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# ISRAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY

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## Introduction

The subject of Israel in Bible prophecy is of intense current interest to both Jews and Christians. The State of Israel was founded in 1948, three years after the horrendous holocaust caused by Nazi hands had come to an end. By the time the carnage of the holocaust was over the world was shocked to learn that several million Jews had lost their lives. This tragedy of destruction, the attempted genocide of an entire people, stands unequaled in history in this century.

During the Gulf War in 1991 when the State of Israel was attacked by thirty-eight scud missiles all eyes were on the nation again. Political leaders wondered whether Israel would react to the threatening attacks. Day after day admiration for Israel grew among friend and foe as this courageous people defied their enemies without retaliating.

At that time a member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, was interviewed on one of the TV networks in the United States. The interviewer raised the question whether Israel would withdraw from the occupied territories as a condition for the withdrawal of occupying forces in Kuweit. This member of the Knesset explained forcefully on American television that Israel had no "occupied territories," only "liberated territories."

The official maintained that the expression, "occupied territories," meant that the territories belonged to someone other than Israel. But in his view this was untrue. He insisted that these were





"liberated territories" because the Bible indicated that God had given to Israel the land which he had promised to Abraham. Israel had simply liberated these land areas from unlawful occupation by others.

## Interpreting Bible Prophecy

The view of this Israeli leader is shared by various Christians. There are Christians who deny the conditional nature of certain types of prophecy. They claim that any promise ever made to Israel, including Israel's possession of the land of Canaan, remains binding in perpetuity. These promises, they insist, must be fulfilled to a literal, ethnic Israel. Thus all promises and prophecies made to ancient Israel in the Bible are believed to remain in force and call for a literal fulfillment by a literal Israel.

Contrary to this position is the view held by other students of the Bible. These claim that the prophecies regarding Israel are conditional in nature. The prophecies were applicable to Israel, ethnic Israel, only if she remained faithful to God's covenant. Once the covenant was broken by Israel, the prophecies could no longer be fulfilled to a literal Israel because she had forfeited the blessings of the covenant.

## A State's Right to Exist

Before we engage in a study of the biblical evidence this writer wishes to express his personal opinion that this investigation of the testimony of Scripture is in no way meant to imply that the State of Israel, formed in 1948, has no right to exist. In this writer's opinion the State of Israel has as much a right to exist on the basis of international law as any other state. We need to keep in mind that the modern State of Israel is perceived in its partially written constitution[1] as a secular state. The modern State of Israel is constitutionally no religious state. From this vantage point the modern State of Israel is, therefore, hardly different from any other secular state formed in modern times.

## Schools of Prophetic Interpretation

It is essential to recognize that Christian understanding of Israel in Bible prophecy is affected by the four differing "schools"

of prophetic interpretation. These four major "schools" of prophetic interpretation have their own history and are built on contrasting presuppositions. They deserve to be heard.

**Historical-critical School.** Modern liberal, progressive scholars follow the historical-critical method of interpretation. It is of fairly recent origin, having been in full flowering only for about one hundred years. These scholars dominate most of the universities around the world. Historical-critical research is based on principles and presuppositions of the historical-critical method.[2] This method is under serious attack from some biblical scholars who have worked within the method for years and have become very disenchanted with it and from scholars who have been trained in the method but turned against it.[3]

This does not mean that the method is no longer used. It remains the major method of biblical study in a secular sense.

At present there are many additional or alternative approaches that are used or proposed in various attempts to move beyond historical criticism. Among them are such methods as structuralism, narrative methods, dialectical hermeneutic, total interpretation, close reading method, deconstructive method, reader oriented criticism, and so on. Each one of them has its own presuppositions and procedures that deserve very careful analysis and reaction. In spite of all of these alternative or supplemental approaches, the historical-critical method remains by and large still dominant in modern liberal scholarship.

One of the major principles of the historical-critical method is that of analogy, that is, that history is moved by cause and effect relationships in which no supernatural causes are allowed. Analogy also means that the past has to be understood on the basis of the present.[4] It has been freely admitted that ". . . the principle of analogy is incompatible with Christian belief"[5] as it has been functioning into the present. "Often the procedure of historical[-critical] biblical criticism has required first the removal of all claims of revelation, and then imposed upon all testimony the *a priori* claim that divine disclosure is impossible," writes Thomas C. Oden[6] of Drew University. These methodological procedures reveal that the historical-critical method is a secular methodology in which the



new spirit of human autonomy[7] permeates all aspects of modern culture—the sciences, philosophy, theology, and so on.

