

The Restoration of Israel #1

Micah 4:6

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Rev. Greg L. Price

The prophet Zechariah speaks of a glorious time of restoration and repentance in Zechariah 12:10,12,14.

Certainly, this prophesied turning to Christ was realized in part when the apostles preached the gospel to the Jews in the early chapters of Acts and thousands became converts, but the full realization of this prophecy awaits yet a time most likely in the very near future when a vast majority of the Jews will weep with bitter tears of mourning and will acknowledge Christ to be their God, and their long awaited Messiah whom their fathers rejected and shamefully crucified. Can you imagine the effect such an event will have upon the nations when the Jews as a people will publicly acknowledge themselves to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you imagine the headlines in newspapers throughout the world? "Israel Turns to Christ." "Israel Embraces the Messiah She Once Crucified." This event will not be hid in a dark corner, but will be one of the signs signaling the inauguration of the Millennium.

David Brown depicts the unprecedented sight of Israel falling before the Lord Jesus in genuine faith and repentance, when he says,

Once he came to his own, and his own received him not. But "at the second time Joseph shall be made known to his brethren; and the house of Pharaoh shall hear the weeping" as one has touchingly said. O what an unexampled mourning that will be! ... But the most glorious feature of it will be its evangelical character. It will be the fruit of a believing "look upon Him whom they have pierced." ... And O, when they see that blood which as a nation they have murderously shed, turned into a fountain open to themselves for sin and for uncleanness—when they find their robes washed and made white in that very blood of the Lamb—how will they water a free pardon with their tears... how will they be disposed to exclaim to their Gentile brethren everywhere, "Come hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul!" (David Brown, *Christ's Second Coming—Will It Be Premillennial?* cited in *Hal Lindsey & The Restoration Of The Jews*, p.vi).

This Lord's Day we continue our study in the prophecy of Micah, and as we turn our attention away from the "many nations" that will flow like a mighty river into the Church of Jesus Christ in the "last days", we come to that wondrous truth revealed by God that He is not finished with His ancient covenanted people, Israel, but will yet draw her unto Himself with unbreakable cords of covenant love and grace. Here is a love story that few will be able to hear without awe and wonder at the mercy of God in Christ, and without tears and emotion stirring them from the bottom of their hearts.

The main points from part one of this sermon are these: (1) The Time of Israel's Reunion ; and (2) The Mercy of Israel's Reunion.

I. The Time of Israel's Reunion ("In that day" Micah 4:6a).

A. In what day will the Lord assemble halting Israel and gather His scattered people? "In that day." That is "in that day" when according to Micah 4:2 "many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob." In other words, at the time when Antichrist is destroyed, when Satan is bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations of the world, and the millennial kingdom is breaking forth among the nations of the earth, Israel's restoration will likewise be

breaking forth upon the earth.

B. There are several New Testament passages which address the restoration of Israel: Matthew 23:39; Acts 1:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:15-16; Romans 11 (particularly verses 12,15,24,25,26-29).

C. Listen to the words of that noble Reformed minister of Geneva and delegate to the Synod of Dordt, John Diodati. Commenting on Romans 11:15 he notes:

This re-establishment of the Jews ought to be desired of all believers, because that if upon occasion of their rejection, the Gentiles have had part in God's grace through the Gospel, by their [i.e. the Jew's—GLP] recalling they [i.e. the Gentiles—GLP] shall obtain a joy and glory much like to the Heavenly one, by the spiritual resurrection of this so noble part [i.e. the spiritual resurrection of Israel as a people—GLP], which shall be accompanied with a glorious manifestation of Christ's kingdom, and admirable effects.

Then again Diodati clarifies who the "all Israel" is in Romans 11:26:

That is, the body of the people in general shall be put again into the way of salvation, and re-established into the communion of the Church.

D. Some have sought to limit this great ingathering of Israel identified by Paul to the first few chapters of Acts wherein thousands responded to the gospel (or to those individual Jews that have come to Christ throughout the gospel period). Although what occurred in the early ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem was the powerful effect of the gospel being brought to Israel, it was only a token or first fruits of their future ingathering as a whole. For Paul makes it clear in Romans 11:5 that those Jews that were coming to Christ during the ministry of the apostles were but an elect remnant of Israel. But this relatively small remnant of Israel that professed faith in Christ during the period of the apostles is contrasted with the "fullness" of Israel that will be subsequently gathered to the Lord according to Romans 11:12 and to the "all Israel" that will come to Christ according to Romans 11:26. When will the blindness that presently falls over the eyes of Israel as a whole be removed? "Until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). Thus, all we may expect during this present time is that a remnant of Israel will come to Christ, but when Israel as a people is grafted back into her olive tree, all Israel will be saved (i.e. the greater number of Israel as a people will be brought into the Church of Jesus Christ).

