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:16-18) only Israel *possesses* the covenant and fulfills it. For this reason, the experience of the indwelling Spirit in the Church Age (Acts 2:4; 15:8-9) is not a replacement of Israel by the Church, but the token of promise made to the Jewish Remnant within the Church (Romans 11:1-5) alongside Gentiles who are in Israel's Messiah (and therefore share the spiritual aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant, Romans 4:16; 11:17-18; Galatians 3:7-9, 29) and the foreshadowing of both national Israel's and the nations' universal experience under the New Covenant in the Millennial Kingdom (Joel 2:28-32; cf. Psalm 22:27; Isaiah 11:9b/Habakkuk 2:14).

²⁶ Of the seventy-five occurrences of the term in the Old Testament thirty-one are found in Ezekiel. Of these uses by the prophet, twenty-one refer to treating as common things which are consecrated as holy such as "holy things" (7:21; 22:26; 42:20; 44:23), "holy places" (7:22, 24; 48:15), "the sanctuary" (7:22; 23:39; 25:3; 28:18; 44:7), "holy occasions" (usually Sabbaths) (20:13, 16, 21, 32 24; 22:8, 26; 23:18), and "holy position" (e.g., King of Tyre, 28:7). The remaining ten occurrences all refer to a profanation of the Lord's holy Name (13:19; 20:9, 14, 22, 39; 36:20-23; 39:7), the highest form of profanation.

²⁷ W.F. Lofthouse, "Ezekiel." *The Century Bible*. Edited by W.F. Adeney (Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, n.d.), p. 114.

The restoration of Israel takes place in stages, with an initial regathering from the nations and a return to the Land of Israel as the first stage (vs. 24), followed in verses 25-27 by a second stage. The first stage is physical: restoration to the Land, the second stage is spiritual: restoration to the Lord. These stages can again be distinguished in the next chapter in the process of restoration in the vision of the dry bones (37:1-14) and the reuniting of the Nation (37:15-28). This fulfillment can take place progressively through time with national spiritual regeneration (verses 25-27) and repentance (verse 31) taking place at the end of the Tribulation (cf. Rom. 11:25-27), which will result in the full and final regathering of Israel into the Land for the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 24:31/Mark 13:27).²⁸

The spiritual regeneration of Israel as the second stage of restoration is seen in verses 25-27. Pure water is sprinkled upon national Israel ritual cleansing at the start of the New Covenant so that they may “live in the Land I gave to your forefathers” (vs. 28). The nature of this spiritual renewal is both individual and national, as it is both cleansing from ceremonial defilement and a purging from idolatry.²⁹ To accomplish such a national purification requires a forensic act (implied by the use of the verb *tahar* in the Piel perfect), which means, “to declare ceremonially clean.” This creation of Israel as a ceremonially clean community is part of the vindication of God’s holy Name since this condition is necessary for the restoration of the Lord’s Presence to Israel. However, restoration to a state of ritual purity does not guarantee the maintenance of this condition, so an individual spiritual regeneration will be necessary to preserve the restoration in perpetuity. Verses 26-27 describe this spiritual regeneration as a radical change in the inner disposition by the removal of that which caused ritual defilement and the implantation of a new nature.³⁰ The theological expression of “new” (“new heart” and “new spirit”) is one of the more recognizable spiritual blessings of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33-34), chiefly because it is the blessing that has been available to the Church in this dispensation (Jn. 3:5-7; Tit. 3:5-6). The remainder of verse 26 reveals the change in national Israel from a hardened condition (“the heart of stone”) to one that is receptive to Messiah (“a heart of flesh”).³¹

²⁸ If this first regathering is in spiritual *unbelief*, then it would be expected to be a secular and political movement, such as is the modern Zionist movement that led to the establishment of the secular Jewish State. Too, the lack of a spiritual motive to return to the biblical Land would produce only a *partial* physical return from the Diaspora, that is, mostly among Jews in lands experiencing persecution and forced exile, as the majority of Jewish immigrants to Israel have experienced. This would leave the remainder of Jews outside the Land to experience the second regathering at the end of the Tribulation. However, even the limited extent of this first stage of regathering can be said to be geographically from “the four corners of the earth” in harmony with the worldwide pattern of prophetic return. The second regathering, then, which would follow a time of worldwide Jewish persecution in the Tribulation will result not only in Israel’s seeking deliverance physically but also spiritually in a time of national repentance (Luke 21:25-28). Therefore, just as the Jewish dispersion occurred in successive stages over time (722 B.C., 586 B.C., A.D. 70, A.D. 115, et. al), so the Jewish regathering can be seen to occur in stages modern and future (initially before the Tribulation (1897, 1948, 1967, et. al.) and finally at the end of the Tribulation).

²⁹ The people of Israel incurred corpse impurity (one of the highest degrees of impurity) through its defiling contacts and pagan influences outside the Land. Such was prophesied for the Nation as a result of covenantal violation and judgment through exile (Deuteronomy 4:27-28). According to this prophecy this condition would not improve until the Nation was “in distress ... in the latter days” and “returned to the Lord” (verse 30).

³⁰ This is depicted in the original Hebrew text by the use of a chiasmic arrangement (A:B:B:A pattern) in which the elements of divine activity and human change are emphasized: (A) “I will give” (B) “a new heart” (A) “a new spirit” (B) “I will put within you.”

³¹ The term “heart of stone” is a forcible imagery of the hardened condition of the will, the attributive genitive “stone” (Hebrew *even*) transferring its stony quality to the heart to render it obdurate, insensitive, and incapable of

This language symbolizes Israel's national repentance (Zech. 12:10-13:1; Rom. 11:25-26) and the bestowal of a new nature will qualifies the renewed Nation to live under the New Covenant. In addition, God's own [Holy] Spirit indwells the Nation individually and corporately (as it does the Church today) so that Israel will be enabled to live under the New Covenant (vs. 27b) and so that no future reversal of fortune will occur because of repeated acts of defilement.³² This new condition insures Israel's permanent residence in the Land and guarantee that God's Name will never again be profaned among the nations. This blessing of the New Covenant results in a re-establishment of Israel in its ancestral Land (vs. 28), fulfilling the promise in the Abrahamic Covenant that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would possess the Land "forever" as an "everlasting possession" (Genesis 13:15; 17:8; 48:4; Joshua 14:9; 1 Chronicles 28:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7; Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 37:14; 60:21; Jeremiah 7:7; 25:5). The verse closes with the covenant-oath formula (first stated in complete form in Leviticus 26:12): "you will be My people and I will be your God." This oath throughout the Old Testament defines and describes a relationship of obedience and fidelity between God and His people and is figuratively a type of wedding metaphor depicting the intimacy of the relationship promised for the New Covenant (Isa. 62:4).

With the physical implementation of the blessings of the New Covenant the establishment of National Israel in the Land demonstrates the LORD's universal sovereignty, not because the Land of Israel is part of the earth, but because gaining dominion over this place at the center of Satanic control through the Antichrist and the world's armies, demonstrates His putting down universal opposition (Rev. 19:20-20:2-3). For this reason Psalm 2:6 and Zechariah 14:9 conclude their depiction of the final battle with King Messiah as the universal sovereign. However, the reason the Land is at the center of this end time drama is because in the divine program it was destined to be the throne of Messiah and the focal point of divine rule over the earth (Rev. 21:24).

Necessary to Fulfill the Messianic Program (Rule as King in Zion)

While there is continuity between NC1 and NC2 because of the shared spiritual blessings by the remnants of Jews and Gentiles in the Church, when it comes to the issue of direct Messianic rule there is significant discontinuity (as the chart below illustrates):

action. By contrast, the term "heart of flesh" refers to the "new sensitive and responsive will," ready for obedient action.

³² The verb הלך "walk" (Heb. *halak*) has in view Israel living according to the legal expressions of God's will, while the verb שמר "keep" (Heb. *shamar*) indicates "keeping with observant care" or a "guarding with diligent preservation." Both terms imply the duty of covenant obedience expected of the renewed Nation.

Discontinuity in the Church and Israel in the New Covenant

NEW COVENANT (NC1)	NEW COVENANT (NC2)
Church Participates	National Israel Fulfills
National Israel Rejects Messiah	National Israel Accepts Messiah
Remnant of National Israel Receives Partial Blessings	Remnant of National Israel Receives Promised Blessings
Gentile Remnant included in Partial Blessings of New Covenant	National Israel Mediates to Gentiles Full Blessings of New Covenant
Land under Divine Discipline	Land under Divine Blessing
Part of National Israel Outside Land	All of National Israel in the Land
Partial Possession of Partial Land	Full Possession of Promised Land
Spiritual Temple and Spiritual Priesthood	Functioning Temple and Levitical Priesthood
Spiritual Temple Indwelt by Messiah	Physical Temple is Throne of Messiah
Provisional Atonement by Spiritual Confession	Provisional Atonement by Ritual Sacrifice
God's Name Profaned by the Nations	God's Name Glorified by the Nations

