

Israel in Prophecy

The apostle Paul used the illustration of an olive tree to point to the fact that we (Gentiles who are converted) are grafted into the stock of Israel:

Romans 11

²⁴ For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

That olive tree is Jesus Christ. This is made plain in Galatians:

Galatians 3

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

There are not two trees! There is *not* one tree for the nation of Israel, and another for the church. It is *one* tree; it is the election of grace; it is the Isaac-seed, not the Ishmael seed. Abraham is our father too, and we are heirs with him.

Galatians 3

²⁹ And if ye be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The current physical nation of Israel are Ishmaelites, children of unbelief:

Galatians 4

²⁴ Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which is Hagar.

²⁵ For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Hagar was the servant of Sarah, Abraham's wife. She produced a son for Abraham called Ishmael. Ishmael represented Abraham's attempt to fulfill God's promise by his own efforts.

The apostle likened the earthly Jerusalem to Hagar, because they were trying to please God by their fleshly efforts, without the working of God's Spirit. Therefore, if Jerusalem was Hagar, then her children were Ishmaelites.

Ishmael, although given an earthly blessing, did not inherit the spiritual promises given to Abraham. And so Ishmaelites today will not inherit those promises either. The reason is simple: an Ishmaelite is a "child of the flesh". He represents the attempt of the flesh to do what God has promised, without the cleansing of sin and the new life of the Spirit. Since God cannot bless sin with immortality, Ishmael cannot receive the blessings.

So only those Ishmaelites who come to faith will be joined back into the tree of Christ. At the moment they are converted, they cease to become Ishmaelites, and become Israelites, because they receive the forgiveness of sins, and the new life in the place of the old.

If these converts are from carnal Jewish stock, then they become "grafted back into their own olive tree" (*Romans* 11:24). This tree is not their fleshly lineage. It is the lineage of faith.

There is an "everlasting gospel" (*Revelation* 14:6) and God's plan has always been the same, even though at times He used different vessels to illustrate it. The "promised land" in its fullness was never only a small spot on this old earth, it encompassed the whole new earth. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God.

When David sat on the throne, and there was rest from the enemies of Israel, the Lord said:

2 Samuel 7

¹⁰ Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.

They were *in* the land, yet God said “I will appoint a place for my people...and will plant them...in a place of their own.” This can only mean that the land of Canaan, upon this old sin-cursed earth, was not the land God intended for them. It was only a picture, a type of the real, a training ground.

Jesus was the king promised to Israel, the one who would assume rulership.

Genesis 49

¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

On the basis of this, and similar prophecies (*Ezekiel* 21:26, 27), the people of Jesus’ time expected him to take the throne and put down the Roman power. They were completely mistaken, because they did not understand the spiritual nature of the work and kingdom that God intended. This misunderstanding is still with us today and manifests itself in such systems as dispensationalism.

A correct understanding of prophecy goes hand-in-hand with a correct understanding of the gospel. When the times of crisis come (and they are already to some degree upon us) we need to know what the Lord’s will is, and what position to occupy. It will be as fatal in our day to misunderstand these things as it was for the Jews in Christ’s day.

The idea that God will somehow miraculously convert all the physical Jews to be His chosen people again, when the life and death of Christ could not convince them, is against all reason. Does God have a better thing to offer than His own Son?!

This attention on carnal Israel is a distraction and will only lead to further wars and strife in the middle East, which will only plunge the world into deeper trouble. This is what Satan wants: to drive the world to desperation so that he can push his solution to the world problems.

The real Israelites in our day will be those who overcome every defect, and perfect Christian character in a time of deep trial and apostasy. Israel means “overcomer.” The battle is against sin and unbelief, not against Muslim nations.

Study the life of Christ more closely: the final struggle will be similar to that which happened when He was among us. The last generation will “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (*Revelation 14:4*).

The Jewish people in Christ’s day had some very unrealistic expectations and interpretations of prophecy which would have involved God transgressing His own law in order to bless them. They wanted God’s power to support their plans and ideas.

That’s what Satan wanted to do in heaven: usurp God’s authority (*Isaiah 14:13*). And the Jewish leaders, whom Jesus called the “children of the devil” (*John 8:44*), wanted to do the same thing. They would have supported Christ if He would have used His miraculous powers to put down the Roman armies.

But they were unwilling to truly come into harmony with His law and put away their own pride and selfishness. Therefore Jesus finally had to say:

Matthew 21

⁴³ The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Jesus also clearly stated,

John 18

³⁶ If my kingdom was of this world, my servants would fight.

