

WHAT THE PROPHETS HAD TO SAY [REDUX]

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The first time I preached this message was at the Grace Fellowship Bible Conference at the Omega Baptist Church in Arley, Alabama on September 20th of this year. My turn to speak was after Brother Jim Gables and Brother Bobby Amos and although we did not collaborate on what we were going to preach about all three messages had to do with the same basic theme, viz. how the OT prophets proclaimed the gospel. Gables: The Suffering Messiah according to the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah; Amos: Who are the Children of the Promise; and my message: **What the Prophets Had to Say.**

The Arley version of this message has been on Sermon Audio for about three weeks now and over 120 people have downloaded it to their computer. I would have to preach this message three or four times here at Vineland Park in order to have that many people hear it.

[As of February 2009 the number of downloads is 282]

The theme of this message is on the main burden of the prophets and is the distillation of many years of the study of prophecy and though I make no claim to superior knowledge of the subject I do believe that the Lord has given me some insight that cuts through much of the confusion about eschatology or the end times and allows us to truly grasp **“What the Prophets Had to Say.”**

After Brother Gables’ message last Sunday from the Lord’s Model Prayer, “Thy Kingdom Come,” it was impressed on my mind that I needed to interrupt my series on the Book of Revelation and preach a “new and improved” version of “What the Prophets Had to Say.”

If you are going to understand the Bible it is vital that you understand at least these two things: 1) The nature of the Kingdom of God, and, 2) What was the main burden of the Old Testament prophets. If you possibly can, please listen to my message and try not to dwell on your arguments against my points. Make notes and after I have concluded I more than welcome anyone to question or challenge what I have preached.

Please don't get hung up with your "what about's" i.e. but, what about this text? There will be plenty of time for that, so I urge you to follow me. I did not start with an eschatological system and then make my message fit my preconceived notions. I honestly tried to take the Bible as it unfolds the message of redemption of the children of God.

My theory of preaching: Tell you what I am going to tell you;
Tell you;
And tell you what I told you.

The **first thing** that I am going to tell you is that the Kingdom of God / the Kingdom of Heaven [the same in Scripture] is not a geopolitical entity in Palestine or any other place on this earth. Brother Gables made it very clear that the Kingdom of God is made up of souls who have come under subjection to King Jesus. The kingdom of God is not a race or segment of people Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, or otherwise.

Jesus the Christ said in Luke 17:20-21:

What was the nature of the Kingdom that the Pharisees expected?

**Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!'"
For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."**

Many people in our day are making the same wrong assumption about the Kingdom of God. They are anticipating a geopolitical rule in Palestine just like the Pharisees did and they are just as mistaken.

For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.

That's the first thing and the **second thing** that I am going to tell you is that God deals with **individuals** in the matter of justification. Put it out of your mind that God ever has or ever will justify a lost sinner based on his or her birth certificate.

If that **singular truth** ever makes its way into your brain you will be able to discard all of the ideas of a national restoration of Israel after the flesh.

This misunderstanding comes from confusing the blessings that God conferred on the Hebrew people with **justification** as to the guilt of sin and condemnation.

Notice three passages of Scripture in the New Testament that point us to the main message of the Old Testament prophets. Now there are many more such references but these three are sufficient to make the point.

Acts 10:43

To Him [Christ] all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

That is, the OT prophets witnessed to the gospel.

Luke 24:25-27

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Revelation 19:10

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

That is, the prophets foretold a suffering Messiah and not a restoration of Israel after the flesh.

Now that I have told you what I am going to tell you, I will tell you What the Prophets Had to Say.

What then was the main burden of the OT prophets? It is true that various prophets were sent to warn the people and to condemn wicked kings and to warn idolatrous peoples of impending judgment; but underlying almost everything that the prophets had to say was the message of Christ and the eternal purpose of His coming into the world in human flesh, His impeccable life, **His vicarious suffering**, His victory over hell and sin and death and Satan, in His resurrection and ascension into the glory that He had with the Father before the foundation of the world.

It is my strong conviction that everything that Jesus of Nazareth did and said was to fulfill the words of the OT prophets. E.g., there is one rather obscure prophecy that Jesus Christ fulfilled that I had not discovered until I read about it in the works of Mr. Charles D. Alexander [CDA].