E. Listen to the words of the renowned teacher of continental Reformed theology, Francis Turretin, who has stated succinctly the time when the restoration of Israel will occur:

Therefore, let it suffice to know that there will be a remarkable conversion of the Jews before the end of the world; not that all will be converted, but that many will, to whom the denomination of "all Israel" can be applied (Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, 3:587).

F. Likewise, we see the same truth clearly displayed in the sermon which the learned and godly George Gillespie, commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, preached before the House of Commons:

But there is a third thing aimed at in this prophecy [Ezekiel 43:11—GLP]... which is the repairing of the breaches and ruins of the Christian church, and the building up of Zion in her glory, about the time of the destruction of Antichrist and the conversion of the Jews; and this happiness hath the Lord reserved to the last times (George Gillespie, "A Sermon Preached Before The Honourable House of Commons", March 27, 1644, *Works*, 1:7).

G. Others have sought to identify the “all Israel” that shall be saved (Romans 11:26) with that of all the elect from both Jews and Gentiles. But such an interpretation does not do justice to the context of Romans 11 which is the salvation of Israel collectively, and not the salvation of individual members of Israel here and there throughout the gospel period (“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid” Romans 11:1). Furthermore, making “all Israel” (in Romans 11:26) to refer to the elect from among both Jew and Gentiles does not do justice to the “mystery” referred to in Romans 11:25. Nor does it do justice to the consistent use of the term “Israel” to refer to God’s ancient people in contrast to “Gentiles” throughout Romans 11.

H. Now although Calvin advocates this view in his *Commentary* on Romans 11, it is interesting to note that the Scotch and English refugees living in Geneva (namely those like Knox and Goodman) published in 1560 (just 4 years before the death of Calvin) the Geneva Bible with its marginal notes, which notes on Romans 11:15,26 clearly anticipate the future restoration of Israel as a people:

He [i.e. Paul—GLP] sheweth that the time shall come that the whole nation of the Jews, though not every one particularly, shall be joined to the church of Christ (*Geneva Bible Notes* on Romans 11:15,26).

I. Finally, that great light of the Dutch Reformed Church, Herman Witsius, declares concerning Israel’s reunion with her Lord:

[T]he Jews are in due time to be converted from their rebellion and transgressions... As this is not yet accomplished, as to the whole body of the Israelites, and yet the scripture must be fulfilled, the apostle [Paul—GLP] has justly inferred, that in the last times it will be perfectly fulfilled (Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, 2:417).

II. **The Mercy of Israel’s Reunion (“In that day, saith the LORD will I assemble her that halteth” Micah 4:6b).**

A. Here is detailed for us one of the most amazing testimonies of God’s grace. God promises to assemble His ancient people that He maimed due to their sin and to gather her again unto Himself that was driven out of the house due to her harlotries.

B. When we consider the history of Israel, we are reminded time and again that God did not choose this people because they were lovable or righteous (because of some merit in them). He chose them to magnify His love and mercy (Deuteronomy 9:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Remember the many times they tested the Lord in the wilderness after He miraculously delivered them by His grace out of Egypt? And consider that throughout the period of the judges, the same cycle is repeated time and time again: God delivers Israel from her oppressors; Israel backslides from God; God sends the nations upon her to chastise her; Israel repents; and then the cycle starts again. Throughout the period of the prophets is God not continuously citing the many acts of backsliding committed against a faithful covenant Husband? Is He not pleading with His bride to return to Him?

C. Here is a love story in which the Lord takes a people to be His bride, who are from the very beginning infatuated with other lovers. But out of His own covenant love for His bride, He will not utterly forsake her. The Lord showers Israel with His salvation. He bestows upon her a land, and gives her good laws to direct her. He appoints her kings after His own heart to lead her. He mercifully warns her by His prophets that if she continues in her backsliding ways that He will send His judgment upon her. What more could the Lord do to manifest His love for His bride? I’ll tell you what more He did to demonstrate His love for His ancient people. He Himself became flesh and dwelt among her—He came unto His own wife in the person of

the Son of God, but she received Him not. He not only sent His messengers to convey His love to His unfaithful bride, but he came to her in person. He healed her sick, raised her dead, and offered eternal life to her. But what did she do? She had Him beat, spat upon, mocked, and crucified. In return for His love, He received her hatred and scorn.

