

PREMILLENNIALISM: THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

God kept his promise to Abraham to give him (his descendants) the Land of Canaan. After leading Israel into that land, Joshua said, "... the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it..... Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:43, 45).

But God also warned Israel that her continued enjoyment of this land required her faithfulness to him in keeping the Law of Moses. Failure to do so would result in the triumph of her enemies over her and her removal to distant lands as a captive people. (Leviticus 26:27-28, 33).

Included in this warning, however, was God's assurance to Israel that penitent confession of her sins would result in his restoring her to the promised land of Canaan (Leviticus 26:40-45).

Israel's rebellion, fall and displacement (the northern tribes by the Assyrians and the southern tribes by the Babylonians) is well documented (II Kings 17:1f; II Kings 23:26-30).

So, what about God's promise to restore Israel to the Land of Canaan? Was this promise kept in the course of Biblically recorded history? YES, premillennialist's denial of the fact notwithstanding.

The ten northern tribes of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and scattered throughout their empire. Assyria was later defeated by the Babylonians placing all of the former's subjects (northern Israelites included) under Babylonian control. Babylon then conquered the two southern tribes of Judah in 606 B.C. This put all Israelites in subjection to Babylon. But the Babylonians would soon fall, too, succumbing to Cyrus the Great and his Medo-Persian army.

In 536 B.C., or shortly thereafter, Cyrus issued a decree releasing all Israelites who wished to return to their homeland to do so (Ezra 1:1f). Later, about 445 B.C., Nehemiah obtained permission from then reigning King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its wall. As he prayed to God for his blessing, he cited God's warning of exile for unfaithfulness and his promise to restore Israel to her land. Then he said this, "Now these (Israelites) are Your servants and Your people, WHOM YOU HAVE REDEEMED by Your great power, and by Your strong hand" (Nehemiah 1:8, 9, 10, emphasis supplied).

Restoration promise fulfilled? YES!

-Jerry F. Bassett