We all know that Jesus walked upon the sea and that He told the raging storm to “shut up”! But do you know where that is prophesied in the OT? Look at Job 9:8.

Job, who was a prophet, said this about God:

**He alone spreads out the heavens,
And treads on the waves of the sea;**

Charles Alexander writes:

“Jesus walks among the prophets.”

The popular teaching in our day is that the prophets in the Old Testament were chiefly concerned with the nation of Israel and its eventual restoration to the land of Palestine. The prophets did indeed prophesy about the restoration of the Jews to the land of Palestine but as we shall see the fulfillment of those prophecies is not what the popular preachers believe it to be. The Scriptures reveal a much deeper meaning to the words of the prophets; words that had a deeper meaning than even the prophets who spoke the words did not fully understand.

Some leading proponents of the popular teaching say that we must understand the OT prophecies **just as the Jews understood them** in the time of Christ’s humiliation. But that interpretation of the prophets led the Jewish leaders to reject Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and because He did not set up a political-geographical kingdom as they expected, they killed Him! So much for understanding the OT prophets as the Jews understood them.

The Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that has no geographical boundaries; whose subjects have submitted to King Jesus as sovereign Lord. And His kingdom is now, not waiting for some time in the distant future to be established. That is where the tension lies; if the kingdom has geographical boundaries then it is not yet established. Ah, but if His kingdom is spiritual [which every NT reference says that it is] then Jesus reigns now!

As to how much understanding the OT prophets themselves had, this is what the inspired Apostle Peter wrote: The context is the salvation of sinners.

1 Peter 1:10-12

10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into.

The OT prophets spoke about Christ and His church and the prophets themselves did not have that truth fully revealed to them. The meaning of what they spoke was not fully known until the inspired NT apostles interpreted the OT prophecies.

Now if any man undertakes the task of exposition of the Scriptures he must have a set of “Principles of Interpretation”. That is, he must follow certain principles that guide his understanding of one passage of Scripture as he compares it with another passage. So let me briefly state my “Principles of Interpretation”. It is not required that you agree with me, but if you disagree you should at least have your own “Principles of Interpretation”.

Principles of Bible Interpretation

My principles of Bible interpretation assumes an inerrant, infallible, and plenary Scriptures as contained in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The essential truth has been preserved in valid word-for-word translations such as KJV, NKJV, and the ESV.

The Bible alone is the Word of God and is authoritative over all mankind and is the sufficient revelation of Jesus Christ under the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are no contradictions in the Scripture. When anyone thinks they have found two passages that seem to contradict each other they have misunderstood either one or both of the passages.

My theology is Sovereign Grace, Baptist, and Evangelistic. I believe in the Analogy of Scripture. Compare Scripture with Scripture and use clearer passages to interpret the more obscure passages.

My First Principle of Interpretation is the focus of the Bible:

What is the Bible mainly about? Is the focus of the entire Bible on a race of people called Israel {the Jews, Israel after the flesh} or is the focus of the Bible on Christ and His Church {the Israel of God}. Is the Bible mainly about the Jews or is the Bible mainly about the Christ and His Church? Of course the Bible is about both the Jews and the Church but I mean its end objective, its primary focus!

My reference to the Church is the complete number of the redeemed of the Lord from the Garden of Eden to the calling and justification of the last one of God's elect.

Well then, is the OT about the Jews, and the NT about the Church? Is the Church to be found in the OT? Will the Jews be finally restored to the land and to prominence in the grand scheme of things?

* * *

Or is the Bible about Christ and His Church in **both** the OT and the NT?

You must understand that these two views on the focus of the Bible are so radically opposed that there is no room for compromise. One view is right and the other view is wrong. They cannot both be right!

And so my **First Principle of Interpretation** is on how you view the focus of the Bible: Jews after the flesh or Christ and His Church.

My Second Principle of Interpretation is that the NT explains the OT:

When an inspired writer of the NT interprets an OT prophecy that is what the prophecy meant. It does not matter what the prophet himself may have thought it meant or what the Jews in the time of Christ's humiliation thought it meant.

Did the Jews correctly understand the prophecies about the Messiah that He must suffer and die? No, their concept of Messiah was of an earthly King and when they understood that Jesus had no intention of setting up an earthly government according to their ideas they killed Him. They misunderstood the nature of Christ's Kingdom just as many Bible teachers do in our day that blindly follow the Rabbis and their misconceptions.

