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# RESTORING THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL

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## Questions:

- 1) Did the OT prophets speak of Israel being "restored"? If so, can you give an example?
- 2) When the apostles asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" were they asking about the ethnic nation of Israel?
- 3) Did the Lord answer their question or did He ignore the question?
- 4) Were the apostles pretty much clueless about the nature of the kingdom in Acts 1?
- 5) When the apostles had a misconception about anything, did the Lord ignore the misconception or did He correct their thinking?
- 6) What was Jesus teaching about in Acts 1:3-8?
- 7) What is significant about Jerusalem and Samaria?
- 8) If Israel has been restored today, in what way has it been restored?

## INTRODUCTION

The OT is filled with passages which speak of Israel being punished and eventually being restored. Observe a few of these passages:

### **Isalah 1:21-26**

<sup>21</sup> How the faithful city [Jerusalem] has become a harlot!

It was full of justice;

Righteousness lodged in it,

But now murderers.

<sup>22</sup> Your silver has become dross,

Your wine mixed with water.

<sup>23</sup> Your princes are rebellious,

And companions of thieves;  
Everyone loves bribes,  
And follows after rewards.  
They do not defend the fatherless,  
Nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore the Lord says,  
The LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel,  
"Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries,  
And take vengeance on My enemies.

<sup>25</sup> I will turn My hand against you,  
And thoroughly purge away your dross,  
And take away all your alloy. [Babylonian captivity]

<sup>26</sup> **I will restore** your judges as at the first,  
And your counselors as at the beginning.  
Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."



This passage speaks both of (a) punishment and (b) restoration.

### **Jeremiah 23:5-8**

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD,  
"That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;  
A King shall reign and prosper,  
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

<sup>6</sup> In His days Judah will be saved,  
And Israel will dwell safely;  
Now this is His name by which He will be called:  
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

<sup>7</sup> "Therefore, behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that they shall no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' <sup>8</sup> but, 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land."

### **Jeremiah 33:14-18**

<sup>14</sup> 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:

<sup>15</sup> 'In those days and at that time  
I will cause to grow up to David  
A Branch of righteousness;  
He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

<sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved,  
And Jerusalem will dwell safely.

And this is the name by which she will be called:  
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'

<sup>17</sup> "For thus says the LORD: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; <sup>18</sup> nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.'"

There are too many passage like these – all speaking of Israel being restored. We cannot read them all in this study.

(cf. Isa 9:6-7; Jer 16:14-15; 50:19; Hos 3:4-5; 11:11; Amos 9:11-12; Zech 9:9-10)

By the time Jesus came into the world, Israel had been punished ten times over. God's people were waiting for the restoration promised by the prophets.

## Acts 1

Fast forward:

### **Acts 1:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "**Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**" <sup>7</sup> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Look at the question asked: "**Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**"

I have three questions for you:

**Q #1:** What did the apostles mean by their question?

**Q #2:** Did the Lord answer the question or did He ignore it?

**Q #3:** Why does this even matter?

## QUESTION #1

Let's begin with the 1st question: **What were the apostles asking?**

A large number of Bible students believe the apostles were like all the others Jews in Israel:

- They expected national, ethnic Israel to be restored.
- Being "restored" meant a return to the "golden years" when David and Solomon reigned.
- That Israel would be an independent, sovereign, nation on the earth which all other nations would respect/fear.

Here are some typical comments:

E. M. Zerr:

The apostles held to their **notion** that Christ was going to erect **a temporal kingdom like the one the Jews had before**, and deliver it to them as a restoration of their power as a nation. They had given up that hope for a time on account of the death of Jesus (Luke 24:21). But after his resurrection, they seemed to think they had been a little hasty in their despondency, and that now perhaps he would give them the kingdom, hence the question of this verse.

(5:271)

Zerr is saying:

- The apostles had a misconception about the nature of the kingdom.
- That they were expecting an earthly reign of the Messiah – just like the unbelieving Jewish leaders were expecting.

Others share Zerr's opinion.

J. W. McGarvey:

The form of the question, "restore the kingdom to Israel," shows that they still retained their former **misconception**, that Christ's kingdom was to be a restoration of the old kingdom of David, and not a new and different institution. (New Commentary on Acts 5)

Johnny Stringer:

Their question probably manifests a **misunderstanding** regarding the Lord's kingdom. Speaking of the Lord's restoring the kingdom to Israel seemingly reflects the expectation that under the Messiah, physical Israel would once again become the great earthly kingdom that it had been in the glory days of David and Solomon.

(Truth Commentaries – Acts 6)

Similar quotations could be multiplied.

This position is saying:

**The apostles were 10 days away from Pentecost and believed like the unbelieving Jewish leaders: The Messiah was bringing a restoration of ethnic Israel.**

But what if that assumption is wrong? The scriptures speak of two Israels (you know):

**Romans 2:28-29**

<sup>28</sup> For he is not a **Jew who is one outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> 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.

Here are two Jews: (a) a physical Jew and (b) a spiritual Jew.

**Romans 9:6**

<sup>6</sup> But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For **they are not all Israel who are of Israel**,

Basically: "***Not every Jew is a Jew.***"

Q: What if the apostles were referring to this spiritual Israel being "*restored*"?