For the historical-critic of today there is no significant predictive element in biblical prophecy.[8] If there is any predictive aspect left, it is one of short-range prediction only in which the ancient prophet speaks about what is contemporary with his own time or later than the historical circumstances which he reflects.[9] The short-range predictive element is not derived from a supernatural revelation. The function of the prophet is not to predict (foretelling) but to proclaim (forthtelling). G. Ernest Wright states it succinctly, "The prophet thus had messages for his own people in his own day."[10]

This view of modern liberalism (here used as a descriptive not pejorative term), or historical-criticism, allows at best a kind of prognostication that is based on the superior insights of a human writer but not on divine, supernatural revelation or inspiration in which actual information is passed from God to the prophet. There is no divinely given prophecy in the sense of a sure prediction about the near or distant future.[11]

Many careful students of the Bible have come to conclude correctly that the historical-critical interpretation of prophecy is a *reinterpretation* of what the biblical text actually says and claims for itself. The historical-critical method does not take the biblical text at face value. It treats it on the basis of modern presuppositions of how a writer/editor of the biblical book should be evaluated in view of modern perspectives and philosophical deductions.[12] This method does not lead to faith but serves to secularize belief systems.

**Preterist School.** A second major view of prophetic interpretation is known as preterism. Preterism is a method of prophetic interpretation which recognizes genuine predictive prophecy in the Bible. However, it holds as a basic premise that all prophecies about the future that were ever made have been fulfilled in the past by the end of the first century A.D.

As regards the books of Daniel and Revelation the preterist school holds that these books found their fulfillment in the New Testament period and the very early history of the Christian church till about A.D. 100.[13]

The preterist position is deeply indebted to the Spanish Jesuit

scholar Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613), who projected the Antichrist back into the distant past by identifying him with the Roman emperor Nero.[14]

Major aspects of the preterist view were in the course of time incorporated into the historical-critical method of prophetic interpretation and other aspects were absorbed into the futurist method of interpretation. Preterism does not command many followers today. But it was quite widely supported in the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Historicist School**. The third school of prophetic interpretation is known as historicism. It is the oldest school of prophetic interpretation of the four known at present. It may be described as the continuous historical method of prophetic interpretation because it understands biblical prophecy to be continuous and consecutive as regards the predicted sequences of empires and events in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The prophecies are seen to unroll in historical fulfillment from the time of the biblical writer to the eschaton, the end of the world and the new creation, without a break or a gap in the prophetic view.

Historicism takes the biblical picture of prophetic prediction, regardless of short-range or long-range prediction, at face value. It follows the biblical picture of divine revelation to humans (viz. prophets) in which God actually foretold what would happen in the near or distant, even very distant, future. The historicist school of interpretation cannot exist without the acceptance of the biblical claim that God has absolute foreknowledge of history and that He has made known ahead of time what would take place in the future.

Historicism accepts the biblical emphasis of conditional prophecy as regards the ancient covenant people Israel. The prophecies about Israel are to be fulfilled to literal Israel as long as, and only if, Israel remains obedient to the covenant given her by God. If Israel should fail to keep the covenant, then God would not be able to automatically fulfill the promises He had made to them in the past. God would remain loyal to His promises but they would be fulfilled to those who would be faithful to Him. This faithful remnant people of God is not restricted to ethnic descendants of Abraham.

Historicism has been the time-honored method of interpretation for the majority of Bible believers from the beginning of



Christianity well into the beginning of the twentieth century.[15] Historicism, however, has found significant competitors in the three other methods of interpretation, particularly futurism in contemporary evangelical Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century.

It has been said that futurism is "knocking at our door,"[16] the door of historicism, urging to be received. Its aim is to modify, challenge, and, if possible, to replace the historicist method of prophetic interpretation which has so profoundly shaped Christianity at large and Protestantism in the last centuries.