Of course in their misunderstanding of the nature of Messiah's Kingdom they were fulfilling prophecy; but not because it was their intention to do so.

My Third Principle of Interpretation:

There is only **one** Gospel and all who are saved are justified by grace through faith. Does not Paul in Romans Chapter Four, use Abraham to show justification by faith? Abraham did not have the details about Jesus of Nazareth but he had the faith to believe that God would provide a Sufficient Substitute. By the way, Abraham was not a Jew and he is surely in the Church and I believe he lived in the times of the OT. Is that not the Church in the OT?

Those who cannot find the Church in the OT are blinded by their preconceived notions. There is one Gospel and there is one body of Christ, the Church of the Redeemed and it is made up of individuals, individual Gentiles and individual Jews; **individuals**, from the Garden of Eden until the last one of God's individual elect is called by the Holy Spirit and justified by grace through faith alone.

Individuals! There has never been a nation or a race of people that were all justified. It is always individuals that are justified by faith. God has never justified anyone based on their birth certificate and He never will.

What I believe and what I must preach is the view that the Bible is primarily about Christ and what Christ has done for His Church.

The focus of the entire Bible is on the Christ and His Church.

Because the focus of the Bible is on Christ and His Church you must see that there are **two Israel's** in the Bible.

Romans 9:6-8

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

One Israel {the children of the flesh} is the nation that came into existence when God miraculously delivered the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt and through Moses gave them the law.

Circumcision and diet and sabbath-keeping set the Hebrews apart from all the other peoples on the earth. But that had absolutely nothing to do with individual justification.

the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God

The Hebrews were commanded to be a light to the Gentiles, to be missionaries; a charge from God which they utterly failed to obey.

The other Israel is the Church. In Galatians 6:16 the Church is called the “Israel of God” and the seed of Abraham according to the promise in Romans 9:8.

but the children of the promise are counted as the seed

All of the promises that God made to national Israel concerning a land have been fulfilled or forfeited because of unbelief. Read all of the promises of a land and see that they are contingent on obedience. There is no future national Israel.

It saddens and amuses me that those who can find all of the OT prophecies about Israel being restored to the land can't find that every such promise was contingent on their obedience.

The modern country in the Middle East that is called Israel is not the Israel of God's prophecy in the OT. Israel as a nation disappeared when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.

Not one living person today or at any time in the future can prove that he is a Jew. All the genealogical records were destroyed and after centuries of intermarriage there is no such person as an ethnic “Jew”.

Besides that, Paul defines a Jew:

Romans 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

I am a Jew circumcised in the spirit and I hope that you are one as well because if you are not a spiritual Jew then you are yet dead in trespasses and sins.

The Church and Israel after the flesh are clearly described in Galatians 4:21-31.

We will not take the time now to expound this allegory of two women, two sons, two covenants, and two Jerusalem's. Study it carefully for yourself and ask what sense can be made of this passage if the allegory does not mean that the "Jerusalem which now is" are the "children of the flesh," and the "Jerusalem above" are the offspring of the true Son of the promise and is the Church who are the "children of the promise."

That is the doctrine of the Church and it is found in the OT, is it not?

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25.

The Church is the final object of the love of God in Christ and there is nothing to follow the Church. When Christ returns that is the end of "this present age" and the "age to come" continues forever. You can search your Bibles through and through and you will find that there are only two ages named; "this present age" and "the age to come."

Now I have made some bold claims and to back them up I will now deal with:

WHAT THE PROPHETS HAD TO SAY

Search the New Testament and see what its writers say was the message of the OT prophets. The OT prophets spoke of Christ and His Church. I know that you know this but be reminded of only a few passages out of the many in the NT about the message of the OT prophets; i.e. **What the Prophets Had to Say.**

Matthew 26:55-56

55 In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. 56 But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Luke 10:23-24

23 Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; 24 for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

Luke 18:31-33

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. 33 They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Luke 24:25-27

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

John 1:45

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Acts 3:18

18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Acts 3:17-26

17 "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." 27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

Acts 10:43

To Him [Christ] all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Acts 24:14

14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets .

Acts 26:22-23

22 Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come — 23 that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

Acts 28:23

23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

Romans 1:1-4

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Romans 3:21-22

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

Ephesians 2:19-20

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Revelation 19:10

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

These references are only some of the many NT passages that refer to the message of the OT prophets.

There are many other connections such as Jesus' answer to the Pharisees when they asked Him for a sign.

Matthew 12:38-40

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

What I am saying is that the main burden of the prophets in the OT was to show that when the Christ came that He must suffer and die and rise again from the dead.

Now the prophets had another burden that is directly related to the Christ and that was to lay the foundation for the New Testament local church that would be made up of elect Jews and elect Gentiles in the same body with **no privileges belonging to the Jew.**

It took a revelation from God to Peter before Peter could receive this truth; the truth that God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile in the matter of justification. And yet the majority of Bible teachers today still insist that Israel after the flesh and the Church are two separate entities and that they never come together in the same body.

There is the NT local church that often includes those who make false professions of faith [the tares among the wheat] but it is a local visible body. The Invisible Church includes all of God's elect from all peoples from all time.

The invisible Church has always included Gentiles: Abraham was a Gentile? At least Abraham lived and died in faith before there was a Hebrew nation.

But even godly Jewish men had centuries of prejudice to overcome. The Jews believed that they were not subject to the wrath of God because they were God's chosen people; just as so many make the same error in our day. Paul corrected that error in Romans 3. The Jews were God's chosen people but not as to **justification.**

They were God's chosen people to serve as a repository for the Scriptures and to honor God as a separated people through circumcision and diet and sabbath-keeping.

Most importantly, the Jews were to be missionaries to the Gentiles; they were to be a light to the Gentiles. They were to tell the nations about the only true God and in this mission they utterly failed.

So when the local church was instituted on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem it was first made up only of Jews. But immediately the purpose of God to have Gentiles and Jews in the same body became an issue.

Let's now see how the inspired writers of the NT applied the OT prophets to the make up of the local church.

WHAT THE PROPHETS HAD TO SAY

The NT interprets the OT and not the other way around.

When James, or Peter, or Paul makes a NT application of an OT prophecy that should satisfy us. But there are those that deny this principle of interpretation and insist that most of the OT prophecies about national Israel are yet to be fulfilled and that they must be fulfilled literally and that the OT prophecies do not have any spiritual application in the OT to Christ or to the Church.

A well-known, now deceased, Bible teacher wrote: "To take the promises God gave to Abraham and apply them to the Church is nothing short of spiritual robbery. To spiritualize Israel and teach that the Church has taken the place of God's chosen people is to wrongly divide the Word of Truth."
Daniel, by Oliver Greene, page 343.

But that is precisely what the inspired NT writers did!

The prophets did not speak for themselves.

Cf. Isaiah 8:18 with Hebrews 2:13b

Isaiah 8:18
18 Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me!
We are for signs and wonders in Israel
From the LORD of hosts,
Who dwells in Mount Zion.

Without going into the historical context of Isaiah chapter 8, Isaiah is presenting his two sons to King Ahaz:

Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me!

But the writer of Hebrews, who I take to be Paul, because I am not sophisticated enough to believe otherwise, interpreted what Isaiah said in the OT to have reference to the NT Church.

Turn to Hebrews 2:10-13 and see that the context is the redeemed of the Lord, i.e., the Church.

Hebrews 2:10-13

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying:

**"I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."**

13 And again:

"I will put My trust in Him."

And again:

"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

Paul takes a statement made by Isaiah in the OT about his two literal sons and applies that statement spiritually to **all of the children of God!**

Isaiah did not understand it that way but Paul says that is what the statement about the "children whom God has given me" meant.

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Take another example. Cf. Acts 15:13-18 where James quotes Amos 9:11-12.

Turn to Amos 9 and hold your place and then find Acts 15.

The context of Acts 15 is the Jerusalem Council where the issue is whether or not a Gentile man had to become a Jew before he could become a Christian. The Judaizers insisted that a man must be circumcised in the flesh before he could become a Christian [Acts 15:1].

Before we get to James' inspired exposition of Amos 9 there is the most marvelous statement made by Peter in Acts 15:11. Consider carefully the order of Peter's words.