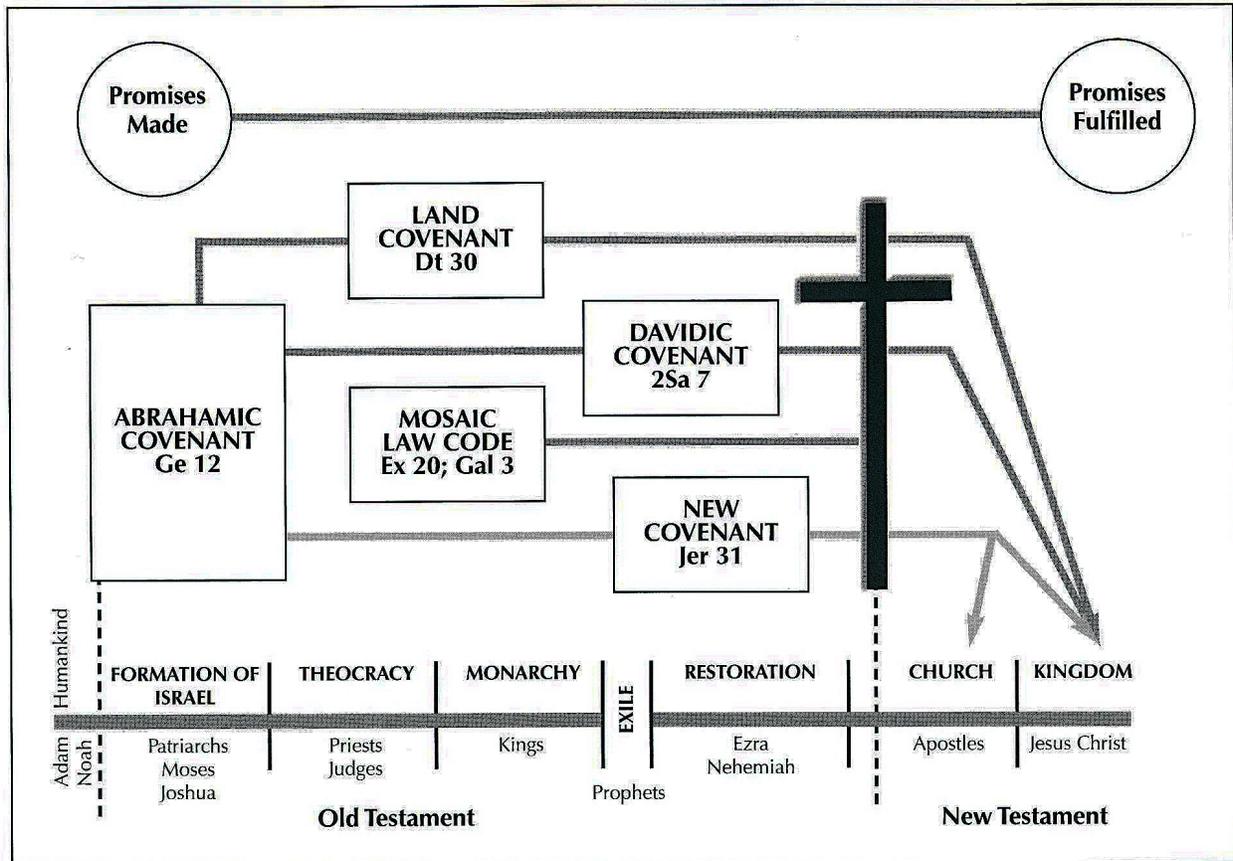
From the above chart it can be seen that national Israel's position in the Church Age (NC1) is rejected because of their rejection of Messiah while in the Kingdom (NC2) national Israel is accepted because it has accepted its Messiah. This discontinuity makes it impossible for the promised New Covenant blessings related to the Land, the Temple and priesthood (Jer. 33:17-26), and the Davidic rule to find literal fulfillment during the Church Age. It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage the New Covenant Perspective (shared in part by Progressive Dispensationalism) that Christ's session as Lord in heaven has fulfilled the promise of a seed of David (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:35-36) ruling Israel (Acts 2:30-36). However, it should be evident, as David Olander has stated, "to depart from this promise of the Davidic covenant in any way is to depart from the defined covenanted kingdom program God has established. God had made it very clear to David that his seed זרעוֹ (literally your *seed* masc. sing.) would be heir to the throne and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-13)."³³ The throne of David (and his descendants) is on earth and in Israel and therefore this can only be fulfilled literally by the Davidic Messiah physically returning to the Land of Israel and ruling over the Nation. Under the New Covenant this rule will be universal, but it will still be from a fixed point, a throne in Israel ("My kingdom") and within the Temple ("My house"), 1 Chr. 17:11-14. The Land under the New Covenant becomes the place of the Messianic government centered in Jerusalem (Jer. 3:17), to which all of the nations come to bring their wealth in tribute to the LORD at the Temple (Isa. 60:5-7, 10-14; Rev. 21:24).

³³ David Olander, "The Importance of the Davidic Covenant," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 10:31 (December 2006): 59.

This is affirmed with respect to the Messianic rule in Psalm 2:6: “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

Necessary to Fulfill the Explicit Provisions of the Unconditional Covenants

Under the New Covenant the provisions of the unconditional covenants will find fulfillment once and for all (see chart below). For this reason Isaiah declares, “Then all your people *will be* righteous; They will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified” (Isaiah 60:21). The provisions in these covenants are all Land-based and



Thomas Ice, Bible Prophecy Charts. Used by permission.

therefore *first* require national Israel’s regathering, return and restoration in the Land in order for fulfillment to take place. Even those non-Land-based provisions, such as spiritual regeneration, are to be enacted for the nation after it has been brought back to the Land. The nature of Israel’s New Covenant (see chart below) completes the national promises made in the Abrahamic, Land, and Davidic covenants that could not be fulfilled in Israel’s past history due to covenant violations and divine judgment (exile).

The Nature of Israel's New Covenant

"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 ..." Jer. 33:31 "I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days ..." Zech. 8:11

National Israel Regathered to Land	Isa. 11:11-12; Ezek. 36:24; 37:21, 25; Matt. 24:31
Nation and Land Boundaries Increased	Isa. 26:15; Ezek. 36:37-38; 47:13-48:34
Twelve Tribes Reunited as One Nation	Isa. 66:8; Ezek. 37:19-22
Rule by King Messiah (Davidic reign)	Jer. 23:5-6; 33:17; Ezek. 37:22a, 24; Zech. 9:10; 14:9
Idolatry, transgression, defilements removed	Ezek. 36:25; 37:23
National Israel Spiritually Regenerate	Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:14
No War, Covenant of Peace	Isa. 2:4; Ezek. 37:26; Zech. 9:10
Curse Removed	Zech. 14:11
Renewal of Nature and Harmony within Creation	Isa. 11:6-9; 27:6; 65:20-25; Zech. 8:12; Rom. 8:21
Israel Recognized by Nations as Blessed	Isa. 62:2; 66:18; Ezek. 36:23, 36; 37:28; Mal. 3:12
Jerusalem Re-Sanctified, Center of Earth	Isa. 2:3; 4:3-6; 65:18; Jer. 3:17; 33:9,16; Zech. 8:3-8
Nations Subservient to National Israel	Isa. 49:7; 60:5,10,12-16; 61:6; Zech. 8:22-23; Micah 4:2
Temple Rebuilt and Indwelt by Divine Presence	Isa. 2:2; 56:6; Ezek. 37:26-28; 40-48; 43:1-7; 48:35
Levitical Priesthood and Sacrificial System Restored	Isa. 60:7; 66:20-21 Jer. 33:18,22; Ezek. 44-45
Eternal (five-fold repetition of "forever")	Isa. 24:5; 61:8; Jer. 31:36, 40; 32:40; 50:5

The Land under the New Covenant becomes the place in which the divine drama comes to completion, including the end time Satanic assault on Jerusalem and final divine deliverance (Rev. 20:7-10). For this reason Lawrence Hoffman can say:

Throughout, he presents the Land as not simply one central idea among many that the Bible offers us, but another facet of *the* primary motif without which, he says, the entire biblical corpus cannot be comprehended accurately: "the Land as covenant" itself.]³⁴

The Restoration of the Land under the New Covenant

In the remaining chapters of Ezekiel's vision (47:1-48:35) the restoration of the Land in the under the New Covenant is given center stage. Topographical changes will have created the mountain of the house of the Lord with its sacred district and holy portion containing the Millennial Temple. From beneath the Temple there will spring forth a renewing river that

³⁴ Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ of Notre Dame Pr, 1986), 27.

transforms the formerly barren and unfruitful lands of the Judean lowlands and the Dead Sea region (47:1-12).³⁵ Briefer accounts of this prophetic event were made before Ezekiel's time by Joel (3:18) and after by Zechariah (14:8). The changes effected by this river of life, which produces "all kinds of trees" growing on each side of the Dead Sea, whose "fruit is for food and leaves for healing" serve as a constant witness throughout the Millennium to both national Israel and the nations that the New Covenant is a continual source of restoration blessing for the Land, as Isaiah's prophecy had stated: "In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout; and they will fill the whole world with fruit" (Isaiah 27:6).

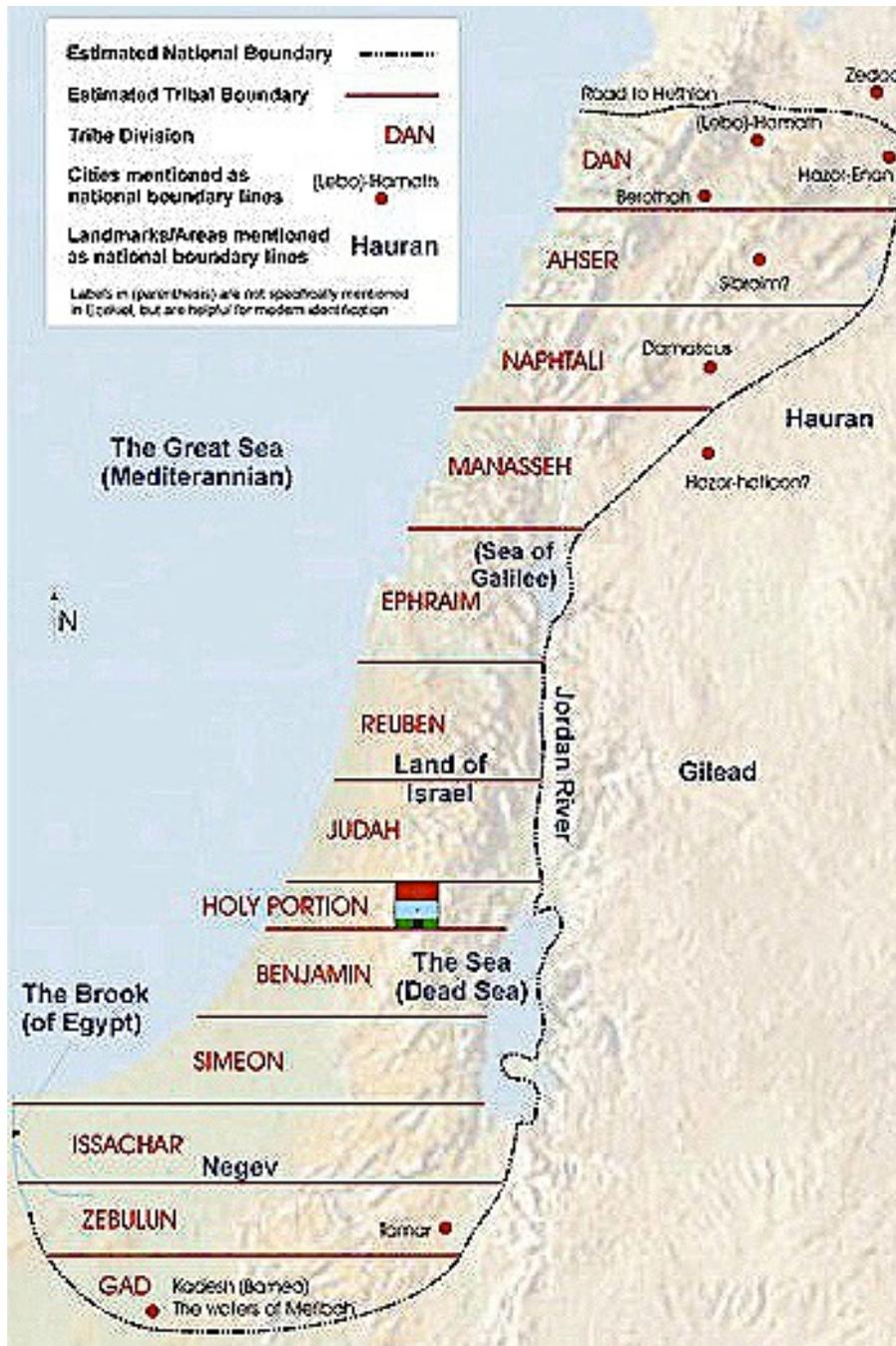
As an interesting aside, Tom Meyer sought to see if the sites given in Ezekiel's "prophetic geography" could be located within the modern Land. He found that if he measured between these sites using the royal cubit the first station is directly across from the Eastern Gate in the Kidron, the next station 1,000 cubits distant is exactly at the Gihon Spring, the next station another 1,000 cubits away is exactly at the junction of the Kidron and Ghenna, the next is exactly at the Kidron and Wadi Yasoul (sometimes called Wadi Azal (Zechariah 14:5) in the Silwan Village, and the final station is at the intersection of the Kidron and the first view of the southern end of the Mt. of Olives. At every station there is a natural intersection of the wadis with the river coming from the Temple, hence the increase in water level (Joel 3:18) flowing to the Dead Sea (47:10).³⁶ If correct, this provides additional evidence that the "prophetic geography" is to be literally fulfilled in the same place (today the modern State of Israel).

