

# Rise Up And Build

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*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

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## **God's Promise To Abraham**

By Everett Hardin

Quite frequently world events provide an occasion for much speculation with respect of wide-spread notions among religious people that the Jews are yet, in some special sense, the chosen people of God, and that His promises are yet to be fulfilled. Well, what is the hope of the fleshly Jew today? Is he entitled to an earthly kingdom prophetically yet unfulfilled?

### **The Nation Promise**

God said He would bless Abraham and that from his seed a great nation would come forth. *"I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered"* (Gen. 13:16). Solomon declared that this was fulfilled by his day. *"Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established; for thou has made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude"* (2 Chron. 1:9). I Kings 4:20 says, *"Judah and Israel were many, as the dust which is by the sea in multitude..."*

### **The Land Promise**

*"And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land"* (Gen. 12:7). God promised to give Abraham and his descendants the land and described its border. *"Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the River of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates"* (Gen. 15:18). This promise is repeated to Abram in several places and to his descendants.

This land promise has already been fulfilled. Jacob (a grandson of Abram) and his family went down into the land of Egypt to escape death in a seven year famine in the land of Canaan in which they dwelt. There they remained and eventually found themselves in bondage or slavery to the government of the land. God then raised up Moses, who under God's direction led the people out of Egypt and its bondage. After wandering forty years in the wilderness, because of their disbelief, they finally were led to the east bank of the Jordan River. Here, Moses, by reason of death, was removed as their leader, and God selected Joshua to succeed Moses. Joshua led Israel into the land and helped them conquer what God had promised.

Joshua said, “*And the Lord gave unto Israel **all the land** which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers and there stood not a man before them the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand*” (Josh. 21:41-43). Concerning God’s promise Joshua said, “*not one thing hath failed thereof*” (Josh. 23:14). Solomon reigned over all the land with the dimensions God had promised. “*And Solomon reigned over all the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt; they brought him presents and served Solomon all the days of his life*” (1 Kings 4:21). So we can readily see that God kept His promise.

### **The Restoration Promises**

Although God had brought them from Egypt and established them firmly in the promised land, they did not obey the system of law He gave them. Nehemiah speaks of this condition: “*Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew the prophets which testified against them to turn to thee*” (Neh., 9:26).

About 700 B.C. Isaiah foretold the fall of Israel to the Babylonians. He said they would be taken captive and exiled, but he also foretold their return. Isaiah gave the name of the King of Persia, saying Cyrus would allow the Jews to return to their own land, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (Isa. 44:28).

About 626 B.C. Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Jerusalem, urging the Jews to surrender the city to the king of Babylon and promised that they would someday return (Jer. 6:15). However, Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would never again occupy the land as they once had, but rather would be like a broken vessel, “*which cannot be made whole again*” (Jer. 19:11-13).

After Jerusalem had fallen and the people carried to exile in Babylon, God spoke through Ezekiel promising: “*I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries and will bring you into your own land*” (Ezek. 36:24). Most of the scriptures being quoted today about Israel’s return to the land are those **already fulfilled** when Israel returned from Babylonian captivity (606—536 B.C.)

By carefully reading 2 Chron 36:11-12, we can easily learn that God said they would be returned to the land at the end of 70 years. This simply means that 70 years after Jerusalem was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and the people taken to Babylon, God would cause them to be released from captivity and return to their own land. When they returned they would rebuild the city and the temple. So there would be no mistaking when the 70 years were completed, God said in verse 20: “*and them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the king of Persia,*” 2 Chron. 36:20.

Then in verses 22-23, we are told of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, who in the first year of his reign, made a proclamation that all Jews could return to their land and rebuild the capital city, Jerusalem, and the temple. This thing was done. The record of it is found in Ezra and Nehemiah. Yet we find men today preaching that the promise is on the verge of being fulfilled, that 70 years did not mean 70 years at all, and God has yet to keep His promise He said he would fulfill in 70 years.

### **The Spiritual Seed Promise**

The spiritual promise to Abraham was made in Genesis 12:3: “*In thee shall all nations of*

*the earth be blessed.*” Paul very forcefully proclaims the spiritual meaning of the promise God made to Abraham, saying: “*For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:26-27). Those to whom Paul was writing misunderstood the identity of Abraham’s seed. Paul was not speaking of a temporal earthly kingdom as he had once believed. He was not speaking of Christ coming and reigning in a national state. Paul was not speaking of a fleshly chosen race who would be sole heirs of the promise. To be an heir according to the promise was to be a child of God. Paul declares that such a relationship is possible only by faith in Jesus Christ. Those who by faith have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. In Him there is no distinction made between the various classifications mentioned as far as the spiritual relationship is concerned. They are all made to comprise one group in the sight of God by obedience to Christ and not because of any other relationship they previously sustained.

The Jews are now as Gentiles in God’s sight. Hear Paul, “*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek*” (Rom. 10:12). “*And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross...*” (Eph. 2:16). God’s Jew (or Israel) today, then, is not of the flesh, but of faith, the kind of faith possessed by Abraham. “*For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly and the circumcision is that of the heart...*” (Rom. 2:28-29)

We need not doubt that this seed promise was Jesus Christ for Paul, by revelation, made clear that precise point. “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He sayeth not, And seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is **Christ**,*” (Gal. 3:16). Whatever hope a Jew can ever obtain, whether present or future, can be obtained only through Christ. This redemption was for all men of all nations. Christ commissioned His apostles, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*” (Matt. 28:19-20).

God’s chosen people today, then, are those who hear, believe and obey Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-18; Heb. 5:8-9). There is nothing in the future in store for the Jews that is not promised to the Gentiles also, for God no longer distinguishes between them.

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