

The Promise of the Land to Israel

by John F. Walvoord

The promise of the land to Abraham is an integral part of the call to Abraham which begins the program of prophecy relating to Israel, and is to be fulfilled literally and unconditionally at the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

Scripture: Genesis 12:7

Topics: "Israel's Inheritance", "Biblical Prophecy"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the significance of the promise of the perpetual possession of the land to Abraham and his descendants, emphasizing the geographic understanding of the land of Canaan in the call to Abraham. The sermon delves into the historical journey of Abraham and the importance of understanding the land promises in a literal sense. It addresses the spiritualization of the land promises and the arguments for the future fulfillment of these promises based on Old Testament prophecies and the theological implications for Israel's eschatological purpose.

Transcript

In the broad program of prophecy relating to Israel, few factors are more important than the promise to Abraham of the perpetual possession of the land. It is not only constantly reiterated in prophecies relating to the hope of Israel, but it is an integral part of the call to Abraham which begins the program. According to Genesis 12:1 God had said to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee." It is almost impossible to avoid the plain "implication that the term the land was a geographic designation and that Abraham understood it in this way.

Practically all conservative expositors agree that Abraham was instructed in his original call to leave his native country, Ur of the Chaldees, and proceed to the land of Canaan. The historical record of his journey is recorded in Genesis 11:31: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." After delay in Haran, still outside the land of Canaan, they finally entered the land itself after the death of Terah as recorded in Genesis 12:5: "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." The original call to Abraham, therefore, involved a geographic understanding and that to Abraham the expression the land meant the land of

Canaan promised to him and his seed.

It would seem redundant to cite these proofs if it were not for the fact that the term the land and its related promises are frequently spiritualized as if they had no geographic implications whatever. As has been pointed out in previous discussion, amillenarians usually follow one of two routes in evading the premillennial interpretations of this passage, namely, (1) that the promises of the land are to be spiritualized and relate to heaven; or (2) that the promises are to be interpreted literally but are conditional and will never be fulfilled. In order to consider the amillennial argument, it is necessary to examine first the promise of the land to the seed of Abraham as unfolded in the Old Testament; second, to study the dispossessions of the land involved in the three dispersions of Israel; third, to ascertain whether these promises have in some sense already been fulfilled or whether they are subject to future fulfillment; and, fourth, whether taking the evidence as a whole there is good ground for belief in the future fulfillment of these promises. Certain conclusions may then be drawn concerning Israel's prophetic hope.

The Promise Of The Land To Abraham's Seed

In examining the promise of the land, it may be observed first that Abraham understood the promises of God as relating to the literal land of Canaan. This is demonstrated by his movement from Ur to Canaan as has already been pointed out. It is further confirmed by the promise in Genesis 12:7 given after his entrance into the land: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Certainly Abraham understood it to refer to the physical land of Canaan. This is reinforced by his experience in Genesis 13 where after being separated from Lot he is urged to look northward, southward, eastward, and westward (Genesis 13:14). At that time God assured him: "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:15). Further, he is instructed: "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for unto thee will I give it" (Genesis 13:17). It is practically impossible to evade understanding these verses as referring to the literal land.

In Genesis 15:18-21 the exact dimensions of the land are given and the territory is described as running from the river of Egypt, which was the borderline between Egypt and Canaan, and the great river, the river Euphrates, hundreds of miles to the east. It becomes clear from the description which follows which itemizes the heathen tribes occupying this territory that God had in mind more than just the small area occupied by the Canaanite himself, but rather the entire area between these two boundaries. Here again it is obvious Abraham understood that a large geographic area was involved.

The New Testament comments on this expectation of Abraham in Hebrews 11:8, 9 where it is written: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." So far, all must agree that a literal land is in view. Amillenarians are quick to point out, however, that verse 10 goes on to say: "For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Also, in Hebrews 11:16 it adds: "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

Do these allusions to a heavenly city nullify the idea of a literal land? A careful study of this passage will demonstrate that the subject is Abraham's faith. His faith first of all was in regard to the land, and his faith was indicated by his obedience and his sojourning in the land in tents. The same faith which he manifested in God's promise concerning the land is also manifested in Abraham's faith concerning the

heavenly city. The land represented God's promise in relation to time, more specifically, the future kingdom of Christ on earth, while the heavenly city has to do with eternity, the New Jerusalem and the new earth. In the case of both, Abraham never possessed in life the fulfillment of the promises and like others he died in faith before the promises were fulfilled. The fact that Abraham believed both the temporal promises of God and the eternal promises of God does not lead to the conclusion that the earthly promise and the heavenly promise are one and the same. It is rather that they require the same attitude of faith. The major emphasis of Scripture, however, is on Abraham's belief in the temporal promises of God and to this the Scriptures constantly refer. The allusions to the eternal state and Abraham's expectation and faith are in fact rare, while the promises relating to possession of the land are one of the major themes of the Old Testament.