The Distribution of Land under the New Covenant (Ezekiel 47:13-23)

Under the New Covenant the Land will be distributed into twelve tribal divisions (verses 13-14). God had sworn, i.e., promised by oath (Ezekiel 20:5, 15, 23, 42; 36:7; 44:12; cf. Exodus 6:8; Nehemiah 9:15; Psalm 106:26) to Israel's forefathers the Land as "an inheritance" (verse 14), which was, as in the past, a defining feature of His covenant with His people (Deuteronomy 32:9). Therefore the historical covenants (Abrahamic, Land, and Davidic) all preserved this unconditional promise of the Land, not simply as a place of occupation, but as an inheritance (something passed on within the tribe to their descendants). Even though the tribal divisions were allocated, the promised boundaries given to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21) and reconfirmed to Moses (Numbers 34:1-12) never were completely realized. This time of fulfillment awaited the New Covenant (Ezek. 37:25). That the fulfillment is in this eschatological period can be seen from the fact that the tribal divisions in Ezekiel are *different* from that in the past (Joshua 11:23; 13:7-33; 14:1-19:51; 22:1-34; 23:4; cf. Judges 18:1-31), although the boundaries of the Millennial Land of Israel (47:15-20) generally follow the boundaries as originally given in the Abrahamic Covenant (see map below).

³⁵ Archaeological confirmation of a subterranean water source that has occasionally erupted on the Temple Mount in past history was given by Edward Robinson based on his discovery of the Fountain Ash-Shafa, whose waters came from a spring 80 feet below the Rock of the Dome. The same source of water is mentioned in the Mishnah (*Tamed* 1:1; *Middot* 1:6-9) and today is thought to be located not far from cistern # 30 (*Shakib Ka-it-Bey*) near the Western Wall.

³⁶ Correspondence with Tom Meyer, November



Boundaries and allotment of the Tribes in the Land in the Millennium³⁷
(Ezekiel 45:1-8; 47:13-48:35)

The Land delineated by these boundaries³⁸ will be distributed to the twelve tribes for their inheritance (Ezek. 48:21) but also for the alien (non-Israelite) who desires to settle permanently

³⁷ Chart may be found at www.paul.ab.net/template/IsraelLandDivisions.htm

³⁸ The northern boundary (verses 15-17) that will extend from the “Great Sea” (Mediterranean Sea) to the Euphrates River incorporates the modern countries of Lebanon and part of Syria. The eastern boundary (verse 18) will extend from the Euphrates River down to the southern end of the Sea of Galilee at its confluence with the Jordan River and

and have children in the Land. Under the Mosaic Law resident aliens were to be protected and allowed specific privileges among the native Israelites (cf. Leviticus 19:33-36; 24:22; Numbers 15:29; Deuteronomy 14:29; 26:11) based on the fact that Israel had also once been strangers in a strange land (Egypt). However, this depended on the alien submitting to the Law, since was to be “one [the same] statute for the Israelite and alien” (Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 21:12-13; 24:17; 27:19). This required resident aliens to have proselyte status (cf. Exodus 12:19; 16:29; Leviticus 17:12, 15; 18:26; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16; Ruth 1:16-17). Moreover, they were excluded from having any inheritance among the sons of Israel (Numbers 26:53-55). By contrast, in the Land under the New Covenant national Israel will treat resident aliens like those born in the Land allot them an inheritance among the twelve tribes (Ezek. 48:22-23). Moreover, there is no longer a condition of proselytism, since under the New Covenant Jews and Gentiles alike will begin the Millennium as believers indwelt by the Spirit.³⁹ Only under the New Covenant, when restoration conditions have been attained, universal peace has been attained, a national regeneration has occurred, the promised boundaries achieved, and the tribes can again be identified and allotted their inheritance, can Israel be expected to fulfill the responsibility toward residents from the nations.

The Division of the Land under the New Covenant (48:1-35)

The twelve tribes of Israel, having been regathered, re-identified, reunited, and restored to the Lord and to the Land will be re-distributed by tribes within the boundaries of the Land. The seven northern tribes will be separated from the five southern tribes by the holy portion upon the Millennial mountain which contains the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.⁴⁰

then down the Jordan Valley to the southern end of the “eastern sea” (Dead Sea). Incorporated within this boundary will be the present-day Golan Heights and portions of Lower Syria to Zedad (probably modern Sadad, about 25 miles north of Damascus). Its southern boundary (verse 19) will extend from the southern end of the Dead Sea southward and westward to the “brook of [Egypt]” (the Wadi el-Arish, cf. Numbers 34:5) and the Mediterranean Sea, incorporating the Negev and the “waters of Meribah Kadesh” (Kadesh Barnea, cf. Numbers 27:14). The western boundary (verse 20) is the Mediterranean Sea running along the shoreline from the Wadi el-Arish in the south to a point opposite Lebo Hamath (the modern town of Al-Labwah in the Bekka Valley) in the north.

³⁹ The fulfillment of this text can only take place under the New Covenant when all foreign nations are at peace with Israel and share faith in Israel’s God. Some Bible teachers attempt to employ it today against the modern State of Israel when the surrounding nations are at war with it. Citing this text they have disqualified the present generation of Israelis from a right to possess the Land on the grounds that the Palestinians living in the Land have not been treated as equals. However, this millennial obligation cannot be imposed on the Israel that has returned in unbelief and whose existence as a Nation is continually threatened. Even in this modern context it is necessary to distinguish between “aliens and strangers” who wish to live peacefully within the boundaries of the modern State under Israeli authority (such as the Israeli Arabs) and those who do not wish to live under Israeli rule but have a rival claim to the Land and have declared war against the Jewish State (such as those under the Palestinian Authority).

⁴⁰ Moving from the north to south these include Dan (verse 1), Asher (verse 2), Naphtali (verse 3), Manasseh (verse 4), Ephraim (verse 5), Reuben (verse 6), and Judah (verse 7). The inclusion of the tribe of Dan in the Millennial distribution (cf. 48:32) refutes the Patristic and popular view that this tribe was cursed and therefore excluded from the list of the 144,000 (Revelation 7:5-8) because the Antichrist came from this tribe. The Antichrist is Gentile, not Jewish, based on his origin in the revived Roman empire (Daniel 9:26-27; cf. 2:41-43) and the imagery of his “coming up out of the sea” (Revelation 13:1), his rise to power during the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24) and rule over the nations (Daniel 7:23-24; Revelation 11:2; 13:7), and his persecution of the Jewish people (Daniel 7:24; Matthew 24:16- Revelation 12:13 with 13:4, 7). Moreover, the list in Revelation 7 also omits the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, although they are understood to be included in the reference to the “tribe of Joseph” (Revelation 7:8; cf. Genesis 48:5, 13-20). Another explanation for the exclusion of the tribe of Dan is that it was guilty of idolatry (Leviticus 24:11; Judges 18; 1 Kings 12:28-29). However, all of the tribes were guilty of idolatry and the tribe of

This holy portion (verses 12-15) contains the Millennial Jerusalem in the southern division that will be laid out as a square of 4,500 cubits (7,875 feet) covering an area of 2.2 square miles (verse 16). The Millennial Jerusalem will have lands around it under the control of workers (who live in Jerusalem but who come from all of the tribes), which is designated for agricultural purposes in order to feed the working population (verses 18-19). This description of cultivation, production and consumption (cf. 36:9-11, 29-30, 34-36; 47:12) indicates that this is very much an earthly reality. The pietistic and allegorical mindset of the church fathers (most famously in Augustine) could not the concept of a literal Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:6) and cited against this Paul's words in Romans 14:17: "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." However, under the New Covenant where the curse has been removed, there is nothing carnal in this necessary activity, but its Land-based character counters the symbolic school's attempt to harmonize it with the heavenly New Jerusalem.

The Land-based Role of the Levitical Priesthood

Under Israel New Covenant, the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system will be renewed to function at the Messianic Temple and to reside in the Priest's Portion in the Land (Ezek. 48:9-14). Jeremiah 33:18 announces the permanency of this New Covenant priesthood and sacrificial system: "and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to prepare sacrifices continually." Other prophetic texts provide details of both the priestly duties and of the various sacrifices and of the atonement they render for the Temple furniture (Ezek. 43:20, 26) and for national Israel (Ezek. 45:15, 17, 20) and probably for the Gentile nations who come to Jerusalem to learn the ways of the LORD (Isa. 2:3) or make an annual ascent to Jerusalem to worship the LORD at the Millennial Temple, (possibly through a present offerings on behalf of their national entities) and to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Zech. 14:16-19). Isaiah 66:19-21 predicts that the priests and Levites will not only come from the tribe of Levi as required under the Mosaic Covenant, but also from believing Jews who were left in distant Gentile nations (vs. 19).⁴¹ Priestly emissaries from the Land will form an envoy and transport them to "My holy mountain Jerusalem" (vs. 20) where those selected for priestly service will apparently be trained in the sacrificial system (vs. 21).⁴² In addition, a choice piece of the Land will be designated as an holy allotment for the Zadokite priests who historically did not go astray as did the the Levites (Ezekiel 48:9-14).

The Land-based Mediatoral Blessings to the Gentile Nations

Under the New Covenant the blessings received by national Israel will be mediated to the Gentile nations (Isa. 2:3; Zech. 8:21-23, et. al). As a result the nations will gladly serve in the rebuilding of the Temple and resettlement of Israel in the Land. This is best exemplified in Isaiah 60:10-13: "The glory of Lebanon will come to you, The juniper, the box tree, and the cypress

Judah was particularly judged for the idolatrous defilements introduced by King Manasseh (2 Kings 23:26; 24:3). The best explanation for this omission seems to be in order to preserve a numerical symmetry.