- If this is the case, maybe the apostles were not so clueless as some think.
- Maybe we have been the clueless ones.

## QUESTION #2

My 2nd question is this: **Did the Lord answer that question or did He ignore it?**

Most students believe Jesus just ignored the question.

Johnny Stringer is typical of those who believe Jesus did not answer the question:

Jesus did not at this time correct their misunderstanding; rather, he addressed himself to the matter of time. (6)

Suppose this is wrong. Suppose Jesus **did** answer the question.

*(We'll talk about this in just a moment.)*

## Question #3

My 3rd question is this: **Why does this even matter?**

Here is the reasoning of some people:

- **If the apostles had the wrong idea** about the kingdom, Jesus would surely have corrected their thinking.

- **If no correction is given**, then Jesus must have shared their views of the kingdom.
- If the apostles believe ethnic Israel would be restored to "glory days", then Jesus Himself believed the same – just like the apostles and Jewish leaders.

**I will admit this much**: If these apostles were "completely off the mark" regarding the restoration of the kingdom, it seems Jesus should have corrected them. [I agree]

The Lord had no problem rebuking and correcting the apostles on previous occasions:

- Jesus rebuked Peter – even calling Him "Satan" (Mt 16:23).
- He rebuked James and John who wanted to call down fire from heaven (Lk 9:54).
- He rebuked two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:25).

If these apostles were completely "off base" regarding the kingdom, Jesus would have had no problem rebuking and correcting them right here and right now.

Furthermore, it seems virtually incredible that the apostles could be only 10 days away from Pentecost and be absolutely clueless regarding the kingdom of God.

## **A PROPOSED VIEW**

I ask you to consider possible solution:

- a) **These apostles were not "off base"** regarding the restoration of Israel.
- b) And **Jesus did answer their question** – He just didn't answer in the way they anticipated.

Before we look at the question, we need to back up and begin reading about Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom.

## JESUS' TEACHING

### Acts 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup> [Jesus] presented Himself alive [to His apostles] after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and **speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.**

<sup>4</sup> And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; <sup>5</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

**Q:** According to v3, what was Jesus teaching His apostles about?

**A:** He was teaching about "*things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*"

Immediately after v3 we begin reading about:

- The city of **Jerusalem.**
- The **baptism of the Holy Spirit.**

In fact, this passage tells us the Father's "*promise*" was first made known by John the baptizer.

Watch closely:

### Matthew 3

<sup>1</sup> In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**"

<sup>11</sup> I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit** and fire.



- If Jesus is speaking about "things pertaining to the kingdom" (Acts 1:3) [**and He was**],
- And then He begins to speak about (a) the city of Jerusalem and (b) baptism of the Holy Spirit,
- Then (a) the city of Jerusalem and (b) baptism of the Holy Spirit must have something to do with the coming of the kingdom.

In other words, we should expect the kingdom to come:

- **In Jerusalem**
- **When the Holy Spirit is poured out on God's people.**

Contrary to popular belief: **Jesus did not ignore their question.**

## WHAT WAS THE QUESTION

Look again at the question the apostles asked:

### **Acts 1:6**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You **at this time** restore the kingdom to Israel?"

These apostles were asking about the timing of the restoration.

- They were not asking if **ethnic Israel** would be restored. (That's an unproven assumption).
- They were not asking if ethnic Israel would be **freed from Roman rule** and, from now on, begin ruling themselves. (That's an unproven assumption).

They were asking: ***Is it time for the kingdom to be restored like the prophets prophesied?***

**NOTE:** Whatever kind of "restoration" the OT prophets were predicting – that's the very kind of restoration the apostles were asking about.

**Q:** Did the OT prophets predict the restoration of Israel?

**A:** Yes. We read several of those prophecies (e.g. Isa 1; Jer 23, 33)

- **If the prophets predicted a restoration of Israel [and they did],**
- **And if the apostles were asking about this restoration [and they were],**
- **Then** the restoration they were asking about is **the same restoration** which the prophets predicted.

**NOTE:** These apostles were not as dense and dim-witted as we sometimes think. By this time, the apostles were "on track" and well aware of what was going on.

**NOTE:** If I was given a choice of **who is dense and dim-witted:** (a) the apostles here in Acts 1 or (b) us today who think we know what is going on in Acts 1 ... if those are my two choices, I'm going to vote that we are the dense ones – not the apostles!

## **JESUS' ANSWER**

Since the question was:

### **Acts 1:6**

<sup>6</sup> ... "Lord, will You **at this time** restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Their question was about **timing** – not the nature of the kingdom.

We now look for the answer of "when."

### **Acts 1:7**

<sup>7</sup> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Although it appears Jesus is refusing to answer their question about time, this is not the whole story. Look back at v5:

### **Acts 1:5**

<sup>5</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit **not many days from now.**"

Jesus already told the apostles it would be soon – "not many days from now." But they weren't content with that. They wanted a more precise target date.

- Jesus refuses to get more specific.
- All they need to know for now is: **It will occur soon.**
- It will occur when the Spirit is poured out on God's people.

