

20. ISRAEL'S RETURN

Verses that predict Israel's end-of-age return

Amos 9:11-15

Hosea 2:21-23, 3:5

Isaiah 11:11-12, 14:1-2, 27:6, 12-13, 49:22-23, 60:4-9, 66:7-12, 20

Jeremiah 23:3-4, 7-8, 30:3

Daniel 11:16, 31, 41, 45

Ezekiel 11:17-18, 36:22-24, 28, 37:12, 25-26, 38:8, 39:26-28

Joel 3:1

Zechariah 2:12, 8:7-8

A selection of these verses

Amos 9:11-12, 14-15 In that day, I will restore David's fallen dynasty - I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins – and will rebuild it as in the old days, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name, declares the Lord, who will do these things. ... and I will return my people Israel to their former condition. They will *rebuild the ruined cities and live in them*. They will plant vineyards and drink the wine; they will make gardens and eat the fruit. **I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them.** This passage is quoted in Acts 15:16-17.

Hos 3:4-5 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. Afterward, the Israelites will return and seek

the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

Isa 11:11-12 In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Elam, Babylonia, Syria, and from the Mediterranean islands. He will raise a banner for the nations and *gather the Israeli exiles and the scattered Jews from the four corners of the Earth.*

Isa 14:1-2 The Lord will have compassion on Jacob's descendants. **He will again choose Israel and settle them in their land.** Foreigners will join them and unite with the Jews. Nations will accompany them to their own place and Israel will possess them as male and female servants in the Lord's land. They will take captive their captors and rule over their oppressors.

Jer 30:3 The Lord said: Listen, the days are coming when **I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess.**

Ezek 11:17 Therefore say: This what the Lord God says: **I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you were scattered and restore you to the land of Israel.**

Ezek 37:21 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: *I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land.*

Israel has returned - these prophecies are fulfilled!

The Jewish nation has been and continues to be regathered from the nations. Their fortunes have been restored, they are one of the world's leading military powers. Jerusalem is destined to be the center of the world's stage at the battle of Armageddon and after the Messiah's return, it will be the capital of his worldwide kingdom. Due to its immigration policies, Israel is one of the most multicultural and multilingual societies in the world. The population of 9.4 million has migrated mainly from Europe, Africa, and Asia.

The last question the disciples asked Jesus before his ascension was when he would *restore the kingdom* to Israel (Acts 1:6). Jesus implied that it would happen, but said it wasn't for them to know the time that the Father had fixed by his own authority.

It is a great miracle that the people of Israel, despite their being scattered among the nations for millennia, have been preserved as a distinct race, and have now been gathered together again as a nation, as they had to be if the prophecies concerning them and Jerusalem and the Messianic kingdom were to be fulfilled. The promise was made numerous times that the Lord would regather Israel from all the countries of the world where he drove them, and not one would be left behind. As a result, they will no longer be thought of as the nation that God brought out of Egypt, but as the nation taken out of the northern country and all the countries where he had driven them. They and their children and their children's children will live in the new Israel forever.

The prophecies expressed in the above references include these:

The nation of Israel will be born in one day, as it was on May 14th, 1948.

Israel will be restored to their land never to be uprooted again.

Their land will become very productive and fill the whole world with their produce.

Israel will rebuild their towns and multiply.

In the latter days, Gog will be mustered to go and fight against Israel, on the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste.

At the end of the present age, the Antichrist will stand in the glorious land (Israel) with destruction in his hand. He will profane the temple (not yet built) and stop the burnt offerings. He will set up an Abomination that causes Desolation, of which Jesus spoke. He will make war in the glorious land and tens of thousands will die. He will come to his end near Jerusalem, at the glorious holy mountain.

Israel, whom the Lord had called 'Not My People' will once again become his people.

They will eventually expand until they possess the entire land promised to them, from the Euphrates River to the Wadi of Egypt, including much of what is presently Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. They will be fruitful and multiply.

The Lord will set shepherds over them who will care for them: a good, caring government.