In presenting the Messianic hope, Isaiah, in the major passage of Isaiah 11:1-12, after describing the justice which will characterize the land when the Messiah reigns, prophesies the regathering of the children of Israel "from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." He goes on to state that He is going to "gather together the dispersion of Judah from the four corners of the earth." The whole context makes clear that they are being brought back to the land.

Similar passages abound in Isaiah. For instance, in Isaiah 14:1 it is declared: "For Jehovah will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." According to Isaiah 27:13 the children of Israel are going to be gathered from Assyria and Egypt and "they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem." This of course involves a return to the land.

In Isaiah 43:5-7 the regathering of Israel to the land is described: "Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth; every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yea, whom I have made." It is stated categorically in Isaiah 60:21: "Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever."

The book of Isaiah concludes with a great prophecy concerning the regathering of Israel as it will be consummated when they are brought from the ends of the earth to the Promised Land in the beginning of the millennium. According to Isaiah 66:20: "And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an oblation unto heaven, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring their oblation in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah."

This theme of Israel is continued in Jeremiah 16:14-16: "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that it shall no more be said, As Jehovah liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As Jehovah liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries whither he had driven them. And I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith Jehovah, and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks." It should be noted that the regathering of Israel to their ancient land is here described as being a regathering to the last man, something that was not remotely approached in any previous return.

In describing the time of the great tribulation in Jeremiah 30:1-7, it is declared in verse 3: "For, lo, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." It is further stated in Jeremiah 30:10, 11: "Therefore fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith Jehovah; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to save thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished." In Jeremiah 31 the return of Israel to the land is predicted in verse 5: "Again shalt thou plant vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit thereof." The regathering is described in Jeremiah 31:8: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall they return hither."

In the description of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-40 it is predicted that Israel will return to the land and that Jerusalem will be built in a certain area which had formerly never been used for building purposes. It is remarkable that this precise area has been built into a portion of the modern city of Jerusalem in fulfillment of this prophecy.

Another clear reference to the regathering of Israel and their being planted in their land is found in Jeremiah 32:37-44. In verse 37 it is stated: "Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely." Again, in verse 41 it is declared: "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." Jeremiah promises that they will again possess the fields in and about Jerusalem and that God will cause their captivity to return. In Jeremiah 33, God solemnly swears that He will cause their captivity to return, that justice and righteousness will be executed in the land, and that the seed of David will reign on the throne. Such passages could be multiplied, such as Ezekiel 11:14-21 where in verse 17 God says plainly: "I will give you the land of Israel."

Ezekiel 20:33-88 describes the judgment upon Israel at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, when the rebels are prohibited from entering the land in contrast to the righteous who do. In Ezekiel 20:42 it is written: "And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country which I swore to give unto your fathers." Again in Ezekiel 34:13 God promises: "And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country."

In the great prophecy concerning the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 the significant statement is given in verses 21, 22: "And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them in to their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Ezekiel adds in verses 24, 25 that David is going to reign over them. In verse 25 he writes: "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and David my servant shall be their prince for ever."

The process of the regathering of Israel is declared in Ezekiel 39:25-29 to extend to the whole house of Israel and indicates that they will be brought back into their land to the last man, as stated in verse 28: "And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, in that I caused them to go into captivity among the nations, and have gathered them unto their own land; and I will leave none of them any more there." The meaning of this passage is that they will be gathered to their land and that God will not allow a single Israelite to remain in dispersion. This has never been fulfilled by any previous regathering.

Most of the minor prophets continue this prophetic strain, so prominent in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The undying love of God for Israel is declared in Hosea, and, though according to 3:4 the children of Israel will be without a king and a priesthood, they are assured in verse 5: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days." The Prophet Joel, after declaring the judgment of God upon Israel, closes his book by declaring: "But Judah shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation" (3:20).

The Prophet Amos, after an almost unrelieved indictment on Israel for their sin, closes his book with five verses in chapter 9 beginning in verse 11, where it is affirmed that the tent of David which is fallen will be raised up again. The abundance of crops is described and Amos declares God's intention in verses 14 and 15: "And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God." This major passage on the regathering of Israel is significant because it pictures the revival of Israel after divine judgment upon them, the abundant crops that will characterize Israel in those days, and closes with the assurance that they will no more be scattered once they are brought back to the land. Here again is a prophecy which was not fulfilled in previous regatherings and demands a future regathering in which this prophecy will be completely fulfilled. It is to this prophecy that James alludes in Acts 15:15-18 when he declared at the council of Jerusalem that it was the divine order that there should be blessing on the Gentiles first and that this was to be followed by the restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of the tent of David.