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we [we Jews] shall be saved in the same manner as they [the Gentiles]”

Don't you see what Peter learned? The Jews are saved just like the Gentiles and not that the Gentiles are saved like the Jews! Justification is by grace through faith alone and it is always individuals and God's calling and justification spans all of human history. There is only one Gospel and one Savior and everyone who is saved, has been saved or will be saved, is justified in the same way: by grace through faith alone in the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is no Jewish salvation and another Gentile salvation but that is the import of what the most popular preachers teach.

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Now for James' inspired exposition of Amos, read Amos 9:11-15.

**"On that day I will raise up
The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down,
And repair its damages;
I will raise up its ruins,
And rebuild it as in the days of old;
12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom,
And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,"
Says the LORD who does this thing.**

**13 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD,
"When the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
The mountains shall drip with sweet wine,
And all the hills shall flow with it.
14 I will bring back the captives of My people Israel;
They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them;
They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.
15 I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up
From the land I have given them,"
Says the LORD your God. NKJV**

But what is this business of the “tabernacle of David” and all the “Gentiles who are called by My name”. What is the “tabernacle of David?” David’s tabernacle is not a physical tent. David’s tabernacle is spiritually the people of God that include, “Gentiles who are called by My name”.

* * *

Arthur Pink writes:

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by My name, saith the LORD that doeth this” (Amos 9:11, 12). We are not left to guess at the meaning of this prophecy, for its terms are infallibly explained to us in the New Testament. After Peter had related to the church at Jerusalem how that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the household of Cornelius, James affirmed, “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit *the Gentiles*, to take out of them a people for His name. *And to this agree* the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:14-17).

“David’s tabernacle was to be rebuilt, and his kingdom restored by the Messiah, but in a *spiritual* way, for the ‘tabernacle of David’ designs the spiritual kingdom or church of Christ. . . . ‘And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up,’ which has been done by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and letting in the latter into the Gospel church with the former. . . .’ That the residue of men might seek after the Lord,’ the Builder and Proprietor of this tabernacle, and who dwells in it; that is, attend His worship, pray unto Him, and seek unto Him for life and salvation. In Amos those are called ‘the remnant of Edom,’ and design the remnant according to the election of grace among the Gentiles-the Jews generally call all other nations, and especially the Roman Empire, Edom” (John Gill).

* * *

Now listen carefully. If you did not have the NT to interpret the prophet Amos you could only conclude that Amos is prophesying about the restoration of national Israel. And that may well be what Amos thought it meant.

But when James under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit interprets Amos as referring to the Gentiles being in the Church along with the Jews then that is what it means. It does not matter what you think it means; if you disagree with the inspired apostle you are wrong!

It is most likely that James understood Amos to mean the restoration of national Israel UNTIL the Holy Spirit spoke through him. It is also important to see that James does not try to explain what Amos thought it meant because now that does not matter at all. But that principle is what the popular preachers insist upon. Listen to James:

Acts 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. 13 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: 14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

**16'After! this I will return
And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down;
I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will set it up;
17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,
Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,
Says the LORD who does all these things.'**

18 "Known to God from eternity are all His works. NKJV

Here is the Church in the OT; Gentiles and Jews in the same body.

* * *

This is exactly what Paul taught in Romans 11.

Romans 11:11-27

12 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. 15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

**"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins."**

Don't be ignorant! If you are ignorant you can be taught. Being ignorant is not the same as being stupid. "Stupid is as stupid does."

Brothers and sisters the "mystery" that Paul did not want you to be ignorant of was not that there **would be** a local church but it is the **makeup** of the local church with Gentiles and Jews together in the same body.

The church is not an afterthought of God brought in because the Jews "rejected" a kingdom; serving as a "parenthesis"; to be "raptured" out before the "kingdom" is set up. The church is the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus and there is nothing to follow the church.

Romans 11 is about a **single** olive tree, not a Gentile olive tree and a Jewish olive tree, but Gentiles and Jews together in the same body.

Most importantly:

Verses 25-26 are not a chronological **order** of events, i.e. first the Gentiles and then the Jews. No! It is the **manner** in which “all Israel” will be saved. Individual Gentiles and individual Jews [a remnant] make up “all Israel”.

Take a look at Romans 9:22-29.

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, **23** and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, **24** even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25 As He says also in Hosea:

"I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved."