Christ’s servants never fight with carnal weapons! That’s not how the kingdom of God is established. All who use such weapons are not his “servants,” nor are they building his “kingdom.”

God’s promises involving men are always conditional.

Sometimes you have to search for the condition in similar verses or statements, but it is always there. For example, the condition upon which Abraham received the promise is stated in *Genesis* 18:19. The condition of Israel always being God's people (*Jeremiah* 31:35) is stated in the previous verses (vs 31-34).

God's kingdom is a righteous kingdom, established upon a righteous law. This is the picture given in the sanctuary where the throne of God rested upon the tables of the law which were inside the Ark. God's presence was over the mercy seat, and under this was the law. Those whose hearts and lives are in harmony with that law are His people and will enter into the New Jerusalem and inherit the New Earth.

The nation of Israel was unique in that it was a separate kingdom on earth, with land and a government directly under God (at least for a time). It had a special opportunity to be a missionary station to the whole world. God stated this in many verses:

- His house was to be a house of prayer for all people (*Isaiah* 56:7);
- All nations were to admire the laws of Israel and how close their God was to them (*Deuteronomy* 4:5-10) and by implication desire to join them as did Rahab and Ruth, etc.

This opportunity, which could no longer be fulfilled through a literal nation, passed on to the church, which are called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (*1 Peter* 2:9). They are now to bring that same gospel and law to all the nations, "then shall the end come" (*Matthew* 24:14).

You can also see that parallel in comparing *Isaiah* 60 with *Revelation* 18:1. That which was promised to literal Israel (filling the world with the light of the knowledge of God) is fulfilled through spiritual Israel.

This *Revelation* 18 angel is part of the series of angels in *Revelation* 14. Six are mentioned in *Revelation* 14:6-20, and this one in *Revelation* 18 fits in between the third and fourth of *Revelation* 14. This must be so, for the message is similar, and there are patterns of seven all through the book).

But the *Revelation* 14 series of angels starts with the proclamation of the “everlasting gospel.” Since this work of proclaiming the gospel has been given to the church, we may safely assume that the *Revelation* 18 angel is also part of the church. Therefore, the work of the church in presenting the gospel goes right up until the coming of Christ.

Jesus clearly stated that His kingdom was “not of this world, else His servants would fight.” In His Sermon on the Mount, He repeated an earlier scripture from the *Psalms* that “the meek will inherit the earth.”

It will not be until He comes again that the “kingdoms of this world” will become His (*Revelation* 11:15), but the latter chapters of *Revelation* make it clear that the earth is in ruins at that time. His coming will usher in the resurrection (*1 Thessalonians* 4:16), where the saints will rise from their graves to reign with him (*Revelation* 20:6).

But since the renovation of the earth does not take place until after the 1000 years, the saints will not rule on this earth. Corruption and incorruption do not go together (*1 Corinthians* 15:50). Instead the saints go to heaven, to the New Jerusalem, wherein is the garden of Eden and tree of life that was taken from this earth before the flood (*John* 14:1-3, *Revelation* 22:2, 3, *Revelation* 2:7). This is the city of God, which at the end of the 1000 years comes down from heaven (*Revelation* 20:7-9).

One of the tasks that the saints will be involved in is judging (*Revelation* 20:4, *1 Corinthians* 6:3). This indicates that we will study the history of transgression, just like we study the Bible now, only the records in heaven include every word and

thought of every person that ever lived. It will be a massive library, and we will be able to trace God's work throughout all history and in all lives. Do you enjoy studying the Bible now? Then you will be thrilled beyond belief in the library of the New Jerusalem!

The Old Testament prophecies to literal Israel will be fulfilled to spiritual Israel in an even more glorious way, because the glory of the New Covenant far exceeds the glory of the Old.

Were they promised land? It will be fulfilled, not just in a small section called Palestine, but in the giving of the whole earth made new!

Were they promised a king? It will be fulfilled, not just with a sinful man who passes away, but with an immortal king called Jesus, and all His saints with Him!

Were they promised rest from their enemies? It will be fulfilled, not just with a temporal truce or peace treaty, but with an everlasting rest in a kingdom full of sinless souls who would not even think of wielding a weapon to destroy another!

I truly do not understand why anyone would trade these rich fulfillments for a few earthly crumbs...unless they only want the outward gifts of God, and not His character.