Obadiah continues this strain on the regathering of Israel when he writes in verse 17: "But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." In that day according to verse 21: "the kingdom shall be Jehovah's."

Micah gives a comprehensive picture of the future Messianic kingdom in 4:1-8. Israel is pictured in their ancient land in peace and security, regathered from their former scattered position and sitting under their vines and fig trees in safety. The book concludes with these words: "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the lovingkindness to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (7:20).

The remaining minor prophets continue this theme. Zephaniah closes chapter 3 with the picture of Israel regathered and rejoicing in the Lord in their ancient land. Zechariah speaks at length on the future blessings of Israel, describing the streets full of happy children in Zechariah 8:5 and Israel is being regathered from the east and from the west in chapter 8:7, 8. Jerusalem is pictured as the capitol of the earth in 8:22. The regathering of Israel is mentioned specifically in Zechariah 10:10 where Israel is described as gathered out of Assyria and Egypt. The concluding chapter of Zechariah, beginning as it does with the second coming of Christ, pictures the changes in the land in the millennial kingdom and the wealth and prosperity and spiritual blessing of Israel. All of these prophecies imply that the promises of the

land are going to be fulfilled and Israel will once again be established in the area promised to the seed of Abraham.

The careful analysis of these many promises relative to Israel's possession of the land and their regathering from the ends of the earth makes clear certain important principles. First, as intimated in previous discussion, the land, though subject to delay and Israel's temporary dispossession, is promised unconditionally to the seed of Abraham. Its ultimate possession is therefore based on the grace principle rather than the law principle. Second, it should be evident that the promise of the land is not given to Gentiles, but to the physical seed of Abraham; to be sure, not all the seed, but nevertheless to be fulfilled literally by the future generation of Israelites on earth at the time of the second coming of Christ. Third, the title of the land is declared to be unending in its character. By this we should understand that the land belongs to Israel as long as the present earth endures. Fourth, not only is the title to be given forever, but the land is actually to be possessed as long as the earth endures, once it is given to Israel at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. Fifth, it is clear that the promises are geographic and that the boundaries announced in Genesis 15 will have specific application when Israel is finally installed in their land in the millennial period. Only by indiscriminate spiritualization of all the terms and promises relating to the land can these prophecies be nullified. The fact that they are stated and restated so many times in so many different periods of Israel's history, even in times of apostasy and departure from God as in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and by so many of the minor prophets makes clear that God intended them to be taken at their face value.

The Dispossession Of The Land

Though only premillenarians insist that Israel is eventually to possess the Promised Land and fulfill literally the promises pertaining thereto, it is agreed by all that Israel in the course of its past history has suffered three major dispossessions. Jacob and his family voluntarily went to Egypt at Joseph's invitation to avoid the famine and thereby left the land promised to Abraham's seed. In Egypt they sojourned for many generations until the time of the Exodus. After the return to the land under Moses and Joshua, the children of Israel lived for hundreds of years within the general area promised to Abraham, but never possessing it in its entirety even in the most extended period of the kingdom under Solomon. The moral disintegration which followed Solomon and the division of the kingdom of Israel into two kingdoms ultimately resulted in the second dispersion, first, in the captivity of Assyria beginning in 721 B.C. and then in the later captivity of the two remaining tribes following the invasion by Babylon beginning in 606 B.C. The second dispersion is the subject of prophecy by Moses in Deuteronomy 28:62-65 and is mentioned in Deuteronomy 30:1-3. At the same time there were frequent promises of restoration from this dispersion as indicated in the prophecies already cited in Jeremiah. The return after the second dispersion is indicated specifically by Jeremiah in chapter 29:10, 11 where the prediction is given that after seventy years they would be able to return to Jerusalem.

The third and final dispersion began in A.D. 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the desecration of the entire land which followed in the next century. From this dispersion, Israel has begun to return in the twentieth century as witnessed in the establishment of the nation Israel. Two million of these people are now established in their ancient land. The present regathering being witnessed by our generation is the largest movement of the people of Israel since the days of Moses, and may be understood to be the beginning of that which will be completed subsequent to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom on earth.