D. And if that were not enough, Israel (as a whole) has continued for nearly 2,000 years in that hatred for her heavenly Husband. And still the Lord will manifest His everlasting love for His ancient people by renewing His covenant with her in the very near future and granting to her a genuine spirit of brokenness and contriteness. O, the deep, deep sorrow and grief that will be heard throughout Israel in that glorious day. But O, the deep, deep love that will well up within her for Christ in that glorious day as she embraces the Lord Jesus and the gospel of salvation.

E. I quoted earlier from Herman Witsius, but I did not finish his statement which emphasizes this very truth, namely, that God has voluntarily bound Himself by covenant to fulfil His covenant love and promises to Israel:

[T]he Jews are in due time to be converted from their rebellion and transgressions... As this is not yet accomplished, as to the whole body of the Israelites, and yet the scripture must be fulfilled, the apostle [Paul—GLP] has justly inferred, that in the last times it will be perfectly fulfilled. For, seeing the foundation thereof is God's covenant with Israel, and this is a firm covenant, stable, immutable, and suspended on no ambiguous condition... it is not possible but that every thing shall happen exactly, according to the promise and prediction. And this is my covenant with them, saith God... All this being addressed to the whole body of the nation [of Israel—GLP], it must of necessity be fulfilled at the appointed time (Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, 2:417).

F. I would have you note an analogy between the calling of Paul and the calling of Israel in the last days. The conversion of the Apostle Paul beautifully illustrates on the individual level what will be true of Israel on the corporate level. Just as Paul, the Jew, exclaimed that he was the chief of sinners because he persecuted the church and blasphemed the holy name of Christ, so will Israel do in the last days. Just as Paul never forgot his blasphemy and persecution of Christ, but brought every thought of his regretful past into captivity to the grace of Christ by declaring, "I am what I am by the grace of God", so Israel will do likewise as they mournfully reflect upon their blasphemy and persecution.

G. But dear ones, are we Gentiles not guilty of similar sins to that of Israel. Whose idolatry, blasphemy, pride, envy, hatred, and lust sent Christ to the cross? Was it not yours and mine as much as Israel's? We put Him on the cross and had we lived at that time, apart from the grace of God, we too would have joined the Jews in crucifying our Lord. The same covenant love that shall redeem Israel in the future is the same covenant love that has redeemed us and given us the heritage of the sons of God. By considering the love of God for His people Israel, we grow to understand the love of God for us as well.

H. When the love of Christ is earnestly embraced, it breaks the hardest of hearts, it draws us to Christ rather than sending us fleeing from Christ, and it compels us like nothing else will to love Him and take up our cross daily to follow him wherever He leads. We can follow such a One into the fiery furnace, through a dry and thirsty land, and even through the valley of the shadow of death, because we know whatever He brings into our lives is because He loves us. Such a love does not foster license to sin, but rather thankful submission to His loving yoke. His love for His people will never ever let them go, for no one or nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. I close by relating to you a portion of the familiar parable of the prodigal son. For in that parable, we observe that when the younger son returned in sincere brokenness and humility to his father's house, the older brother rather than rejoicing, sulked, indulged in self-righteousness, and charged his father with being unfair in not inviting him and his friends to their own feast. This illustrated to all who had ears to hear that the Jews as a people likewise sulked, indulged in self-righteousness, and charged the Lord with unfair treatment because the Lord freely welcomed sinners (publican, harlots, and Gentiles) to His banqueting table. If I might continue the same theme, the elder brother (i.e. the Jews) became filled with such a self-righteous indignation over the grace extended to the younger brother (the Gentile sinners), and hatred for the Father (even the Lord Jesus Christ) that they turned their backs upon the Lord, persecuted the younger brother, and were cast out of the house of the Lord to wander from one pig sty to another for 2,000 years. But in these last days, the elder brother (Israel) shall be made alive to Christ and shall return to the Lord and shall embrace Christ and weep upon his neck and shall declare himself unworthy of the least blessing from Christ. But our merciful Christ will call for the fatted calf, the royal robe, the sandals, and the ring. He will bring the elder brother back into the household of faith, there to be united with the younger brother. At that time, the younger brother will not sulk in self-righteousness or foolishly charge Christ with unfairness, but will stand beside the Lord to welcome the older brother back into the family and so shall the Lord's house be made complete throughout that millennial kingdom.

J. How appropriate, therefore, are the words of Samuel Rutherford as he describes the reunion of the older brother (Israel) to Christ (from *Rutherford's Letters*, pp. 122,123):

O to see the sight, next to Christ's Coming in the clouds, the most joyful! Our elder brethren the Jews and Christ fall upon one another's necks and kiss each other! They have been long asunder; they will be kind to one another when they meet. O day! O longed-for and lovely day-dawn! O sweet Jesus, let me see that sight which will be as life from the dead, thee and thy ancient people in mutual embraces.

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