Jerusalem will be their capital city. God will do this to vindicate his name because he chose Jerusalem as his own city.

Israel will be glorified among the nations, when God sets them in their land and foreigners join them there, affiliating themselves with Israel (Isa 14:1-2). During the millennium, the nations will repatriate Jews to their land and leaders will bow down to them with their faces to the ground and “lick the dust from their feet” (Isa 49:22-23). In addition, the wealth of the nations will be brought to Israel to beautify the temple. Israel and its capital, Jerusalem, will be open to visitors continuously (Isa 60:11, Rev 21:25-26).

Israel will rebuild their temple and remove from their land idolatrous objects and practices. They will once again worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

Only after their return in the latter days, will Israel seek their God and the Messiah, Jesus. It is only after the Messiah’s return that he will be their God and they be his people, his chosen nation. It is after he has saved them from their enemies at Armageddon that he will pour out his Spirit on them (Zech 12:10).

God gave Israel up for a long time, and they have dwelt for many years without a king or temple or divine revelation (Hos 3:4, Mic 5:3). But eventually, Israel will be the center of the Kingdom of God, and Jesus will rule the world as King of kings and Lord of lords.

God has given the nations a warning. Attacking it will bring about their downfall:

The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling and is coming (Zech 2:12-13).

NT confirmation of Israel's return to their land

Jesus: Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles

The Gentiles will trample Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luk 21:24).

Jerusalem has been under domination by the Gentiles since Jesus' time. In AD 70 Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by the Romans and the entire Jewish population was scattered among the nations. They spread to most countries of the world but have never lost their identity as Jews.

The Jews began returning to Israel in the late 19th century and took control of much of their land in 1948, when Israel was declared a nation by the UN. They reclaimed Jerusalem after the 1967 six-day war with Muslim neighbors. The West Bank and the most important part of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, are at the time of writing (2024) still under the control of Gentiles. Jesus' words declare that the time will come when the domination of the Gentiles will come to an end, and Israel will once again be in full control of their land and capital city. The trampling of Jerusalem is spoken about by the apostle John concerning the final 3 ½ years of this age before Jesus returns:

Exclude the outer court, do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for forty-two months (Rev 11:2).

Two witnesses will preach repentance in Jerusalem during those forty-two months, even though the world is under domination by the Antichrist. When he finally has them killed, the world's unbelievers will gloat and celebrate. Then the witnesses will come alive and ascend to heaven as their enemies look on. There will be an earthquake in which a tenth of the city falls and 7,000 people die. The remaining people will be terrified and give glory to God. This is not said about the foreigners trampling Jerusalem. They won't repent, they can only curse God at this time (Rev 9:20-21, 16:9-10).

Some commentators interpret Revelation 11:1-13 as symbolic and relating to the Church but on comparing the details with other Scriptures, it is clear that the two witnesses are powerful Messianic evangelists, called “my two witnesses” (vs. 3), who are killed in the great city “where their Lord was crucified.” Jerusalem, the holy city, is being trampled for forty-two months, as prophesied by Daniel (Dan 9:27, 11:31). Jesus interpreted these prophecies as still being in the future (Mt 24:15-16, 21) in a time of great distress when the Jews would be living in Jerusalem and a contemptible person would desecrate the temple, abolish the daily sacrifices, and set up the Abomination that causes Desolation.

Paul: Hardened Israel will be saved

A partial stubbornness has come upon Israel until the full number of Gentiles has come in (Rom 11:25-31).

Jews who believed in Jesus in the first century, and an increasing number who believe in Jesus today, are members of Christ’s Church, the community of faith he has been building. They will be resurrected with Gentile believers at Jesus’ return. The remaining Jews, those who have not believed in Jesus up to this point are “hardened.” The Kingdom of God has been taken away from them and given to a people producing its fruits (Mt 21:43). When Jesus returns, the door will be shut; God’s redeemed community from all nations, who constitute the bride of Christ, will be complete. They constitute the monarchy that will rule with Christ during the millennium. But this is not the end for Israel. Their hardening of hard or stubbornness will end when the Church is complete, and Paul declares that all Israel will be saved.