The principles involved in the dispersion and regathering of Israel are sometimes called the Palestinian covenant. This is outlined in particular in the final message of Moses in Deuteronomy, chapters 28, 29, and 30. According to Deuteronomy 28:63-68, Israel was warned that they would be scattered over the face of the earth if they departed from God. Along with this, however, it was anticipated that there would be a future return in which a godly remnant of Israel would repent. This is stated explicitly in Deuteronomy 30:1-3: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither Jehovah thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto Jehovah thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; that then Jehovah thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee."

This regathering is connected with the return of Christ mentioned in Deuteronomy 30:3 and involves the restoration and regathering of all the children of Israel scattered over the face of the earth including righteous Israelites who have died and gone to heaven. As stated in Deuteronomy 30:4: "If any of thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jehovah thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee." According to Deuteronomy 30:5-9, they are promised that they will be regathered to their land, restored spiritually, delivered from their enemies, and abundantly blessed. Though the prophecy is given in a context which conditions fulfillment on the future repentance of Israel, both this Scripture and many others relating to the regathering of Israel predict that Israel will repent and will therefore be restored and regathered.

The dispossessions of the land, therefore, are temporary judgments upon the generations of Israel who turned from God. While they lost possession of the land in the captivities and suffered as the Scriptures prophesied, at the same time God abundantly declares in His Word that their dispersion was temporary and their regathering is the ultimate purpose of God. Confirming this judgment is the dramatic fact of Israel's return to the land in our day after many centuries of dispersion, persecution, and affliction.

Has The Promise Of The Land Already Been Fulfilled?

Generally speaking, amillenarians who deny that Israel will possess the Promised Land in the future tend to ignore the promises to the contrary in the Major and Minor Prophets and in many cases do not even attempt to offer evidence that these promises are conditional or are to be interpreted in a nonliteral way. Occasionally, however, some arguments are offered in the attempt to sustain the thesis that the promises have already been fulfilled in historic possessions of the land. George L. Murray for instance, in his book *Millennial Studies*, page 27, offers I Kings 4:21-24 as evidence. It is stated in verse 21: "And Solomon ruled over all of the kingdoms from the River unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought tribute, and served Solomon all the days of his life." In I Kings 4:24 this same thought is continued: "For he had dominion over all the region on this side the River, from Tiphshah even to Gaza, over all the kings on this side the River: and he had peace on all sides round about him."

A careful study of this passage in the light of its context, however, will demonstrate that, while Solomon ruled over all this area, he did not possess it, inasmuch as the kings are indicated as continuing their rule even though they paid tribute and served Solomon. The area was therefore not incorporated in the kingdom of Solomon, but rather came under his sway in the sense that the nations paid tribute and were at peace with Solomon. If this portion had been incorporated into the kingdom of Solomon, it would not have involved the kings' remaining on their thrones and paying tribute to him.

A similar argument is offered by Murray in reference to Joshua 21:43-45 where it is stated: "So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein." On the face of it this would seem to be a plain declaration that they did possess all the land. This promise, however, has to be limited by subsequent Scriptures. According to Judges 1:21 the Beniamites did not conquer the Jebusites. According to Judges 1:27, the children of Manasseh did not conquer all of their territory, and in verse 28 it is stated: "And it came to pass when Israel was waxed strong, that they put the Canaanites to taskwork, and did not utterly drive them out." In the verses which follow are itemized the areas which Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali did not possess. In other words, the statement of Joshua 21:43-45 must be understood as teaching that God on His part was faithful, but that the children of Israel did not enter into their possession.

Much later in Israel's history Murray notes that Nehemiah refers to the promise given to Abraham relative to the land and states, "Thou...hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous" (9:8). This must be understood in the same sense as Joshua in that indeed God did "give them the land," but they never possessed it historically in the Old Testament period.

The passages already cited relative to Israel's regathering and possession of the land are in themselves a complete refutation of this idea that Israel has already possessed the land in the past in its entirety. If the promise of the land was fulfilled in Joshua's time or in Solomon's, why do the many Scriptures later appeal to a future possession? Even though it may be conceded that the reference in Nehemiah is late in Israel's history, it by no means proves that the promises pertaining to the last regathering and establishment of Israel in the land have been fulfilled. In fact, it is quite to the contrary as we examine the context of Nehemiah.

There are three essentials to the fulfillment of the original promises given to Abraham regarding the possession of the land. First, the land must be actually possessed, that is, occupied, not simply controlled. Second, the possession must continue as long as the earth lasts, i.e., forever. Third, the land during this period of possession must be under the rule of the Messiah in a time of peace, tranquillity, and blessing. Nothing in history fulfills the many promises given to the prophets and, if it be judged that these promises must be fulfilled literally and surely, there remains only one possible conclusion--that is, that Israel in some future time will possess their promised land, including the entire area described in Genesis 15.