26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,
' You are not My people,'
There they shall be called sons of the living God."

27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,
The remnant will be saved.

28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness,
Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."

29 And as Isaiah said before:

"Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed,
We would have become like Sodom,
And we would have been made like Gomorrah."

Before you will ever correctly understand Romans 11:26, you must study the context of Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11. Paul clearly defines the “Israel” of 11:26 as individual Gentiles and the remnant of the Jews. The verses above show that Paul interprets the prophecy of Hosea to refer to the Gentiles and that of Isaiah to mean a **remnant** of the Jews.

It is noteworthy that Isaiah “cries out” i.e. Isaiah was shocked to have to say that it is only a remnant of the Jews that will be saved.

Now your preconceived notion will interpret who “all Israel” is in verse 26.

The only way to make “all Israel” refer only to the Jews is to bring that notion to the text because that is not what the verse in its context says.

“Never underestimate the power of a preconceived notion.” Charles Alexander

* * *

One of the most significant things that I learned about OT prophecy is from John L. Bray. Writing about prophecies of the restoration of national Israel:

“As to the Old Testament, I have already pointed out how that any promises made as to a restoration to the Land, were fulfilled when they returned from Babylon, etc., as recorded in the Bible, and that after that no more such promises were ever made. All the prophecies used by the Bible teachers today to try to prove a future or present restoration of Israel to Palestine, are prophecies made prior to their restoration as God promised in the past. And many of the prophecies included future fulfillment in the sense of spiritual blessing found in Christianity, couched in highly symbolical language that are best understood as God intended them to be.”

John L. Bray, “Israel in Bible Prophecy” [Page 54]

After I read that claim I was stunned at the **simplicity** of his point. I took the time and read through the prophets before and after the return of the Jews from Babylon and learned for myself that Mr. Bray was exactly correct.

There are no prophecies of restoration **after** the return from Babylon. And there is not a word in the NT about a restoration of national Israel. Be careful with your proof texts because you have to impose your preconceived notions on the NT text in order to make it say what you think it does.

Prophets before the return to Jerusalem from Babylon from 870 to 540 B.C.: The Babylonian Captivity was 586-539 B.C.

Obadiah, Joel [Elijah & Elisha], Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel.

Prophets after the return to Jerusalem from Babylon from 540 to 500 B.C.:

Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi make no prophecies of restoration.

And there is absolutely nothing about a restoration of national Israel in the NT!

Look again at Romans 11 and see that the context is the single olive tree made up of Gentiles and Jews in one local body and that it says nothing at all about a restoration to the land. If that is your interpretation I say as kindly as I can you brought that preconceived notion to the passage because that is not what the passage is about.

* * *

If you want to see the doctrine of the church read Ephesians 1, 2, and 3. Nothing could be plainer than what Paul writes in Ephesians about the Church being composed of Gentiles and Jews in one body of Christ.

Ephesians 2:11-22

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh — who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands — 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 3:1-13

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

The message of the prophets was about Christ and His Church. Ephesians 3:11 says that the eternal purpose of God is to have Gentiles and Jews together in the same body, the Church!

I told you what I was going to tell you, I told you, and now I will tell you what I told you.

In my opinion the two greatest misunderstandings about the Bible and OT prophecy are: 1) The nature of the Kingdom of God; that the kingdom is a geopolitical entity and not a spiritual kingdom; and, 2) That God justifies the Jews because they are Jews and not as individuals in the exact same way that God justifies Gentiles.

The OT prophets were mainly about the Messiah who would suffer and die and not about some imagined geopolitical entity, and earthly kingdom in Palestine. The focus of the Bible, OT and NT, is on the Christ and His Church and not on national Israel or the Jews. There are two Israel's in Scripture; Israel after the flesh and the Israel of God which is the church, the children of the promise.

“In the Old Testament God meant what He said; in the New Testament God says what He meant.” John Wilmot

The New Testament interprets the Old Testament.

The covenant promises to Israel after the flesh in the OT have all been fulfilled in history, or forfeited due to unbelief, or they were meant for Christ and His Church. There is nothing more to be fulfilled as far as a literal land is concerned.

God deals with **individuals** and not nations in the matter of salvation [justification]. There has never been a nation in which everyone was a believer. God has always included elect Gentiles and the elect remnant of the Jews in His church.