⁴¹ This change in the law, like that for steps leading to the Altar (Ezek. 43:16-18; cf. Ex. 20:26) are further evidence that the functions described are in operation under the New Covenant not the old Mosaic legislation.

⁴² For a defense of this activity in the future New Covenant see Jerry Hullinger, "The Compatibility of the New Covenant and Future Animal Sacrifice," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 17:50 (Spring 2013): 47-64.

together, To beautify the place of My sanctuary; And I shall make the place of My feet glorious. “And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; And they will call you the city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated With no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation. “You will also suck the milk of nations, And will suck the breast of kings; Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Biblical Texts Affirming the Prophetic Promise of the Land in the New Covenant

The scope of this study cannot deal with the extensive Old Testament texts that treat the fulfillment of national Israel’s new Covenant. However, selected texts from this corpus will be considered, while concentrating on the New Testament where references and allusions to the Land under the New Covenant are few and more stringently debated.

Old Testament Texts Affirming the Prophetic Promise of the Land in the New Covenant

When we follow the history of Christian interpretation to those Old Testament texts and contexts treating the subject of the New Covenant we come to a long deserted field where the weeds of misunderstanding have grown tall for many centuries of the professing Christian Church. W.D. Davis, who has helped cultivate this crop, notes this history saying,

Beginning with the New Testament, and certainly since St. Augustine, Christianity in its major expressions has substituted for the holiness of place—The Land, Jerusalem, the Temple—the holiness of Christ. The Land—although called Holy in Christianity—is ultimately incidental in Christian affection and faith. Life “in Christ” replaces life “in The Land” as the highest blessing, so that the traditional Jewish doctrine of the unseverability of Land, people, and God is not upheld.⁴³

However, it is impossible to substitute or marginalize the Land in a study of the concept of the New Covenant because of the inseparable divine triad of the LORD, the People, and the Land. This union requires that the New Covenant cannot take place only between God and the Nation; the Land must be involved in this relationship and everything it entails since it belongs to the LORD and is the inheritance (Heb. *nahalah*) of national Israel. This foundational understanding for the New Covenant in the Old Testament has been noticed by Old Testament scholar Norman Habel:

Any new beginning with YHWH will include YHWH’s personal *nahalah*. This beginning will involve a “new planting” in the land and a “new heart” in the people of the land to re-establish the intimacy and purity of the original relationship. Any new order will involve all YHWH’s people, from the least to the greatest, knowing YHWH in a personal way that was once reserved for priests

⁴³ W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Pr, 1992), 131-132.

and prophets. And the greatest, under YHWH the shepherd, will know how to execute justice in the land and for the land.”⁴⁴

Therefore, any discussion of the New Covenant, which has its first referent and intended fulfillment with national Israel, must include how the Land of Israel is a part of this fulfillment.

Israel’s New Covenant in the Old Testament

The foremost fact about the New Covenant in the Old Testament is that it was made exclusively with national Israel and will be ultimately fulfilled only by national Israel. This is the essential truth missed by the Reformed school and others who seek to read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament and only see “Christians” in New Covenant passages. As one recovered New Covenant Perspective scholar confessed:

“I had once thought that Jesus came to unveil the New Covenant in what we call the New Testament and that it was entirely ‘Christian’. I had thought that Jewish people could accept their part of the book, but that this New Covenant was the Christian part. As with so much before, I now saw that the New Covenant was made *first* with the people of Israel, with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah, and it appears *first* in the Hebrew Scriptures.”⁴⁵

Once it is recognized that the blessings of the New Covenant described in the Old Testament concern national Israel in its Land, all of the details in these blessings become easy to interpret literally and make sense both in the context of Israel’s history and the messianic redemptive plan. It is amusing to read commentaries by scholars, who do not accept this definitive understanding of the New Covenant, ply their imagination and abuse New Testament passages in an effort to conjure a meaning their “New Covenant Perspective” for these texts!

Preparing National Israel in the Land for the New Covenant

The divine intervention that is instrumental in bringing Israel the New Covenant is centered in the LORD’s defense of the Land (Ezek. 38:18-39:6; Zech. 12:4, 8-9; 14:3, 12-15) in a “last days” invasion.⁴⁶ The consequent rescue of His People in the Land is part of a series of rescues that take place throughout the Tribulation and ultimately provoke Israel’s national repentance (Ezek. 39:22, 29; Zech. 12:8-13:1) resulting in its experiencing the *spiritual* blessings of the New Covenant, and secures the Land for the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (Ezek. 39:7-20, 23-28; Zech. 14:9-11) resulting in the realization of the *physical* blessings of the New Covenant.

Reunification of National Israel the Land (Ezekiel 37:21-25)

⁴⁴ Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 96.

⁴⁵ Rob Richards, *Has God Finished with Israel? – How do events in Israel fit in with Biblical Prophecy?* (Milton Keynes, England: Authentic Publishing, 2000), 80.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of these various interpretive views (including the author’s) on the God of Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39 see “Ezekiel” in Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, eds., *The Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary* (Harvest House, 2006), pp. 189-195.

Only under the New Covenant can there peacefully and securely be “one Land for two peoples” and only then when the peoples are “the sons of Israel.” Verse 21 identifies these two sticks with “the sons of Israel” that had been dispersed among the nations and will be regathered into their own Land. Verse 22 speaks of the historic division into “two kingdoms,” while verse 25 speaks of them and their Land in continuity with “Jacob” and “[their] fathers.” Both of these references could apply to none but the historic Jewish people descended from the Patriarchs to whom the Land of Israel was given. Clearly, it is the same Jewish tribes (and only those tribes) that had been divided that would be reunited. Judah was the larger of the two tribes that gave the Southern Kingdom its dynastic ruler (“the house of David”) and its name (1 Kings 12:22-24), just as the Northern Kingdom was called by its most prominent tribe from the house of Joseph, Ephraim (cf. Hosea 5:3, 5, 11-14).

The stages of regathering and reuniting are progressive and sequential with verses 21-22 being the physical regathering to Israel from the nations and verses 23-25 the spiritual regathering and reunification under the Davidic King in the Millennial Kingdom. Prophetically, this pictures Israel’s return to the Land and constitution again as a nation, followed by a national repentance and regeneration at the time of Christ’s second advent. The purpose and result of the national rebirth (cf. Isaiah 66:7-9; Zechariah 12:10-14; Romans 11:26) will be a spiritually cleansed Israel (cf. Zechariah 13:1-2; Romans 11:27) with a new nature incapable of repeating the sins of the past that brought against them the curses of the Mosaic Covenant (verse 23). Under the New Covenant they will finally fulfill their unique calling as people in special relationship to God (verse 24). The singular shepherding of the Davidic King in verses 24-25 has already been discussed in 34:23-24, however, verse 25 adds a familiar feature of the unconditional covenant with its promise of possession of the Land “forever” (Genesis 13:15-18; 2 Chronicles 20:7).

The word “forever” in verse is the first occurrence of a five-fold use of this term in verses 25-26, 28. The repetition of the term is meant to affirm in the strongest way the *eternality* of God’s renewal and restoration and requires an eschatological projection of the divine program beyond the Millennial Kingdom. The word “forever” translates the Hebrew term *’olam* which denotes “an indefinite period of time;” the duration often defined by the context. For example, in Exodus 21:6 it is used of an Israelite slave who has his ear pierced in token of his pledge to serve his master “forever.” In this case the duration of “forever” is until his service is terminated by his or his master’s death or by the year of Jubilee. However, David Friedman in his doctoral dissertation examined the use of more than 80 biblical uses of *’olam* and concluded that it expresses the time element of “as long as the present heaven and earth exists.”⁴⁷ This understanding of the term also takes into account duration for a period of time but reveals that the time is until this present world has run its course. On this basis the Land promise is extended to Israel for “all time” which in context would mean only until the end of the Millennial Kingdom, at which time the present earth will be destroyed and a new earth created (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

The Land as Sanctuary (Ezekiel 37:25-28)

The return of Israel to the Land and to the Lord is now climaxed by the return of the Lord to Israel and the Land (verses 26-28). After this return the New Covenant will be enacted with

⁴⁷ David Friedman, “Israel from the Eyes of a Messianic Jew Living in the Land,” *Kesher* 13 (Summer 2001): 17.

Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34) just as the old covenant had been put into effect when the Lord returned to Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:9-25). The New Covenant is here called both a “covenant of peace” (cf. Isaiah 54:10) and an “everlasting covenant” (cf. Isaiah 55:3; 61:8; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60-63). As in Ezekiel 34:25-30 where the list of Millennial blessings under the New Covenant is based on the terms of the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 26:4-13), here the promise of “peace” for the Land and the “perpetuity” of provision is drawn from Leviticus 26:4, 6. The first synonym “covenant of peace” (verse 26a) is appropriate to describe the restored conditions of the Millennial age since the Hebrew word *shalom* (“peace”) denotes a comprehensive peace (“security, welfare, health, prosperity, harmony”). The second “everlasting” or “eternal covenant” (verse 26b) describes the nature of God’s enduring promise and the inviolability of His commitment to Israel demonstrated by the historic covenants of the past that have now been fulfilled. The term “everlasting covenant” was used of the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:12-16), the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chronicles 16:17; Psalm 105:10), and the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 23:5; cf. Psalm 89:34-37; Jeremiah 33:21, 26) and the Sabbath and priestly service (Exodus 31:16; Leviticus 24:8; Numbers 18:19; cf. Jeremiah 33:17-26). As proof of the new relationship between God and Israel, verse 26d-28 announces the building of the Millennial Temple and the return of the Divine Presence to Israel. Both Hebrew terms for the “Sanctuary” are used in verses 26d-27a: “and I will set My Sanctuary (Hebrew, *miqdash*) in their midst forever. My dwelling place (Hebrew, *mishkan*) also will be over them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My Sanctuary (Hebrew, *miqdash*) is in their midst forever.”