**Futurist School**. The fourth major school of prophetic interpretation is known as futurism.[17] It has became a major part of modern dispensationalism. Futurism has deep roots in the Counter-Reformation through the Spanish Jesuit scholar Francisco Ribera (1537-1591).[18]

Ribera put prophetic fulfillment into the future. "In 1590, Ribera published a commentary on the Revelation as a counter-interpretation to the prevailing [historicist] view among Protestants which identified the Papacy with the Antichrist. Ribera applied all of Revelation but the earliest chapters to the end time rather than to the history of the Church. Antichrist would be a single evil person who would be received by the Jews and would rebuild Jerusalem . . . and rule the world for three and a half years."[19]

Ribera was subsequently supported by Robert Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621),[20] who opposed the year-day principle and identified the "little horn" of the book of Daniel, usually identified with the Papacy, with the Seleucid king Antiochus IV of the second century BC who persecuted the Jews (see 1 Maccabees).

Among the early Protestant futurists were such major figures as S. R. Maitland, James H. Todd and William Burgh. They explicitly stated in the 1820s and 1830s that they followed Ribera.[21] From then on futurism was quickly adopted into the system of dispensationalism which developed from the 1830s onward.

**Present-day Futurist Beliefs**. Present-day futurism sees the establishment of the State of Israel as a direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy.[22] Leon J. Wood, a prominent dispensational-futurist writer states, "The clearest sign of Christ's return is the modern state of Israel."[23] The widely read Hal Lindsey writes, "The

most important prophetic sign to herald the era of Christ's return" and "one of the most important events of our age" is the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.[24] Dispensationalists and futurists also see the reunification of Jerusalem on June 6, 1967, as a direct sign of fulfillment of prophecy.[25]

There is an expected rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem which in the view of many is to take place in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period.[26] Any visitor in Jerusalem today can go to a particular place and inspect temple utensils that are made ready for this temple to be built.

Futurism holds that in the final millennial dispensation another temple will be built, the millennial temple, in which Jews will literally sacrifice animals again but not in an expiatory way. They will be "memorials of the one complete sacrifice of Christ."[27]

In futurism there is the widely anticipated "secret rapture"[28] of all true believers which is to take place before the great tribulation.[29] No believer has to go through the dreadful tribulation.

In historicism believers will go through the tribulation of "the time of trouble" unharmed and specially protected by God's mighty arm; in futurism believers will be raptured into heaven at the beginning of the tribulation. Only unbelievers will experience the great tribulation in the end of time in the view of dispensational-futurism.

**Main Concept in Futurist Interpretation.** In contrast to "historicism"[30] "futurism" is based on the literalistic method of dispensationalist interpretation.[31] It should be clearly understood that in futurism prophetic fulfillment is based on the concept that all promises made to ancient Israel are unconditional and, therefore, must be literally fulfilled to "natural Israel." This literalism demands that the prophetic and apocalyptic portions of Scripture relate primarily to the future, that is, after the end of the present Church age or dispensation which represents a gap or parenthesis in prophecy.[32] This so-called "church age" is considered outside the biblical view of prophecy.[33] Furthermore, the Bible is interpreted in such a way that the claim is substantiated by dispensational-futurists that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament has anything to do with the Church. The Bible, it is claimed, does not know of a Church or the time it will occupy. With the alleged biblical



silence of the Church dispensation every unfulfilled prophecy about and relating to ancient Israel is projected into the future, because the Church is not perceived to be the legitimate heir to any of the promises made by God in the past.

In futurism prophetic fulfillment is to come in the future and is to center around Israel as a nation,[34] the Middle East, including the coming of a future Antichrist and the False Prophet. A significant role is assigned to Russia,[35] and a literal battle of Armageddon which will take place in Palestine,[36] and so on.

**Origin of Dispensationalism.** Futurism is linked up with dispensationalism. "Modern dispensationalism"[37] is rooted in the teachings of John N. Darby (1800-1882),[38] a trained lawyer who became a prolific writer with more than 53 volumes, each averaging some 400 pages.[39] Darby was one of the early leaders of the Plymouth Brethren Movement in England.[40] In 1845 he broke away over the issues of ecclesiology and prophecy to form the "Exclusive Brethren," also known as "Darbyists."

The second key impulse for dispensationalism came from Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921), a lawyer and legislator from Kansas, who produced the notes for the original Scofield Reference Bible. It was first published in 1909 and has seen a more recent revision in 1967. This Bible with its extensive notes has been a major force to popularize dispensationalism.

