

ISRAEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is certainly a very interesting study to find out the opinions of our Lord Jesus Christ and the New Testament writers concerning the lost House of Israel. The probability of the case is very strong in favour of the House of Israel being found in the New Testament.

(i) Christ came to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; therefore the House of Israel, being part of that seed, must also be dealt with in the New Testament. From that point of view the New Testament must of necessity solve the problem of the lost tribes. It is absolutely impossible that it can ignore them entirely. It must tell us whether they have joined the Jews after the return from Babylon, or whether they are existing apart from the Jewish nation. All we have to do is to find out what these promises concerning them in the Old Testament were, and Christ, who came to confirm or establish those promises, could not have ignored the people who were to inherit them.

(2) The Old and New Testament are one revelation. Destroy the authenticity of the Old Testament, and the New is not worth having; discredit the author of the New Testament, and the Old remains an empty shell. The Old Testament cannot be understood and is quite incomplete without the New. Thus if we find certain promises belonging exclusively to Israel in the Old Testament, we must find their fulfilment recorded in the New Testament. If in the Old Testament dispensation we find the House of Israel cast out of the covenant, and we are promised that they are to be recovenanted under the new dispensation, which was ushered in by Christ, we must find that the recovenanting of this nation had taken place or had begun to be accomplished. It would be entirely against the veracity of God's character if He were to break His promises. The probability of the case is entirely in favour of Israel being found in the New Testament, and it only remains to be seen whether we can find support by facts.

A new covenant is promised to these people in the Old Testament. The old was only partially successful. Under it the people have defiled themselves, and were cast out and cursed to become wanderers amongst the nations of the world. The curse was to be taken off under this new covenant. If God's word is true, and if Jehovah can be trusted, then this nation must be now found in existence enjoying the benefits of this new covenant. We read about this new covenant in Jer.xxxi. 31: " Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." There is not the slightest doubt in the mind of the writer of the Hebrews as to what dispensation this promise refers. He quotes it verbatim in ch.viii; and we are told that Jesus Christ is the mediator of this better covenant, established on better promises. Therefore, in the New Testament, under the new covenant The House of Israel must be found.

Again, we read in the Old Testament that the seed of Abraham, which was of God's own choosing, was to be an everlasting nation. No amount of wickedness on their part would bring about their utter destruction. They were to be punished for their idolatry and sins, but this punishment was always remedial. The guarantee of the covenant rested on Jehovah's faithfulness and unchangeable character. "For I the Lord change not; therefore, O ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The covenant God made with Abraham was an everlasting covenant, and entirely unconditional in its promises. It could not have been everlasting if it had been conditional. Jehovah said to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an *everlasting covenant*, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (Gen.xvii. 7). This promise in itself would be sufficient. Yet we find it reaffirmed in Jer.xxxi.35, 36. There we read: "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name; If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." Now nothing could be more emphatic than this Scripture. And, therefore, the House of Israel must be in existence in the New Testament dispensation.

Some people say, yes, the promises of God are yea and amen, but there is no need to search for a lost House of Israel, for the Jews, whose existence no one denies, satisfy the requirements of the text. That may be an easy way of getting out of the difficulty, but it certainly does not solve it to the satisfaction of thinking people. Firstly, the promise was not made to the Jews only, or to the House of Israel only, but to all the seed of Abraham. Thus to say that Jehovah kept His promise to two tribes and not to the ten is to reflect on God's character. Secondly, in the text we read that the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a *nation*. Now, unfortunately, the Jews cannot be called a nation. They are a race scattered over the face of the earth, and the term nation is not applicable to them in their present condition. There is no getting out of it. The House of Israel, and not the House of Judah, is the living nation in this dispensation in the new covenant relationship.

Moreover, a third dispensation is to follow this present Christian dispensation, and it is to be ushered in by the joining together of the House of Israel and the House of Judah. This statement, if correct (and we shall prove it to be correct), at once does away with that peculiar and unscriptural notion of some people that the Jews represent the twelve tribes. How can the Jews be all Israel when we are definitely told that the day is coming when they will be joined with Israel?

Again, if at the end of this dispensation the House of Israel is to be united with the House of Judah, it is certainly logical to argue that the House of Israel must be existing now during this New Testament dispensation. Let us see what Scripture tells us about it. In Ezek.xxxvii. 19, 22, it is written: "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. 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." Scripture is indeed its own commentary. All we have to ascertain is whether we are facing here unfulfilled prophecy. As this is the case, and as we are undoubtedly living at the very close of this second dispensation, the House of Israel

must now be a nation in the world. And it is not fancy to suppose that the New Testament must contain some allusions to this people.

Finally, there is the promise of the land for an everlasting possession to Abraham and to his seed. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. xv. 18). St. Stephen tells us in his address, recorded in Acts vii. 5, that Abraham had no inheritance in the promised land. "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." The only conclusion we can draw from this is that the promise is yet waiting to be fulfilled. Abraham had no possession, yet his seed shall possess one day all the land given to him.

It is true the seed of Abraham did dwell in the land, but this was not an everlasting possession. They occupied the promised land for a time, and both Israel as well as Judah were driven out on account of their sins. Nor was that occupation complete, for it never went to the extent of the promise, viz., "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Therefore, the House of Israel must be in existence now in this Christian or New Testament dispensation, for in the coming third dispensation, joined with Judah, they are to occupy the land to the extent of the promise for an everlasting possession. We are praying and longing for that glorious consummation of that wonderful prophecy of Ezekiel in ch. xxxvii. 25, 27, "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. . . . Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

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