**NOTE:** Jesus is explaining that (a) in a few days (b) the Spirit will be poured out and (c) the restoration of Israel which the prophets predicted would then be accomplished.

## **THE REIGN OF MESSIAH**

Now look at v8:

### **Acts 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- The OT prophets predicted Israel would be restored.

- The apostles were asking if what they predicted is ready to take place right now.

And what are we reading about here in Acts 1:8?

- We're reading about **Jerusalem** (that's the capital city of Judah).
- We're reading about **Judea** (that's the territory of the southern kingdom of Judah).
- We're reading about **Samaria** (that's the territory of the northern kingdom of Israel).
- We reading about **the end of the earth** (that's Gentile country).

We're reading about the reign of the Messiah here.

The OT prophets had predicted that when the Messiah comes and Israel is restored, the Messiah and His people will rule over restored **Israel** and **the entire world**:

**Jeremiah 33:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to **the house of Israel** and to **the house of Judah**:

<sup>15</sup> 'In those days and at that time

I will cause to grow up to David

A Branch of righteousness;

He shall execute judgment and righteousness **in the earth**.

When the Messiah comes:

- He will reign over **Judah** (the southern kingdom).
- He will reign over **Israel** (the northern kingdom).
- He and His people will reign over **all the world**.

And He will be reigning over all this territory thru the gospel message proclaimed by the apostles.

Listen again:

### **Acts 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses to Me** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The "rule" would be thru the witnessing-message preached by the apostles.

## **SUMMARY**

In summary:

- The kingdom will begin in **Jerusalem** (capital of Judah).
- It will begin on the day **the Spirit is poured out** on God's people.
- On the day these things occur, **the prophecies of Israel's restoration will begin to be fulfilled.**

Q: What do we see in Acts 2?

A: We see all of these things occurring when the church is established.

**NOTE:** The **establishment of the church** and **the preaching of the gospel** is the fulfillment of all those OT prophecies of the kingdom of Israel being restored.

## **THE OT SCRIPTURES**

Compare Acts 1:8 with the prophecies in the OT about the restoration of Israel.

## Comparison #1

### **Acts 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power **when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**; ...



This recalls the words of:

### **Isalah 32:12-15**

<sup>12</sup> People shall mourn upon their breasts

For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.

<sup>13</sup> On the land of my people will come up thorns and briers,

Yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city;

<sup>14</sup> Because the palaces will be forsaken,

The bustling city will be deserted.

The forts and towers will become lairs forever,

A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks —



Here is a picture of Israel in a fallen condition. Now watch the restoration of Israel in the next verse:

<sup>15</sup> **Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,**

And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,

And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

When you read **Isa 32**, you're reading about the church.

Make a mental note about v15: "**Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high.**" We know beyond doubt this is a reference to what happened on Pentecost. Watch this same wording:

### **Luke 24:49**

<sup>49</sup> Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until **you are endued with power from on high.**"

Yes ... the beginning of the church is the "restoration of Israel."

## **Comparison #2**

### **Acts 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> ... you shall be **witnesses** to Me ...



This recalls the words of:

### **Isaiah 43:5-10**

<sup>5</sup> Fear not, for I am with you;  
I will bring your descendants from the east,

And gather you from the west;

<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'

And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!'

Bring My sons from afar,

And My daughters from the ends of the earth —



Here is the restoration of Israel ... but continue reading:

<sup>10</sup> "**You are My witnesses,**" says the LORD,  
"And My servant whom I have chosen,  
That you may know and believe Me,  
And understand that I am He.  
Before Me there was no God formed,  
Nor shall there be after Me.

The apostles of the Lord and the church became the witnesses of the fact that God restored Israel.

## **Comparison #3**

### **Acts 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> ... and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,  
and **to the end of the earth.**"



This recalls the words of Isaiah:

### **Isalah 49:6**

<sup>6</sup> Indeed He says,  
'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,  
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,  
That You should be My salvation **to the ends of the earth.**'"

**NOTE:** This passage is quoted in Acts 13:47 and applied specifically to the preaching of the gospel by the apostles.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are living in a wonderful age. We live in a time when the prophecies of the restoration of Israel have been fulfilled.

- These prophecies have nothing to do with ethnic Israel.
- These passages have nothing to do with Israel becoming a nation on May 14, 1948.
- But these passages DO have everything to do with **the church of the Lord**.

The church is God's Israel:

### **Galatians 6:16**

<sup>16</sup> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon **the Israel of God**.

**Q:** According to this, who is the "**Israel of God**"?

**A:** The passage says, "*as many as walk according to this rule*"?

This is the church – founded on the apostles and prophets – Jesus Himself being the "chief cornerstone" (Eph 2:20).



Let us then be careful:

- Not to neglect the church in our lives.
- Not to speak of the church as if it were optional.
- Not to speak badly of the church to anyone.

There's a lot of "bad-mouthing" of the church these days.

- *"The people are unloving."*
- *"The people are legalistic."*
- *"The people are ignorant."*

If any of this is true, the solution is to teach the people to do better, not to criticize the church.

The church is "**restored Israel.**"

Let us love and support the church for what it truly is.