There are other key names that shaped dispensationalism in more recent times. Among them are Lewis Sperry Chafer,[41] and more recently Arno C. Gaebelein, H. A. Ironside, Charles Caldwell Ryrie, J. Dwight Pentecost, Leon J. Wood and, of course, John F. Walvoord, the President Emeritus of Dallas Theological Seminary.

In recent years the book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*,[42] authored by Hal Lindsey, claimed to have been translated into over 30 languages, sold over 30 million copies in its first ten years of publication.[43] Written for the laity, this book has brought unprecedented popularity to dispensational-futurism.[44]

The majority of popular radio and TV preachers around the world belong to the dispensational-futurist camp of prophetic interpretation. The dispensational-futurist approach is dominant among conservative Christians of many different Protestant churches on all continents.

Modern dispensationalism holds tenaciously that the history from creation through the millennial kingdom to come is divided into seven different dispensations.[45] They form a key part of the dispensational-futurist hermeneutic of biblical interpretation in general and the literalistic prophetic interpretation for which it stands.[46]

## Pillars of Futurist Prophetic Interpretation

There are three essential pillars of dispensationalism. They are wed to futurism: (1) The radical distinction between Israel and the Church; (2) the insistence on a literal (that is, literalistic) interpretation of the Bible; and (3) the unifying principle of the glory of God.[47] They interlock and define the essence of dispensational-futurist interpretation. Since the first two are "basic aspects of futurist eschatology,"[48] they need more careful analysis at this time.

**Israel and the Church Distinguished.** The distinction between Israel and the Church, in the words of the well-known dispensationalist exponent, Charles Ryrie, is "probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a man is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive."[49]

This distinction between Israel and the Church, that is, its total separation, is also a pillar of the futurist interpretation of prophecy and dispensational eschatology.[50] This means that the entire notion of a "gap" between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel 9:24-27 has its rootage in this distinction. The alleged resultant dispensation of the Church Age (supposedly outside of biblical prophecy in the sense that neither the OT nor the NT knows anything about the period of the Church) is based on the distinction of Israel and the Church.

We can see that this distinction between Israel and the Church is the foundation of futurist eschatology and the interpretation of the events of the end time. It is thus of vital importance to investigate the biblical evidence for this alleged distinction.

**Arguments for the Israel/Church Distinction.** According to futurism and dispensationalism the term, "Israel," refers to the earthly Jews (or Judaism), that is, "natural Israel," and the Church refers to a heavenly people. A prominent dispensationalist writer



states, "This whole distinction between Israel and the Church is based upon the unique character of the Church. The Church is unique as to its nature, its time and its relation to Israel."[51]

Any adequate understanding of the undergirding foundations of futurism and its view on Israel must give full attention to the relationship of the Church to Israel. It is claimed that the Church is the mysterious body of Christ[52] and the time of the alleged Church Age dispensation reaches from Pentecost to the rapture.[53]

The entire theory of the pretribulation rapture,[54] which means "that the Church will be taken away from the earth before the beginning of the tribulation,"[55] "grows out of the distinction between Israel and the Church."[56] It forms one of the cardinal features of dispensational-futurist eschatology.[57] A complete enumeration of differences between Israel and the Church has been provided in a list of twenty-four contrasts provided by the early dispensationalist writer, Lewis Sperry Chafer,[58] the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary. They are summarized by J. Dwight Pentecost.[59]

The essential point of this differentiation is that Israel is the entity to which all the promises in the OT were made. Therefore, the promises must be literally fulfilled to literal, natural, ethnic Israel—not to the Church that other Christians define on the basis of New Testament evidence as "spiritual Israel."

This fulfillment started to take place in 1948 when the State of Israel was established in Palestine. It will reach into the millennial kingdom, that is, the millennium. "The Church," it is claimed, "is not now fulfilling them in any literal sense."[60] Thus Israel will see all of them fulfilled in a literal way primarily during the millennium which will be experienced on earth.[61]

It is claimed that the Church is an entity of an essentially "spiritual" type and the promises made to ancient Israel do not apply to the Church. Charles Ryrie summarizes as follows: "Use of the words Israel and Church shows clearly that in the New Testament national Israel continues with her own promises and the Church is never equated with a so-called 'new Israel' but is carefully and continually distinguished as a separate work of God in this age."[62]

Dispensational-futurist interpreters continue to insist that whenever the Bible uses the term "Israel" it means literal, ethnic

Jews and whenever the Church is mentioned it is always a spiritual entity. The Church is never identified with Israel and Israel is never identified with the Church.