New Testament Texts Affirming the Prophetic Promise of the Land in the New Covenant

When we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we remain historically and theologically in the Land of Israel with national Israelites, whether the focus is in the Land or from the Land to other nations. In every case, it is national Israelites taking the Gospel to the Gentiles under the administrative charge of the central apostolic authority in Jerusalem (Acts 15:4). Paul was under this authority (Acts 15:22-29; 21:18-19) and frequently reminded his foreign audience that he was a national Israelite (Acts 26:4), a Pharisee (Acts 26:5), and held to the national promise given by the Prophets, the same promise that was commonly held by all Israel (Acts 26:6-7). Moreover, he asserted he remained loyal to the Temple and the customs of national Israel (Acts 23:1; 24:12, 18; 25:8; cf. Acts 20:16; 21:26), and used the Law of Moses and the Prophets in his preaching to the nations, which he believed was consistent with the message of Jesus (Acts 28:23). Given these historical facts, it is strange to hear Gary Burge declare:

At no point do the earliest Christians view the Holy Land as a locus of divine activity to which the people of the Roman empire must be drawn. They do not promote the Holy Land either for the Jew or for the Christian as a vital aspect of faith. No Diaspora Jew or pagan Roman is converted and then reminded of the importance of the Holy Land. The early Christians possessed no territorial theology. Early Christian preaching is utterly *uninterested* in a Jewish eschatology devoted to the restoration of the land. The kingdom of Christ began in Judea and is historically anchored there but it is not tethered to a political realization of that kingdom in the Holy Land. Echoing the message of the Gospels, the praxis of the

Church betrays its theological commitments: Christians will find *in Christ* what Judaism had sought in the land.⁴⁸

“This hope is not redefined or clarified in the new era in a way that old promises are lost. It is the hope of the ages for the nation. It is the restoration of order with Israel having a central role. It is, to match the language of Acts 1:6 to which the terminology here alludes, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. What Gabriel promised to Mary, what Mary hoped for, and what Zacharias predicted of Jesus in Luke 1-2 is what Peter hoped for here. There is a kingdom hope that applies to Israel and that is explained in what is now called the OT. The existence of the church has not canceled that hope for Israel.”⁴⁹

The Land in the New Testament

We should not be surprised that there is no concerned mention for the Land in the New Testament because the time its events record, as well as the time of its writing, national Israel was still in the Land. It is true though that independent rule had been lost with the Roman invasion under Pompey (63 B.C.), and this concern is stated in the disciples’ question to the Lord concerning “restoring the *kingdom* to Israel” (Acts 1:6). However, restoration to the Land was not at issue since Jesus entire ministry was Land-based and the first church was centered in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12, 15; 2:14, 46; 3:1, 11; 4:27; 5:12, 16, 22, 28, 42; 6:7; 7:58; 8:1; 13:13; 15:4). The Lord’s commission in Acts 1:8 was certainly to take His witness to “the remotest parts of the earth,” but it was to begin in the capital city of “Jerusalem” and continue to the whole Land of Israel (“Judea and Samaria”). Even the Book of Revelation, though written to diaspora communities after the Roman destruction of the Temple, appears to have its prophetic events centered in the Land.⁵⁰ Before the Temple’s destruction, the diaspora communities felt connected to the Land via their contributions to the Temple, and it is only after the Hadrianic ban on Jews Jerusalem after the second Jewish revolt that exile (*galut*) from the Land becomes a voiced concern. This, of course, was well after the orthodox New Testament canon had been completed. Taking this into account, we should not expect the epistolary concern to be Israel’s restoration, but the church’s relationship. Moreover, the Bible of the early church already offered a complete manual on the subject of the Land and its future restoration. S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. makes this point when he writes:

What about the land promises? They are not mentioned in the NT. Are they, therefore, canceled?” In my opinion the apostles and the early church would have regarded the question as singularly strange, if not perverse. To them the Scriptures consisted of our OT, and they considered the Scriptures to be living and valid as

⁴⁸ Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land: the New Testament Challenge to* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 59.

⁴⁹ Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend and general editors, *A Case for Premillennialism: a New Consensus* (Chicago: Moody Pr, 1992), 189.

⁵⁰ In Revelation 11 the setting is Jerusalem as there is mention of the Temple (vs.1) and its desecration (vs.2), the assault on the Two Witnesses in “the great city” (vs. 8), and earthquake in the same city (again in 16:19), in chapter 12 Satan focuses his persecution on national Israel (vs. 13), the reference point for the attack of the “kings from the east” seems to be Israel (16:12), and Christ’s advent and enthronement (chapter 19-20) appear to be in Jerusalem, as Rev. 20:9 implies with its reference to “the beloved city” and the comparable Old Testament prophetic texts (e.g., Zechariah 12-14) indicate.

they wrote and transmitted the NT literature. The apostles used the Scriptures as if they were living, vital oracles of the living God, applicable to them in their time. And these same Scriptures were filled with promises regarding the land and an earthly kingdom. On what basis should the Abrahamic promises be divided into those to be fulfilled and those to remain unfulfilled? Finally, there is no need to repeat what is copiously spread over the pages of the Scriptures. There seems to be lurking behind the demand a false principle, namely, that we should not give heed to the OT unless its content is repeated in the New.⁵¹

It is not that these Jewish leaders of the church did not have this concern, for this had been voiced directly to Messiah after the resurrection as their primary concern (Acts 1:6). However, they understood from that the Messiah's response on that occasion that national restoration (with its Land-based component) was not the immediate goal of the NC (Acts 1:8), but it was its ultimate goal, as the Jerusalem Council made clear in their citation of Amos 9:12 and allusions to other texts (Deut. 28:10; Isaiah 63:19; Jeremiah 14:9; Daniel 9:19) in Acts 15: 15-18. When the gospels and the epistles were penned, this was already a settled issue with the Apostles and the believing Jewish community. The spiritual inclusion of the Gentile remnant along with the Jewish Remnant during the church age would lead to the complete realization of the NC for Israel and the nations with the return of Messiah. Paul recognized this in Romans 11:25 in his timing text on the duration of national Israel's judicial hardening "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." Therefore, the concern of church formation including the Jewish and Gentile elements was the primary concern of the Apostles. Yet, this necessary shift in focus should not be taken to imply that they had abandoned these hopes. On the contrary, their Bible was the OT and the NC contexts from which they formed their understanding of the present messianic program had this focus. As has been noted numerous times, there was no need to reteach what was already well understood (the NC promises to national Israel), but to instruct on what was new (the realization of the spiritual blessings to the Gentiles in the NC).

The restoration promises made to national Israel require a future fulfillment *in the same manner* as the redemptive promises have found past fulfillment. As the Messiah's first advent was originally directed to national Israel (Matthew 15:24), and was accomplished literally in terms of Israelite redemptive expectation (Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:26), so the Messiah's second advent will fulfill the prophetic expectation of Israelite restoration (Acts 1:6; Romans 11:26-27; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:3-12; Revelation 19:11-20:9). If this was to be understood otherwise, why did Jesus in the Olivet Discourse and Peter in Acts (3:19-21) project its fulfillment to the time of the Second Advent? How was "the times of the Gentiles" "fulfilled" (concluded), and Israel's fortunes restored? The only way to harmonize these discrepancies is to reinterpret historic fulfillment in terms different from the Old Testament prophets. This is the new hermeneutic employed by those evangelicals who have championed the anti-Zionist agenda:

Matthew 5:5

Jesus' words here in Hebrew (יִרְשׁוּ־אֶרֶץ) "they shall inherit the Land" would have been recognized by all who heard them as one of the most familiar promises of the Old Testament (cf.

⁵¹ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Evidence from Romans 9-11" in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*. Eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 222-23.

Ex. 32:13; Num. 33:54; Deut. 1:38; 12:10; 19:14; Psa. 25:13; 37:9; 69:36; Isa. 49:8; 57:13; 65:9). This phrase used by the Lord has a parallel usage in one Israel's most memorable psalms, Psalm 37: "the humble will inherit the land" (vs. 11), "those blessed by Him will inherit the Land" (vs. 22), "the righteous will inherit the Land" (vs. 29).⁵² Jesus "Sermon on the Mount" concerns "the kingdom of heaven" (i.e., the coming theocratic kingdom, Matt. 4:17; cf. 3:2), and this reference to the Land of Israel (veiled by our English translations of γῆς as "earth"), holds out the promise of restoration in the Land under the New Covenant. Though the commentators recognize this, their theological supposition of transformation and replacement condition their acceptance of its intent:

The "earth" (τὴν γῆν) originally referred to the land of Israel, ie, what was promised to the Jews beginning with the Abrahamic covenant (cf Gen 13:15). But in the present context of messianic fulfillment it connotes the regenerated earth (19:28; cf Rom 4:13, where κόσμος, "world," replaces γῆ), promised by the eschatological passages in the prophets (eg, Isa 65–66).⁵³

The Hebrew word underlying πραεῖς ("meek, gentle") is עָנָוִים ("humble, pious," but also "afflicted"). This term occurs in Isaiah 61:1 (where the LXX translates it as πτωχοί, "poor") and with reference to inheriting the Land in verse 7, where the LXX translates with a parallel to Matthew 5:5: κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν, "they will inherit the Land." If this text was also in the mind of our Lord (cf. His use of it to credential His messianic identity in Lk. 4:17-21 and 7:22), then there is clearly a New Covenant restoration context in view. Isaiah 61:8 speaks of a future "everlasting covenant" made with Israel in the Millennial Kingdom where those who are in Zion are called "oaks of righteousness" (vs. 3) and "priests of the LORD" and "ministers of our God" (vs. 6), and will trade their shame and humiliation (caused by the nations) for a "double portion in their Land," in which the nations will now enrich (vs. 7) and divine "blessing" (vs. 9). Based on these biblical references, there is no evidence that Jesus intended His words in Matthew 5:5 to mean anything other than what had been promised in the coming kingdom. The commentator's supposition that Paul made an intentional theological change from Land (γῆ) to world (κόσμος) is incorrect. The original promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 extends the covenantal blessings through national Israel to "all the families of the earth." The word "earth" is hDaSdōmD'h, a term that literally means "ground," but from its reference in Genesis to the "cursed ground" it indicates the fallen world (Gen. 3:17; cf. Rom. 8:20), whose condition will only be reversed when national Israel comes under the Millennial New Covenant (NC2) with a physical and spiritual renewal of men and nature (and nations).⁵⁴ This original idea has not been lost to all

⁵² Psalm 37 is an alphabetic acrostic psalm written to encourage memorization and was likely well known by most Jews in the time of Jesus. The Qumran community revered Ps 37 and saw themselves as those about to experience the vindication that would come with messianic fulfillment (4QpPs 37). As a wisdom psalm of King David, employing proverbial statements to teach trust in the LORD, it has a comparable theme and style to the Sermon on the Mount.

⁵³ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*. Word Biblical Commentary. 33A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 93.

