

PREMILLENNIALISM: WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL TODAY?

God kept the promise he made to Abraham in its fullness. This included Israel's initial occupation of all the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:18-21/I Kings 4:21; Joshua 21:43-45). It also included Israel's restoration to that land following God's chastisement of her at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians—punishment she brought on herself by her idolatrous rebellion (Leviticus 26:27-45; Nehemiah 1:5-10).

So, what part, if any, does a physical, national Israel have in God's plan for the blessing of mankind today? In one word, none!

First, we must understand that God simply used Israel as a medium through which to bring Jesus Christ into the world (Matthew 1:1-17). Further, the Law of Moses was given to Israel to keep her from transgression until that promised Seed (Christ) should come and to serve as a tutor to prepare her for his coming (Galatians 3:19, 24). At that point, Jesus Christ fulfilled God's purpose to redeem all mankind, including those who served God by faith prior to his coming and everyone since who serves God through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:8-9). This fulfilled the purpose of the Law of Moses. Therefore, this "tutor" was no longer needed (Galatians 3:25). Paul could say, then, that all are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, having been baptized into him, and that in Christ the former distinction between Jew and Gentile is no longer of any significance (Galatians 3:24-29).

Second, we must understand that Israel's repentance of idolatry did not end her sinful rebellion against God. God warned her that this attitude would eventuate in her being destroyed beyond repair even as the clay vessel the prophet, Jeremiah, dashed on the ground before Israel's leaders (Jeremiah 19:1-15, esp. vs. 11). Nothing epitomizes this rebellion more than Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Christ for which Jesus said, "See! Your house is left to you desolate..." (Luke 13:35). To this end, God used the Romans to destroy Israel utterly and finally in the siege of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. (Cf., Matthew 24:1-35).

No, the Biblical Israel of old no longer exists. But there is a spiritual "Israel" provided for everyone regardless of race, social standing, or gender. This Israel is established in Jesus Christ, the Seed God promised to Abraham and the one in whom we may all become heirs of that promise (Galatians 3:8, 16, 26-29; 6:14-18).
—Jerry F. Bassett