## Biblical Analysis of the Israel/Church Distinction

How does this important pillar of the dispensational-futurist hermeneutic fare in light of the total biblical message? If it should turn out that the Old Testament and the New Testament will not sustain such a distinction, then the very foundation of dispensationalism and its futurist views of Israel will be destroyed.

It would mean secondly that the projection of events to be fulfilled through "natural Israel," in the near future in Palestine, or in the distant future during the millennium on earth, have no biblical foundations.

A third implication is that if the radical separation of Israel and the Church does not hold, then the whole concept of a Church Age with its gap or parenthesis would lack the support that is claimed for it.

Fourthly, the whole idea of the "secret rapture" would be undercut,[63] since it is tied to the distinction between Israel and the Church.

Evidently the stakes are high. Let us take a careful look at major biblical evidences.

## Israel in the Old Testament

Our attention must turn to the Old Testament. It is in the Old Testament where we encounter the name "Israel" for the first time.

The designation "Israel" has various connotations.[64] This fact in itself, as we shall see, is an important element that runs counter to futurism's and dispensationalism's claim that the usage of the designation is rather uniform throughout the Old Testament.

**A Person.** To begin with "Israel" is the name given to the patriarch Jacob: "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" (Gen 32:28, NIV). His struggle "with God," and "with the angel" (Hos 12:3-4), "symbolizes Jacob's new spiritual relation to Yahweh and stands for the reconciled Jacob through God's forgiving grace."[65]



In short, the inauguration of the term "Israel" in the Bible makes it a term for a person, an individual, and not a people or a nation.[66] Jacob is characterized and identified through a faith relationship to God. There is nothing in the early part of the Bible that makes Israel uniquely or consistently a term for a nation or people. There is also no emphasis on physical or ethnic lineage. "Israel" is a term for a person of a true faith response and faith relationship with the covenant God.

This early connection of "Israel" and faith is hardly accidental. It seems to set the stage for what is to follow in the OT.

**Descendants of Jacob.** In the book of Genesis there are 43 usages of the name "Israel." Out of these 29 usages refer to Jacob, an individual. The remaining usages mention the "sons of Israel" in the sense of the "children of Israel/Jacob." "The tribes of Israel" are used twice (Gen 49:16, 28).

In the book of Exodus the patriarch Jacob is referred to twice by the name "Israel" (Exod 6:14; 32:13). In 41 instances, beginning with Exod 4:22, the name "Israel" is employed for the Israel to be redeemed from Egyptian bondage.[67] It consisted for the most part of ethnic descendants of Jacob, respectively Abraham.

**Composite of Ethnic Descendants and a "Mixed Multitude."** The Israelites were joined by a "mixed multitude" (Exod 12:38) in the Exodus. This reveals that their ethnicity did not remain the unique factor in what constituted the entity of Israel in the post-Exodus period. The totality of the people of Israel, made up of ethnic descendants together with the "mixed multitude" of nonethnic descendants, was called to worship God (Exod 4:22). They were designated "his people Israel" in Exodus 18:1 (NIV), and later as "the Lord's community" (Num 20:4, NIV). Thus the term "Israel" seems to be more inclusive than pure ethnicity.

**"Holy Nation."** God calls Israel to be a "holy nation" (Exod 19:6). The term "nation" (*gôy*) is not typical of Israel in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 4:6-8). The typical term used for God's people in the OT is the term "people" (*'am*).

Israel, however, is called to be a "nation" (*gôy*). This is so because of the sovereign election of God and not because of any ethnicity or pure lineage.[68] Israel is a special people in its election and not a "'secular' people."

Israel is a community of faith and faith makes Israel this special community.[69] In this Israel "what counts is not the ethnicity, what counts is not the natural, but very uniquely her relationship to Yahweh."[70] Here we meet once more the faith aspect as the key notion of the true Israel of God.