From that moment, God’s redemptive plan will once again focus on the nation of Israel, who until then were hardened. God doesn’t give up; his will must be done. His election of Israel as his own chosen nation can never cease. All of Israel will be saved after Jesus returns, and among the nations remaining on earth, Israel will be God’s special nation, his chosen people on Earth throughout the millennium.

Many OT passages refer to the eternal purpose of God for his ancient people, Israel. They are eternal promises that will be fulfilled for them. Paul teaches that God will fulfill his saving promises to Israel:

I ask then: Did God reject his people? No! ... God did not reject his people whom he foreknew (Rom 11:1-2).

Again I ask: When they stumbled, did they fall completely? No! Rather, because of their transgression, God saved Gentiles to make Israel jealous (Rom 11:11).

If Israel don't continue in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again (Rom 11:23).

Brethren, I don't want you to be ignorant of this mystery and be wise in your own sight. Israel has experienced a partial stubbornness until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way, all Israel will be saved as it is written: "*The Deliverer will come from Zion and turn godlessness away from Jacob* (Rom 11:25-26).

For God does not change his mind concerning the gifts he has given and the people he has called (Rom 11:29).

Many OT prophecies have not yet had their fulfillment and cannot be explained away as having been spiritually fulfilled through the first coming of Christ. The NT makes clear reference to prophecies yet to be fulfilled and only in the light of these NT verses do the OT prophecies make sense. For example, it was spoken by Simeon at the birth of Jesus:

For my eyes have seen the Savior whom you have appointed. You made things ready for him in the sight of all nations. He is a light to enlighten the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel (Lk 2:30-32).

It is evident from these verses that the returning Messiah will bring glory to Israel.

Hebrews: God's new covenant with Israel

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (Heb 8:8). Cf. Jer 31:31-34.

This new covenant, in which God puts his laws in peoples' minds and writes them on their hearts, is the same new covenant that Jesus spoke

about at the Last Supper. This covenant in his blood provides complete atonement for the sins of all God's people, past, present, and future, including OT saints, the Church, and millennial Israel when that nation will be saved.

Jesus applied Jeremiah's prophecy to his disciples, who were all Jews (Lk 22:20) and Paul later applied it to the Corinthian church who were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor 11:25). Jeremiah's prophecy, however, was that God would make this covenant with the house (descendants) of Israel and the house (descendants) of Judah "in days that are coming," at a time when he would once again be their God and they would be his people. At that time they will all know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and nobody will have to tell his neighbor to know him.

Jesus: Israel's kingdom will be restored

Just before his ascension, the resurrected Jesus was asked a question by his disciples: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). Despite three years of teaching from Jesus about the kingdom of God, and more during the past forty post-resurrection days (Acts 1:3), they knew the earthly messianic reign was coming, but they were confused because he was departing and they didn't know when he would return. Jesus replied: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7).

Soon after Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jews in Jerusalem and he said:

So, repent and turn to God that your sins may be removed, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, the Messiah who has been fore-ordained for you. He must remain in heaven *until the time comes for God to restore everything*, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets (Acts 3:19-21).

He would have remembered Jesus' teaching about the restoration:

Truly I tell you, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne *in the new world*, you who have followed me will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28).

Jesus' Jewish disciples were looking forward to a time when Jesus would return as the Messiah to rule Israel.

A few years later at the Jerusalem Council, Jesus' brother James supported the inclusion of Gentiles in the Church, by quoting Amos 9:11-12 from the Septuagint version:

After this, I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name," says the Lord who does these things – things known from long ago (Acts 15:16-18).

He understood that the Messiah would return and restore David's monarchy, ruling from the throne of David in Jerusalem and instructing the Gentiles how they should worship God.

Amillenarians say that the mention of 1000 years in Revelation 20 is the only evidence of the millennium. True, it is the only specific mention of its duration, but not of its existence. The Mesianic reign was the main emphasis of Jesus' teaching, which he called the Kingdom of God.