⁵⁴ See Keil and Delitzsch F., *Genesis*. Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996): "The blessing of Abraham was once more to unite the divided families, and change the curse, pronounced upon the ground on account of sin, into a blessing for the whole human race. This concluding word comprehends all nations and times, and condenses, as *Baumgarten* has said, the whole fulness of the divine counsel for the salvation of men into the call of Abram."

commentators as the comments of James D.G. Dunn (in the same series as the former commentator) who calls this “a most nationalistic formulation” reveals:

That Abraham should be “heir of the world” might seem an odd rendering of the promises of Gen 12:2–3 and 15:5, even in their subsequent form (17:4; 18:18; 22:17–18). But in fact this was how the promise to Abraham was regularly understood. Indeed it had become almost a commonplace of Jewish teaching that the covenant promised that Abraham’s seed would “inherit the earth.” It is not by accident that Paul takes up this more grandiose form of the promise—the promise to Abraham or his seed (we might say “through his seed”) that he should inherit the world. For the promise thus interpreted was fundamental to Israel’s self-consciousness as God’s covenant people: it was the reason why God had chosen them in the first place from among all the other nations of the earth, the justification for holding themselves distinct from the other nations, and the comforting hope that made their current national humiliation endurable.⁵⁵

Matthew 8:11/Luke 13:29

This is one of several texts that relate to a pivotal event after Messiah has returned to the Land and assumed sovereignty as theocratic King. The text reads: “And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven/God” (Matt. 8:11; Lk. 13:29). The event is known as the Messianic Banquet, which the Lord also alludes to in his words to His disciples at the Last (Passover) Supper (see comments below for the explanation of the eschatological meal and the allusion to Isaiah 25:6-9 in Matthew 26:29/Mark 14:25). In that passage the focus is on the disciples participation with the Lord at this meal, whereas in this text the focus is on “many” who will come from “the east and west” to share in the meal with the Nation’s founding fathers, the Patriarchs. Isaiah 25:6 also says that this banquet will be for “all peoples,” in contrast to the sectarian Qumran text, based on Isaiah 25:6 and instructing its separatist community on the preparation for the eschatological event, that says only “the men of renown” (probably those of their sect) would be invited. Under Israel’s New Covenant, those from national Israel will join together with those from the nations (as they did in the Church Age), but also with the resurrected Old Testament saints (and probably the resurrected Church Age and Tribulation saints) in Jerusalem to celebrate with the Messianic King at the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom. As will be seen below, Matthew 26 also contains an allusion to this Messianic Banquet, but without reference to the Gentiles. However, the previous context (Matthew 25) describes the separation of the righteous Gentiles among the nations and with the understanding of “many” in this text and “many peoples” in Isaiah 25:6, the basis for this inclusion was established.

Matthew 19:28

Unique to Matthew, likely because his gospel was directed to the believing Jewish community, is this account of shared rule over national Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. The text reads: “And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones,

⁵⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*. Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), p. 233.

judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The term τῆ παλιγγενεσία (“the Regeneration”) is a synonym for the Kingdom Age, also known as the Era of Redemption, Time of the Restoration, Messianic Era, and Day of the LORD. Gundry ascribes this term to: "Israel's renewal when God fully establishes his kingdom on earth.⁵⁶ This term complements the prophetic concept of eschatological renewal in the restoration which we saw in Ezekiel 36:24-38, and which also occupied the prophetic message of Isaiah (e.g., 49:5-13; 56:1-8; 60:1-22; 66:18-24).⁵⁷ The same idea of a renewal of both the Land and the people of Israel is found in the apocalyptic literature (e.g., Tobit 13:16-17; 14:5-6; Jubilees 1:15-17, 26-28; 1QM 2:2-7).

Jesus' promise to the Twelve “who have followed” Him (which would exclude Judas Iscariot, Jn. 6:70-71, but include Matthias, Acts 1:21-22, 26) is delegated oversight of the 12 Tribes of national Israel in His coming administration. Once the Land is brought under the blessings of the New Covenant, which includes the topographical changes in the Jerusalem area (Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8, 10) occupation of the original territorial boundaries and the allotment of the tribes within these boundaries (Ezekiel 47-48), the resurrected Twelve will function as New Covenant administrators, possibly in a role like that of Moses' 70 elders who represented the Nation and mediator of Moses' commandments to their respective tribes (Ex. 19:7) and accompanied Moses' into the Presence of the LORD on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:1, 9). Similarly, the Twelve, who were closest to the Lord in the days of His flesh, will have privileged access to Him and will represent (and possibly reinforce) His will to the tribes. Furthermore, in this passage, the disciples are encouraged to look forward to sharing an earthly rule with Jesus as the messianic King: "when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."⁵⁸ Therefore, if the disciples and the early Jewish-Christian community were awaiting the imminent arrival of the messianic Kingdom, as was their stated goal (Acts 1:6), they would have originally remained in Jerusalem, since it was to Jerusalem that he was expected to return (cf. Zechariah 14:4) and from which his rule, and theirs, would begin (Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 14:9, 16-17).⁵⁹

Matthew 25:31-46

The New Covenant was designed to include the redeemed Gentile nations in fulfillment of this provision of blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3). After the installation of the Messianic King on His throne within the rebuilt Temple, one of His functions will be to “judge

⁵⁶Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Arts*, p. 392.

⁵⁷ The term in its New Testament usage and context clearly indicates an era yet future, cf. *TDNT*, s.v.

"παλιγγενεσία," by Friedrich Buschel (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976) 1: 686-689, and F. W. Burnett, "Palingenesia in Matt. 19:28: A Window on the Matthean Community?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 17 (February, 1983): 60-72.

⁵⁸ The role of the disciples would be governors functioning as tribal judges (cf. II Kings 15:5; Psalm 2:10; Isaiah 1:26), similar to the traditional role of the phylarchs, the princes of the twelve tribes, who would rule over Israel in the period of the restoration as depicted at Qumran (e.g., 1QM 3:3; 5:1-2), and the apocalyptic literature (e.g. Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs - Testament of Judah 25:1-2; Testament of Benjamin 10:7), cf. William Horbury, "The Twelve and the Phylarchs," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 503-527, esp. pp. 512, 524.

⁵⁹ While the early Jewish-Christian community's expectation of Israel's restoration was valid, their remaining at Jerusalem was invalid. In Acts 1:6 when they expect the restoration from Jesus after the resurrection, they are told by him (verse 7) that it awaits the predetermined time of God, and that they, rather, are to spread the news about Messiah beginning from Jerusalem, but extending all over the empire (vs. 8).

between the nations” (Isa. 2:4a). His first order of judgment with the nations will be to separate the unregenerate element that failed the test of faith with respect to their treatment of the believing national remnant (“My brethren”) in the Land (vss. 40, 45) that suffered dispersion in the Land because of the desecration of the Tribulation Temple by the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15-25; cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 11:2). The righteous Gentiles who demonstrated their faith at the cost of their lives by caring for Jewish Tribulation saints who will be a special target of Satan and the Antichrist (Rev. 12:13-17; 13:10) will share in national Israel’s blessings of the New Covenant in the Kingdom (vs. 34). Interestingly, Rashi held that the future allowance of Gentile inheritance among national Israel in the Kingdom Age (Ezek. 47:23) would be based on the foreigner demonstrating that he had “embraced Judaism,” not when it was convenient and advantageous, but while Israel was in exile. The reasoning behind this is that if the Gentile had converted to Israel’s God (i.e., identified with Israel) during the time of its suffering shame among the nations, then it had merited the right to share its inheritance after it had been restored. Only in this way could their conversion be demonstrated as genuine.⁶⁰

Matthew 26:29/Mark 14:25

At the Last (Passover) Supper the Lord assured His disciples that He would return after the Intercalation (“from now on until that day”) to celebrate in a new way in the Millennial Kingdom (referred to as “My Father’s kingdom” in Matthew and “the kingdom of God” in Mark). The Old Testament text Jesus has in mind is Isaiah 25:6-9 which describes the messianic banquet that inaugurates Messiah’s rule after the conclusion of the final campaign of the battle of Armageddon (Zech. 12:2-9; 14:2-9, 12-15; Rev. 19:11-21). The text reads: “And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, *and* refined, aged wine. And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.”

This victory celebration will follow the national repentance of Israel, its ritual purification and regeneration in the Land (Zech. 12:10-13:2; Ezek. 36:22-27) and the removal of the curse and will be the first official act as Messianic King that initiates His New Covenant relationship with national Israel as His People and He as their God (Ezek. 36:28). It seems that just as the Last Supper was the last intimate association with His disciples, so this “supper” will be the first intimate association as they “inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34)⁶¹, which they had expected to take place in the Land after the resurrection (Acts 1:6) and now is finally fulfilled.

A recent study on this topic, and especially its appropriation by Jesus with respect to His

⁶⁰ Other rabbis contend they do not get an inheritance only the benefit of atonement and the right of burial in the Land. For discussions pro and con on this issue see Eisemann, p. 747; cf. Breuer, p. 431.

⁶¹ The thought here is that the Messianic Kingdom was part of the eternal redemptive plan and that righteous Gentiles will be included in it with national Israel, which in this context has already received salvation (Rom. 11:26) and so is not included in this judgment reserved for the Gentile nations.

eschatological promise to His disciples, provides insight into the importance of this pivotal event in the Land prior to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom under the New Covenant:

The prophets of the Hebrew Bible frequently describe a coming age of prosperity in terms of eating and drinking. The event is called an “eschatological banquet” in scholarly literature, whether this is an inaugural meal at the beginning of a future age (Isa 25:6–8) or an ongoing Edenic feast in an idealized age (Isa 32:15–20, Ezek 34:25–31, Ps 23:1–5). That the eschatological age will be inaugurated by a victory banquet is found initially in Isa 25:6–8. Isaiah 25:6–8 describes the eschatological age as beginning when the Lord himself deals decisively with the enemy of humanity (death).⁶²

Acts 1:6-7; 3:19-21

The disciples still believed Jesus was “the Restorer of Israel’s Kingdom” at the time of His ascension (Acts 1:6). This statement is post-resurrection and after the disciples had received understanding from the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26; 20:22). Their question to Jesus about the time for Israel’s national restoration assumes they believed the promised New Covenant and its attendant blessings were to be expected after the completion of the redemptive work of Messiah. The Lord’s reply to this does not appear to deny the truth of their expectation, only the timing of its fulfillment. Gary Burge disputes this and contends that:

“Jesus’ correction of the apostles (“It is not for you to know the times or periods...”) should not be taken to mean that Jesus acknowledges the old Jewish worldview and that its timing is now hidden from the apostles. Instead Jesus is acknowledging their incomprehension. He in effect says, “Yes I will restore Israel—but in a way you cannot imagine.”⁶³

However, the problem was not an unexpected fulfillment, but a fulfillment at an unexpected time, the time of the Church Age in which the full blessings of the New Covenant to national Israel would be postponed until the Second Advent and the partial spiritual blessings would be equally experienced by both Jew and Gentile alike. However, the concept of restoration taught by Jesus and repeated by His disciples was consistent with the view of the Prophets and non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers.⁶⁴ Thus, Sanders, after surveying the Jewish literature relevant to this period concluded: “the hope that seems to have been most often repeated was that the restoration of the people of Israel ... the kingdom expected by Jesus ... is like the present

⁶² Phillip J. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet in the Synoptic Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), p. 43.

⁶³ Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land: the New Testament Challenge to* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 61.