This entire element of faith is rooted in Abraham, the father of the faithful, who is called out of Mesopotamia and into Canaan (Gen 12:1-3). Here too the promise is given to him that he should be a "nation" (*gôy*). The term "nation" (*gôy*) is used to "describe a people in terms of its political and territorial affiliation, . . ."[71]

The widely used term "people" (*'am*) for ancient Israel is the typical term for "consanguinity and a common racial parentage."[72] The usage of both terms for ancient Israel (nation/people) means that Israel would consist of a population made up of both blood relationship *and* people, although lacking blood relationship would share the same faith. Thus Israel is a spiritual entity in harmony with the design of God for Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 17:4, 5) and, thus, Israel emerged from Egypt as both ethnic descendants and a "mixed multitude." The true Israel of old was to be a faith community where ethnic lineage was never the unique criterion for belonging to Israel.

**Covenant Community.** On Mt Sinai God made a covenant with Israel so that this redeemed Israel of faith could remain in a covenantal faith relationship with God (Exod 19-24). Israel is a religious or faith community.

Israel is at the same time a political community which had to function alongside other nations in the ancient world. In this double role as a religious and political/national entity Israel was to experience all the covenant promises as long as she remained faithful to the Lord (Deut 26-28).

Every covenant promise ever made by God is conditional, depending on whether Israel keeps the covenant with her Lord (Lev 26-27; Deut 26-28).[73] The covenant promises are dependent on the faithfulness of the covenant people. The covenant promises were not to come automatically to Israel according to the flesh, or according to an ethnic line. These covenant promises remained dependent on Israel's faithfulness to her God. What counts is a faith relationship based on the covenant and not ethnic origin.



**Covenant Obedience: Prerequisite for the Land Promise.** A faith-obedience aspect is specifically underlined in the curses and blessings in Leviticus 26 and linked already to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If Israel shall persist in disobedience to the Lord, then the Lord will take Israel into exile and "the land shall rest" (vs 34). "But if they [the Israel in the exile] confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, . . . if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob; I will also remember my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land" (Lev 26:40-42, NRSV).

This unambiguous statement indicates that the land promise was not unconditional. It was conditional upon Israel's obedience to the Lord. Only an obedient and faithful Israel would retain possession of the land.

The land referred to in the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not promised unconditionally to the patriarchal descendants, because it is part of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:7: 26:5, 6) which in itself is conditional in that it is dependent on human obedience (Gen 12:1; 12:7; 15:9, 10; 17:1, 9; 18:19; 22:17-19; 26:5).[74] No one will deny that the Abrahamic covenant is tied up with a true faith relationship with God (Gen 15:6) which was demonstrated by Abraham.[75]

**A Portion of the Nation.** In numerous Old Testament passages the word "Israel" is not used as a designation for the entire nation of the twelve tribes. A few examples may suffice to demonstrate this restricted usage.

In 1 Samuel 17:52 and 18:16 "Israel [is] clearly used to denote an entity different from Judah."[76] There are 48 occurrences of the word "Israel" in 2 Samuel as a designation of the territory of the Northern Kingdom, exclusive of the Kingdom of Judah.[77]

A similar kind of distribution has been noted by F. Anderson and D. N. Freedman in the book of Amos. They observe that when the name "Israel" appears in the book of Amos by itself, it refers to the Northern Kingdom,[78] except in Amos 9:7 where it seems to refer to Israel in its collective sense. Even if one disagrees with some passages, it is certain that "Israel" does indeed refer many times to the Northern Kingdom.

In 33 usages out of 43 in the book of Hosea "Israel" is understood as a designation for the Northern Kingdom.[79] It is suggested that in about 564 usages "Israel" refers in the Old Testament to the Northern Kingdom and in other usages it refers to the Southern Kingdom.[80] At other times it can refer to both kingdoms.

**Remnant of Faith.** There came a time when Israel as a religious and national entity apostatized and entered into pagan religious worship. As a result a remnant of faith became the true Israel of God in the Old Testament. For example, in the ninth century the Israelite remnant of faith consisted of Elijah and the seven thousand who remained loyal to God and his covenant within an apostate nation Israel (1 Kgs 19:18).

The Elijah experience reveals that the true Israel is "a remnant loyal to Yahwistic covenant faith."[81] This faithful remnant would not bow the knee to Baal. From this time onward the true Israel of God is a religious entity of faithful and loyal persons, even though there is also the unfaithful Israel as a national entity. The latter is an apostate Israel. The apostate Israel will not inherit God's covenant promises, because they are no longer faithful to their covenant God. This is explicitly expressed in the formula "Not my people" in Hosea 1:9.