I will conclude with two NT passages that refer to the church:

John 10:15-16

15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

John 11:45-52

Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

* * *

If you have any theory of prophecy that does not lead to personal sanctification and that glorifies Christ and His Church discard it. Prophecy is not a calendar. OT prophecy has mainly to do with Christ and His kingdom and His Church.

THAT IS WHAT THE PROPHETS HAD TO SAY

ADDENDUM

The term "Israel" never did stand exclusively in prophecy for the twelve literal tribes descended from Jacob. Paul in Romans describes TWO ISRAELS, the earthly and the heavenly. He declares that in Romans 9:6-8

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

* * *

God entered into a covenant with Abraham whereby He promised to do certain things for him and for his posterity. He renewed His covenant to Isaac, Jacob, and Israel [Exodus 2:23-25; 6:1-9; Psalm 105:7-10]

Exodus 2:23-25

23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

Exodus 6:1-9

**Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."
2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. 4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. 5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. 6 Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 7 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as**

a heritage: I am the LORD.'" 9 So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.

Psalm 105:7-12

**7 He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
8 He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,
9 The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
10 And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
11 Saying, To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,"
12 When they were few in number,
Indeed very few, and strangers in it.**

God promised to make His people great. He promised them wisdom. He promised them victory over their foes. He promised them peace. He promised them all sorts of blessings [Deuteronomy 28:1-14].

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

**3 "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.
4 "Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.
5 "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.
6 "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.
7 "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.
8 "The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.
9 "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.
10 Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. 11 And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. 12**

The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. 13 And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. 14 So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

It is a continuing puzzle to me how those who can find all the promises made to Israel after the flesh and insist on their future fulfillment cannot also find that every such promise as to its carnal fulfillment was contingent on obedience.

Sometime around 50 A.D. a little group of Jews were huddled together on the Sabbath in a strange city. They were still waiting for God to fulfill His promise [or promises] which He had made to their fathers. They were not a great people. They had not had victory over their foes, for the heel of Rome was heavy upon them. They had no peace. They had no king or kingdom. They had none of the things that the Scriptures promised God would do for them.

There were a couple of visitors in the synagogue that day, apparently visitors from the home country who might bring them some encouraging news. When invited to speak, Paul stood up and said.... [Pay attention to this! The news that Paul brought to these people must have been the most astounding thing any congregation had ever heard. Listen!]

Acts 13:26-33

26 "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. 27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. 28 And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. 29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead. 31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 And we declare to you glad tidings — that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus....

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was declared to be the fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham, Israel, and David. Here we have these people still waiting for the fulfillment of what God had promised Israel, and the apostle came and told them the absolutely startling news that it had already been fulfilled.

Did God promise Israel victory over all her foes? The good news is that Jesus had obtained the victory for them. Did God promise He would give them peace...and wisdom? Jesus was their peace [Ephesians 2:15] and their wisdom [1 Cor 1:30]. Did God promise to make Israel great? All power in heaven had been given to the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ [Matt 28:18]. Did God promise them land – an inheritance? Christ had been resurrected and on their behalf had become “heir of the world” and “heir of all things.” [Romans 4:13; Hebrews 1:2] God who fulfills His word in surprising ways, had fulfilled what He had promised to the fathers far abundantly above what any Jew had ever asked or thought.

If those Jews are to be considered backward for not realizing this about twenty years after Calvary, what might be said of Christians today who are still waiting for God to fulfill His promises to Israel two thousand years later? Yes, Christians who say they meet once a week in honor of the resurrection are denying what God really did when He raised Jesus from the dead – namely He fulfilled what He had promised to Israel. It took the Holy Spirit’s illumination to see it when Paul preached to the gathering at Antioch; it takes the Holy Spirit’s illumination to see it now! The gift of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead was a finished work. In it God fulfilled what He had promised to the fathers. More than that, Christ was heaven’s gift to the Gentiles – to the whole human race. In Christ, God answered every prayer, every worthy aspiration of every heart, as it is written, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ....” [Ephesians 1:3]

Fulfillment Only in Christ

The blessings which God had promised to Israel were all given on condition – the condition of obedience:

Exodus 19:5

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

From Present Truth, October – December 2004 [Author Unknown]