⁶⁴ This concept was of an earthly messianic reign preceding the eternal state, sometimes of a thousand years duration, as at Revelation 20:4, but also of varying length, cf. J. W. Bailey, “The Temporary Messianic Reign in the Literature of Early Judaism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53 (July, 1934): 170-187. This literal hope of restoration was even shared by Philo, though accustomed to allegorization of Jewish religious beliefs, nevertheless could write: “the cities that now lay in ruins will be cities once more,” *De Praemiis et Poenis*, p. 168. For the documentation of this view of an eschatological earthly kingdom at Qumran cf. Shemaryahu Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), p. 300ff.

world - it has a king, leaders, a temple, and twelve tribes."⁶⁵

Peter affirms this in Acts 3:18-21 revealing that he continued to have his original understanding of national restoration under the New Covenant in the Millennial Kingdom. The restoration terminology he employed in these verses, predicated upon national Israel's reveals the hope of New Covenant fulfillment in the national Land. The "times of refreshing" are said by Peter to "come from the presence of the Lord" (vs. 19). This may imply the geographical enthronement of the Glorified Messiah within the eschatological Temple in the Millennial Jerusalem (cf. Jeremiah 3:17; Ezekiel 37:27; 43:7; 48:35). The sequence of events spoken of by Peter in verses 19-21 are characteristic of the national restoration promised to Israel: national repentance (vs. 19a; cf. Zechariah 12:10-14; Ezekiel 37:11-14; Isaiah 59:20-21/Romans 11:25), divine forgiveness and national cleansing (vs. 19b; cf. Ezekiel 36:25-29; Zechariah 13:1; Romans 11:26-27), the return of *Israel's* Messiah (N.B. "appointed for you") to effect its restoration (vss. 20-21; cf. Romans 11:12, 15), and the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom (vs. 21; cf. Isaiah 11:1-9; 65:17-25).

That this hope was a controlling factor in the disciples' presence in Jerusalem may be implied by the central place this hope occupies in their proclamation of repentance to the Jerusalemites (Acts 3:19-21). In this passage, the very terms used to express the promise are drawn from the prophetic message concerning Israel's future restored Kingdom, which almost certainly derived its source directly from Jesus own teaching in Matthew 19:28 (cf. Luke 22:30), and Acts 1:6.⁶⁶

Romans 11:25-27

This text defines Israel as ethnic and national Israel whose "salvation" was historically defined in connection with restoration, including a return to the Land. As an Israelite schooled in the restoration promises, he could not have envisioned this salvation as monolithic, but in view of the full-orbed restoration promise. The supporting citation on this restoration (salvation) event is drawn the Land-based context of Isaiah 59:20-21 which in vs. 26 clearly states that Zion (Jerusalem) is the point of origin for Israel's Savior/Deliverer. If we do not isolate chapter 58, but view it in its NC/millennial context of chapters 56-60, we will see the frequent mention of restoration to the Land and Zion. This context also has a particular focus on NC blessings bring extended to the Gentiles in the Millennium:

⁶⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 87, 103.

⁶⁶ The terms in Acts 3:20-21 are drawn from the language of the prophetic discourses. The phrase in verse 20, καιροι ἀναψύξεω is parallel with the phrase χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεω in verse 21. The former use of ἀνάψυσις is attested in the LXX only in Exodus 8:15 [Heb. 8:11] where it must have the sense of "relief," "respite," following the MT's נְחִיָּה. The idea, then, is of a "relief" from Gentile oppression through the deliverance from Gentile domination accompanying the advent of the Messiah (cf. Zechariah 12-14). This domination was considered a judgment from God for past apostasy (cf. Deuteronomy 28:36, 47-50) that would find a reversal with Israel's restoration (cf. Isaiah 11: 11-12, cf. Luke 21:24; Romans 11:25). The latter use of ἀποκαταστάσεω is identical to Acts 1:6 of the "restoration" or "establishment" of Israel's Kingdom, and parallel in sense to παλιγγενεσία ("renewal, regeneration") in Matthew 19:28. The prophetic hope here is that the restoration of Israel's blessings - politically and spiritually - would be conditioned upon repentance, which in turn would bring the Messiah to fulfill the promise of the messianic age. Note also that Acts 3:19-21 qualifies this eschatological age with restoration motifs: καιροι ἀναψύξεω ("times of refreshing") and χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεω" πάντων ("the times of the restoration of all things"), clearly stating that this period yet to come was predicted by the all the writing Prophets of Israel (πᾶτων ἁγίων αὐτοῦ' προφητῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος).

“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from His people ... Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And holds fast My covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (Isaiah 56:3–7). The next verse adds the theme of national regathering: “The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “Yet *others* I will gather to them, to those *already* gathered” (Isaiah 56:8).

The focus shifts in chapter 57 to the obdurate spiritual condition of national Israel that acts as an impediment to national restoration, but the Land-based and Temple-based promise remains: “... but he who takes refuge in Me shall inherit the land, And shall possess My holy mountain” (vs.13). This obstacle will one day be removed: “And it shall be said, “Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove *every* obstacle out of the way of My people” (vs.14), for the LORD declares “I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry” (vs.16). This forms the basis for Paul’s understanding of a determined time for national Israel’s hardening (and Gentile inclusion) during the church age and the time for its national “salvation” and restoration in Romans 11:25-26. Moving now to Chapter 58 returns to the obstacles that have prevented restoration and which characterized the hardening of national Israel observed by Paul in vs. 25.

Yet, here, too, the thought of national restoration is included with an emphasis on national repentance: “Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness” (vss. 8–9). This spiritual renewal leads to physical rebuilding in the Land: ““And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell” (vs.12). That this is indeed the promise of the Land Covenant made with the fathers is declared in verse 14: “Then you will take delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” The “heritage of Jacob (Israel)” is the Land, as other texts make clear: “And He gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His people” (Psalms 135:12; cf. Ps. 136:21-22). The national repentance and restoration of the “tribes of God’s heritage” is elaborated upon in Isaiah 63 in the context of national judicial hardening (vs. 17), the Tribulation (“day of vengeance” vs.4) and the Revelation of Messiah (vss. 1-6): “Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation; Where are Thy zeal and Thy mighty deeds? The stirrings of Thy heart and Thy compassion are restrained toward me. For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, And Israel does not recognize us. Thou, O LORD, art our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name. Why, O LORD, dost Thou cause us to stray from Thy ways, And harden our heart from fearing Thee? Return for the sake of Thy servants, the tribes of Thy heritage. Thy holy people possessed Thy sanctuary for a little while, Our adversaries have trodden *it* down. We have become *like* those over whom Thou hast never ruled, *Like* those who were not called by Thy name. Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens *and* come down, That the mountains might quake at Thy presence — As fire kindles the brushwood, *as* fire causes water to

boil — To make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, *That* the nations may tremble at Thy presence!” (Isaiah 63:15–64:2) The focus of the context, however, is the desecration of the Temple that calls for the promise of restoration (63:15, 18, 64:10-12).

Now we come to Isaiah 59, which served as the source for Paul’s citation concerning national Israel’s Savior/Deliverer. Building on the previous chapters mixed view of the hardened condition of Israel and the hope of eventual restoration from that condition, this text opens with a description of Israel’s condition (vss. 1-8) and moves to a confession of its condition (vss. 9-15b). This leads to divine intervention and the advent of a Savior culminating in Israel’s salvation (vss. 15c-21). It is the last words of this text from which Paul drew his promise of Israel’s national salvation/restoration: “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD” (vs. 20). Setting aside the issue of Paul’s directional change of the Savior/Deliver with respect to Zion (“out of” rather than “to”) and Jacob (“from” rather than “in”), the point is that Zion (Jerusalem) and “Jacob” (Israel) is the place where the salvation/deliverance is centered.

Steve Sullivan⁶⁷ summarizes scholarly views explaining the shift in Paul’s citation of Isaiah 59:20 in vs. 26:

Paul supports his statement that “all Israel will be saved”⁶⁸ by citing the conflation of Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9.⁶⁹ For the most part Paul quotes each text in the form that is identical with the LXX Isaiah.⁷⁰ The major textual dispute, which has brought out the most comments, is the apparent change from ἐνεκεν Σιών (LXX)⁷¹ to ἐκ Σιών in Romans 9:26. Though it is not possible to know

⁶⁷ This quote and accompanying documentation is from the unpublished (and at the time of this writing, yet to be submitted) dissertation by Stephen P. Sullivan, “Text and Context: The Use of the Isaianic New Exodus in Romans 9-11.” Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Wales Trinity St. David, 2014.

⁶⁸ Scott, “‘And Then All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Rom 11:26),” 519-24 demonstrates the usage of σόζω in Romans 9-11 has the background of the Old Testament restoration.

⁶⁹ Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, vol. 74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 170 states that the conflation of Isa 59:20-21 and 27:9 “seems more likely that Paul has appropriated a traditional proof text from either the Jewish synagogue . . . or Jewish Christian apologetics” Christopher D. Stanley, “‘The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιών’: Romans 11:26-27 Revisited,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 83, Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, vol. 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 126 refines his position by saying that Paul drew his citation from “a Jewish oral tradition in which Isa 59:20 and Isa 27:9 had already been conflated and adapted to give voice to a particular interpretation of Yahweh’s coming” Stanley gives four reasons why he espouses the above position (*Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 169-70; “‘The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιών,’” 122-24). Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans*, 236-39; Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 280-81, note 196 and Christopher R. Bruno, “The Deliverer from Zion: The Source(s) and Function of Paul’s Citation in Romans 11:26-27,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 59 (2008): 120-22 all critiqued Stanley and found his argument unconvincing. They also all concluded that Paul was the originator of this conflation citation. See also Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, vol. 69 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 177.

⁷⁰ For textual discussion on the citation see Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 166-71 and Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 282-84, especially the footnotes.