Arguments For Future Fulfillment Of The Promise

In reviewing the material already presented relative to Israel's future possession of the land, it may be seen that this is integral in the whole prophetic scheme involving the millennial kingdom, the return of Christ, and the consummation of the ages. The ground for fulfillment lies first in the nature of the promises themselves rooted as they are in the original proposition made to Abraham to leave his father's land and to go to a land that God would show him. The promises originally given to Abraham are reiterated again and again and form the backbone of Old Testament prophetic revelation. The promise of the land sustained Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as they contemplated the future of their seed. The promise of the land was that which dominated Moses and Joshua as they brought the children of Israel from Egypt to the land. The hope of regathering was that which sustained Jeremiah and Ezekiel at the time of the captivities and Israel's moral apostasy. It formed the basis of their hope in future restoration both spiritually and politically. It has been further noticed that the very statement of the promises, though linked with a future repentance of Israel, is stated as certain and sure. It is linked with the perpetuity of the seed of Abraham which is promised continuance as long as the sun and moon endure.

The strongest kind of promises are related to the possession of the land in that not only the nation Israel is promised eternal continuity, but the land is promised as an everlasting possession. The emphatic description of the land given in Genesis 15:18-21 almost defies spiritualization, including as it does the heathen tribes which possessed it at the time the promise was given. The fact that Israel has been dispossessed of the land in three periods of its history is by no means an argument against ultimate possession, for imbedded in the very promises of dispossession are the promises that Israel will return and repossess the land. It has been demonstrated that these promises were not fulfilled in the past. Though Solomon temporarily controlled the area described by Abraham, he did not possess it and he did not occupy it. The prophets following Solomon certainly did not understand that Solomon had fulfilled the promise of the land and therefore promised future fulfillment. While God had been faithful, as witnessed by Nehemiah, it should be obvious to all that in Nehemiah's day the promises of possession of all the land were not fulfilled.

On every hand, therefore, an examination of the promises of the land of Israel supports the eschatology of Israel as a whole and the premillennial interpretation of the Scriptures. By so much also any spiritualization of Israel which would require fulfillment to the church in the present age or which would look to fulfillment in the eternal state would undermine not only the eschatology of Israel, but the program of eschatology as a whole. It is therefore not too much to say that the subject of the eschatology of Israel is a determinative one in the theology of future things, and as one decides these important questions he therefore decides the validity of eschatology in its broader scope. Inasmuch as the promises relating to Israel pervade the entire Scriptures, by so much a disclaiming of the promises given to Israel affects one's theology as a whole. It is for this reason that this subject is important, not only in the study of Israel itself, but in the establishment of premillennial theology.

Summary

The theological implications of the promise of the land to Israel have been shown to be central in God's eschatological purpose for His ancient people. The promise of the land was integral in the original covenant with Abraham and was understood by him in a literal way. This is demonstrated in the constant reiteration of the promise in which literal possession of the land is implied or stated. The countless promises of the Old Testament which relate to the promise of the land were considered seriatim in a representative way. Such major passages as Isaiah 11, 14, 43, 60, 66, Jeremiah 16, 30, 31, 32, 33, Ezekiel 11, 20, 34, 37, 39, Hosea 3, Joel 3, Amos 9, Obadiah, Micah 4, Zechariah 8, and 10 were cited. Certainly this is an overwhelming proof that the entire Old Testament lends its confirmation to a

promise of future possession of the land to Israel. These promises, though subject to delay and temporary dispossession, were never transferred to Gentiles but were declared to be unending in character, its title given forever with specific boundaries announced in Genesis 15 to Abraham himself.

The dispersions predicted when Israel was out of the land were prophesied, but it was demonstrated that not only were the dispersions fulfilled, but also the regathering. Evidence was adduced that the final regathering will include every Israelite to the last man, a promise which today has never been fulfilled.

The amillennial argument that the promise of the land was fulfilled in Solomon's day was refuted by the fact that Solomon never fulfilled the promise in any proper sense, and that subsequent Scriptures regarded the promise as subject to future fulfillment. Assertions of Joshua and Nehemiah to the fact that God had fulfilled all His promises to Israel were found to be limited by the context to the thought that God

had kept His Word though Israel had failed to possess the land. The arguments for future fulfillment of the promise hang therefore on the certainty of the Word of God. just as the prophecy concerning Israel has always had its fulfillment in the past, so it will also in the future. Israel's promise of the land is just as sure as the Christian's promise of heaven.

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