

"Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

Jer 31:35-37 (NASB)

In this final portion of the given of the New Covenant, it is clear that the Lord ties His promises to a literal interpretation; so literal that the very order of creation is linked to it. Again notice how the promise is made to “the offspring of Israel” in the context of a “nation”. He also declares this in light of “all that they have done” as a nation so it would include the future rebellion against Christ that led to their status as “not my people” for 2,000 years.

From “My People” to “Not My People” and back again

In his books “Israelestine...” and “Psalm 83” author Bill Salus points out this prophetic aspect of Israel from the book of Hosea. Hosea’s story paints a vivid picture of the reality of Israel’s harlotry, her judgement as a result and God’s enduring promises. God calls Israel “Mine elect” in Isa 42:1; 45:4; 65:9, 22. Jesus spoke of the regathering of Israel from their scattering in His prophetic utterances in Matthew 24. So as many would say that as Israel lost her promises because of her rejection of their Messiah, it could only be based on the presumption that their rebellion wasn’t part of God’s sovereign plan. Yet Hosea declares all of these things in very specific terms.

"When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God." Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God." And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel."

Hos 1:8-11 (NASB)

So through Hosea’s life and the prophecy given to him, the Lord predicts that the nation will eventually reach a status so severe that they will become “not My people”, yet even with this severe “divorce” He reminds them of the Abrahamic Covenant and then connects it’s final fulfillment with the new as the Lord declares that both Israel and Judah will be gathered again in the same place that the became “not My people” but this time with the status as “the sons of the living God” which is nothing less than conversion through faith. This is all fulfilled within the context of Israel and Judah exulting Christ as their “one leader” in their land.

GOD’S LOVINGKINDNESS TO ISRAEL		
	Hosea & Gomer	God & Israel
Betrothal	Hos 1:2	Assumed; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:8
One Flesh	Hos 1:3	Assumed; Jer 3:1; Ezek 16:9-14
Adultery	Hos 2:2;3:1	Hos 2:5; 4:12; Jer 3:6; 5:7; Ezek. 16: 15-34
Divorce	Hos 3:1	Hos. 2:2; Jer 3:8-10, 20; Ezek. 16: 35-59
Remarriage	Hos 3:3-5	Hos 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 14:4-9; Jer. 3:22-4:2; Ezek 16:60-63

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This shouldn't be a surprise because Israel is referred to over 2000 times in scripture and not once does it mean anything other than what it says. God is called "the God of Israel" over 200 times. Paul recounts what scripture promised regarding the promises to Israel from the same Hosea passage:

"As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY." And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOth HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH." " Rom 9:25-29 (NASB)

As Paul continues through chapters 10 and 11 reflecting on God's faithfulness to always preserve a remnant regardless of the rebellion of the nation as a whole, he explains the faithfulness of God to bring blessing to the Gentiles who are now being grafted into the root that was not their own, that is the root of God's promises to a nation for a kingdom of eternal blessing. In regards to considering Israel as a nation rejected by God, Paul emphatically rejects that notion as he reminds us of why Israel, as a nation, is in her rebellion:

"I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, " Rom 11:11-13 (NASB)

"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Rom 11:25-29 (NASB)

The plain hermeneutic here clearly shows Paul contrasting the nation of Israel with the Gentiles and how the sovereign election of God stands for Israel as a nation. And it is by His gracious election that the same promises have become open to the Gentiles who through Israel's temporary rebellion, have been grafted in...PRAISE GOD!

The Promises of God Remembered at Jesus's Birth

One of the most significant keys to understanding if a literal view of prophecy is correct is what the mind-set of the faithful Jews (the Israel of God) was in the time of Christ; did they believe literally in the unilateral covenants of god given to Israel? Incredible insight is revealed in Luke's gospel surrounding the birth of Christ. Mary's famous "magnificat" shows that she understood the arrival of the Mes-

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promised to Israel meant that He would keep His promises:

"He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever." "
Luke 1:53-54 (NASB)

Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah shows that the faithful priest's were truly looking for as that poured over scripture:

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant— As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old— Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; to show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days"
Luke 1:67-75 (NASB)

Notice how Zechariah ties all of the unilateral covenants together in the Messiah who is the promised "horn of salvation" from David's house. Zechariah knows that according to the promises the Messiah meant that Israel would be:

- 1) Redeemed
- 2) Delivered from all of her enemies
- 3) Shown mercy because of their fathers and because of the integrity of God
- 4) Serving God without fear, in holiness and righteousness "all our days"

Can we say that Zechariah is mistaken then because Messiah came and went without these things being realized? Absolutely not! (as Paul would say). It was the Holy Spirit who spoke through Zechariah to begin with and it is therefore by the holy Spirit's own proclamation that we know these things will come to pass for Israel.

It was at the temple when Jesus was dedicated that Simeon, who was "righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel" and filled with the Holy Spirit said:

"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel." "
Luke 2:29-32 (NASB)

At the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) the whole discussion was amongst the believing Jews over how to view Gentiles that were believing the gospel; should they become Jewish first and be circumcised It was James who reflected on Simeon's proclamation that salvation was intended for the Jews and the Gentiles not through Judaism, but through the mercies of God. Simeon had another important thing to say about Jesus:

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"And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed— and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." " Luke 2:34-35 (NASB)

Notice His appointment is for the “fall and rise of many in Israel” The order is important because it is a reference to the fact that the nation would fall, but it would also rise again. Both connected to “this Child” – Jesus. Since the fall is based on their national unbelief, the rise would have to be based on national belief.

“All things concerning the Kingdom”

Another very important piece to this tapestry of evidence is given in Luke’s historical record in Acts of what the post resurrection, 40 day ministry of Christ revealed concerning the promised kingdom:

"To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;" Acts 1: 3-7 (NASB)

The most effective teacher in the world is Jesus and even though His disciples had to go through many peaks and valleys in their own discernment, there is now doubt that by this time in their walk with the Lord, especially after 40 days of intense teaching from scripture about the things “concerning the kingdom of God”, they would have a clear understanding about Israel. So it is significant that the one question they ask Him as they are told to wait for something from the Father is the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Not only do their expectations reveal what Jesus taught them, but His response confirms that their expectations were correct, just not within the context of the mystery that was about to come about.

“The times of refreshing may come”

If ever there was a time for Peter to be able to articulate that the church was Israel, it would be in his first, post-resurrection of Christ, Holy Spirit empowered speech given to the religious Jews in response to their “orders”. But still we see that what the Jews had always expected in regards to a future kingdom was legitimate:

"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." Acts 3: 19-21 (NASB)