⁷¹ In the LXX manuscripts, ἐκ Σιών is found in the miniscules 22c-93, 564*, 407, 534, the Bohairic Coptic version and quotations by Ephiphanius, Hilary and Jerome. Symachus and Aquila has τῆ Σιών (Joseph Ziegler, *Isaias*.

exactly how or where Paul obtains the phrase, he uses this phrase and citation to accomplish his point in the argument of Romans 11.⁷² Wagner seems to be correct when he said, “Rather than focus on the Lord’s victorious return *to* Zion, as does LXX Isaiah 59:20, Paul’s quotation depicts the Lord’s coming in person *from* a restored Zion to bring deliverance to his people who are scattered among the nations.”⁷³ This eschatological deliverance,⁷⁴ which uses the phrase ἐκ Σιῶν is found in passages like Isaiah 2:3-4, Micah 4:2-3, Joel 4:16 (LXX/MT; 3:16 [Eng]), Psalm 13:7 (LXX; 14:7 [Eng/MT]) and 109:2-3 (LXX; 110:2-3 [Eng/MT]). This kind of deliverance is found in the context of the citations in the Old Testament that Paul cites in Romans 11:26-27. Scott states that “[a]ccording to Isa 49:22; 60:4, 9; 66:20, the nations will bring the exiles as an offering to the Temple, implying not only that the nations will become devotees *before* the exiles are brought back to Jerusalem, but also that Jerusalem experiences restoration before many exiles arrive.”⁷⁵

Understanding the context of these Old Testament restoration texts enables us to understand Paul’s reasoning in this shift based how he saw the restoration promises finding fulfillment with the Second Advent of Christ. Sullivan⁷⁶ further explains this and provides a correction to the

Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, 3rd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939, 1983], 14:343; Stanley, “The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιῶν,” 133, note 43). For an extended discussion of the textual differences and possible Hebrew or Greek *Vorlage*, see Stanley, “The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιῶν,” 133-35, especially note 44. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 624 believes ἐκ Σιῶν was possibly an “influence from Ps 14:7, or perhaps it comes from a copyist’s error, misreading εἰς Σιῶν.” See also Jewett, *Romans*, 703-04, especially note 87. For a critique of Berndt Schaller’s position see Carlos Osvaldo Cordero. Pinto, “The Contribution of the Isaiah Quotations to Paul’s Argument in Romans 9-11” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2003), 168-69. It is possible Paul uses the minority Greek witnesses, but more likely he borrows or conflates this phrase from another text.

⁷² Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 674 states that “Paul’s reading is probably theologically motivated, since his entire citation of the text is highly interpretive.” Stanley, “The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιῶν,” 125, note 26 thinks it may be “a reference to the place of Jesus’ birth (‘Zion’ = Palestine or the Jewish people), his death (‘Zion’ = Jerusalem), or his expected return.” See also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 625. Holland, *Romans*, 385 gives two possibilities: (1) he is a Jewish Messiah but he comes to save both Jews and Gentiles or (2) Paul is stressing the source of salvation that it is not in the institution of Judah but it comes from Zion.

⁷³ Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 284.

⁷⁴ The time of this deliverance seems to be the second coming of Jesus Christ. See Jewett, *Romans*, 704; Scott, “‘And Then All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Rom 11:26),” 496-97; Johann D. Kim, *God, Israel, and the Gentiles: Rhetoric and Situation in Romans 9-11*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, vol. 176 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 138-39; Schreiner, *Romans*, 6:619; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 723-24, 727-28; Jan Lambrecht, *Pauline Studies, Collected Essays*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 115 (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 46; Hofius, “‘All Israel Will Be Saved’,” 36; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 38B: 682; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 314; Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:577. Holland, *Romans*, 385, note 32 suggests it refers to the Redeemer’s second coming. Others refer it to Christ first coming (Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 729; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 250-51; N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in *Pauline theology Volume III Romans*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series, No. 23 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002], 60-61; J. R. Daniel Kirk, “Why Does the Deliver Come ἐκ Σιῶν (Romans 11.26)?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33 [2010]: 81-99).

⁷⁵ Scott, “‘And Then All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Rom 11:26),” 495.

⁷⁶ Stephen P. Sullivan, “Text and Context: The Use of the Isaianic New Exodus in Romans 9-11.” Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Wales Trinity St. David, 2014.

Reformed [New Covenant] view:

Isaiah 27 and 59 are found in the background of the Zion traditions with the warrior motif in the framework of the new Exodus and this helps to interpret the thought of Paul. Käsemann agrees that the underlying tradition is “the apocalyptic expectation of the restitution of Israel and the associated pilgrimage of the nations to Zion.”⁷⁷ In Isaiah 59 the Lord bares His mighty arm of salvation by donning His warrior battle dress of righteousness, salvation, vengeance, and fury (59:16-17) and comes to judge His adversaries even to the farthest coastlands so that His name and glory may be seen throughout the earth (59:18-19). The Redeemer⁷⁸ will come to Zion for it is there that He will rule and reign (Isa 59:20; 60:14), and it will be from the physical city of Zion that the effects of redemption will flow out to the Jewish people and also to the nations. It is here at this point that commentators miss the flow of the Isaianic context of chapters 59-60 and mistakenly take Zion in Romans 11:26b (Isa 59:20) as heavenly Zion.⁷⁹ Scott states that “the restoration begins in Jerusalem and the Land but is later completed when the Diaspora returns in conjunction with (and facilitated by!) the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations. In both stages, the Messiah is very much involved: restoration begins in Israel, the nations are brought in, and then ‘all Israel will be saved.’”⁸⁰

Conclusion

Whatever the future might hold, we are told by the majority of scholars, both Jewish and Christian, that the Israel described there cannot be equated with the modern Jewish State. March emphatically states:

⁷⁷ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 312.

⁷⁸ The LXX translates the Hebrew word **לְבַנְיָמִן** with ὁ ῥυόμενος. Stanley, “‘The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιῶν,’” 137 does not believe that Paul read the term ὁ ῥυόμενος in a christological sense. The christological interpretation of this phrase is accepted by Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 443; Jewett, *Romans*, 704; Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 297, note 236; ; Schreiner, *Romans*, 6:619-20; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 728; Hofius, “‘All Israel Will Be Saved,’” 36; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 38B: 682; Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:578; Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical and exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 337. Holland, *Romans*, 386, believes that Paul chose the term “deliverer” because in his paschal theology the term “Redeemer” was dropped in preference of the title “Firstborn” (see Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology*, 207-34).

⁷⁹ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 624; Stanley, “‘The Redeemer Will Come ἐκ Σιῶν,’” 138; Hoehner, “Israel in Romans 9-11,” 157 take it as physical Zion on earth (cf. Rom 9:33). Others take Zion as a heavenly Zion (cf. Gal 4:26) and not an earthly one for which the deliverer will come (Holland, *Romans*, 385; Seifrid, “Romans,” 673; Jewett, *Romans*, 704; Schreiner, *Romans*, 6:619; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 727-28). Wagner seemed to move more to a literal Zion in *Heralds of the Good News*, 276-98 from his earlier chapter “The Future of Israel: Reflections on Romans 9-11,” in *Eschatology and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of George Raymond Beasley-Murray* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 109-10.

⁸⁰ Scott, “‘And Then All Israel Will Be Saved’ (Rom 11:26),” 496. For Scott, there is today an “already” stage of a remnant of Israelites that are being saved and then a “not yet” stage when “all Israel” will be saved at the parousia of Christ. For a different view on this point see Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 187-97. Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 293, note 227 gave a good critique of Donaldson. See also Wagner, “The Future of Israel: Reflections on Romans 9-11,” 105.

Israel is not biblical Israel, and any rights held by biblical Israel do not belong to modern Israel. The promises and the relationship with God claimed by biblical Israel are now part of the legacy of both Judaism and Christianity. When we read the Bible, we must be quite clear that its Israel is not the modern nation.⁸¹

However, if we assume that the future fulfillment is with a real people and place, then fulfillment could, if we accept a doctrine of imminency, take place with modern Israelis and in the modern State of Israel. As Kaiser has well observed:

The promise-plan of God founded in the covenant was forever bound to our kind of history and geography. The boundaries of the land given to Israel were described in the contexts of the covenant promise to be centered in what is today known as the State of Israel.⁸²

While we cannot ascribe fulfillment to the modern State based on any New Covenant text, neither can should we miss the divine intention in returning a portion of national Israel to Land during the times of the Gentiles in preparation for its future regathering there in the Tribulation period. Although not cognoscente of this eschatological argument, Israeli Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik does understand that the phenomena of the existence of the Jewish State in the Promised Land should affects the way Christian theologians interpret national Israel's New Covenant:

All the claims of Christian theologians that God deprived the Jewish people of its rights in the land of Israel, and that all the biblical promises regarding Zion and Jerusalem refer, in an allegorical sense, to Christianity and the Christian Church, have been publicly refuted by the establishment of the State of Israel and have been exposed as falsehoods, lacking all validity."... "Certainly there is much left to do and much to improve, and that is our mission. We must take what the previous generations have imparted to us and improve this wonderful gift called the State of Israel.⁸³

Acknowledging the prophetic significance of the Jewish People's modern existence as a Nation in the Land, it must be equally acknowledged that at the present time Israel's national rejection of Jesus as its promised Messiah continued divine discipline (Isa. 6:9-10; Jn. 12:38-41; Acts 28:24-28; Rom. 11:25a, 28) and postponed the New Covenant blessings for the Nation in the Land. Judicial hardening does not affect the enjoyment of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant by individual members of the Nation as they accept Messiah and are added to the Church (Body of Messiah). Conversely, life in the Land at any time until the period of "the Indignation" (Daniel 8:19) and "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) runs its determined course

⁸¹ W. Eugene March, *Israel and the Politics of Land: a Theological Case Study* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 1994), 67.

⁸² Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6-12)," in *Israel the Land and the People*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 209.

⁸³ <https://bay157.mail.live.com/default.aspx#n=1523402469&fid=1&mid=4693866f-eaf4-11e2-b038-00237de49cd0&fv=1>

means sharing in the persecution imposed by the nations that was a consequence of the divine discipline imposed on the national Israel in the Land.⁸⁴ Still, national Israel did not lose its New Covenant promise, but its realization will come only after its collective national repentance toward Messiah and have returned to live in the Land where the promises will be enacted.

Finally, it must be noted that the restoration Land promises to Israel were made to Israel with God's full knowledge of its national rejection (one that began with national rejection of Prophet Moses, continued with the Prophets, and culminated in the Greater Prophet Jesus, Deut. 18:15-19; Jn. 5:46) and were included by God in His promise of Israel's New Covenant with a binding oath (Jeremiah 31:35-36; 33:20-25). The Church did not replace Israel, as though the Church had no relationship to Israel. Rather the Church is comprised of both a remnant of national Israel, who have the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, and a remnant Gentile nations, who have a promise blessings in that covenant mediated by national Israel and have been presently grafted into the covenant so as to enjoy its spiritual blessing (Gen. 12:3; Rom. 11:17, 19, 24). This serves as a proleptic preview and divine assurance of the complete realization of universal blessing at the time of the New Covenant Restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. Today a remnant of National Israel and a remnant of the nations participate as the Church in the New Covenant, but the fulfillment of the New Covenant with national Israel and the Gentile nations can only be experienced in the restored Land of Israel with a regenerate national Israel and redeemed Gentile nations under the rule of the Messiah and a functioning Temple and Levitical priesthood. For this day we pray in the words of the model prayer taught those original disciples in national Israel by Israel's New Covenant Messiah: "Thy Kingdom come ..." (Matt. 6:10; Lk. 11:2).

⁸⁴ This harsh reality is revealed in the statement of the State of Israel's current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2012): "We must constantly repeat that the root of the conflict is the very existence of the State of Israel, the refusal to recognize the State of Israel in any borders whatsoever."