In the book of Amos the picture is the same. The "remnant of Joseph" of which Amos prophesied (Amos 5:15) is a faithful remnant from Israel. National or natural Israel is rejected and is not the remnant.[82]

Isaiah affirms explicitly that the remnant of faith of the future will be a "holy seed" (Isa 6:13) which is "recorded for life" (4:3). It "will inherit the election promises and form the nucleus of a new faith community (Isa 10:20f.; 28:5f.; 30:15-17)."[83]

Ezekiel affirms that this remnant of faith will have a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek 11:16-21). The remnant motif is used in the OT prophets only in a religious-theological sense and never in a national-ethnic one. In short, in the OT the remnant of faith is the true Israel of God from the time that national Israel apostatized.

**Summary.** The word "Israel" is used in the Old Testament in several ways. First, it is used for an individual, Jacob, who is



renamed "Israel," so as to mark his conversion experience and his new spiritual relationship with God.

Secondly, the designation "Israel" is used of the Israel of the Exodus which was enslaved in Egypt and redeemed by Yahweh to worship him as a religious covenant community. This Israel included the "mixed multitude" and is not a purely "natural Israel."

Thirdly, ancient Israel is designated a "nation" (Hebrew gôy), indicating that it is made up of people who are not limited to consanguinity, or blood relationship, but that it is intended to be a "holy nation." What counts is a faith relationship and the spiritual character of the people.

Fourthly, "Israel" as a designation can be used for the nation as a whole, or for the Northern Kingdom alone, or for the Southern Kingdom alone, or for both as a united kingdom. Israel is also a term which is employed for the apostate nation which is rejected by God and about which God says, "Not my people" (Hos 1:9). They have broken God's covenant and have disqualified themselves from being His people. This Israel is rejected by God and will not be blessed with the covenant promises.

Fifthly, Israel is a designation used for a remnant of faith that goes forth from national Israel or lives within/alongside national Israel. This remnant of faith inherits all covenant promises of God. This view is supported by the Abrahamic covenant (see especially Gen 17:10, 14; 18:19; 22:15-18; 26:4-5) where the promise of the covenant is linked repeatedly to obedience that keeps the promise alive.

There are predictions that reveal that Gentile believers will be incorporated into this Israelite remnant of faith (Isa 46:3-4; 45:20; 56:6-8; 66:19). "The total picture of the Old Testament eschatological remnant reveals that Israel's covenant blessings as a whole will be fulfilled, *not* in unbelieving national Israel, but only in that Israel which is faithful to Yahweh and trusts in His Messiah."[84]

In short, the Old Testament indicates that the dispensational-futurist claim which holds that only "natural Israel"[85] will experience the promises made by God cannot be brought into harmony with the biblical evidence.[86] The Old Testament evidence reveals clearly from the beginning that only a faithful people will inherit the promises made in the Abrahamic covenant regarding the land.

## Israel in the New Testament

How is the word "Israel" used in the New Testament? Dispensational-futurists claim that the radical distinction between Israel as a literal people and the Church as a spiritual people is maintained throughout the NT. Charles Ryrie refers to 1 Corinthians 10:32 in his claim that "natural Israel and the Church are also contrasted in the New Testament."[87] This proof-text needs some attention and we will deal with it later.

Hans LaRondelle counters Ryrie's argument as follows, "The question is not, Does the New Testament contrast the Church with 'natural Israel'? but rather, Is the Church called 'the Israel of God' in the New Testament and is it there presented as the new Israel, the only heir of all God's promised covenant blessings for the present and the future?"[88] If the Church is identified in the New Testament as the Israel of God, then the major pillar of dispensational-futurism will be seen to be without a foundation in the New Testament as well.

Two issues call for consideration. One is the identification of the Church as the Israel of God. The other is whether the Church inherits all Old Testament promises. We will address these issues in what follows.

**Church: Inheritor of OT Promises.** The issue of the inheritance of the Old Testament promises by the Church is crucial. Vern S. Poythress raises several decisive questions, "To which Old Testament promises is Christ heir? Is he an Israelite? Is he the offspring of Abraham? Is he the heir of David?"[89] He answers by quoting 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him [Christ] they are yes" (NASB). The phrase, "as many as may be the promises of God," means all the promises of God. They find their "Yes;" and they find their "Yes" in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 1.** None of the "promises of God" made in the OT are outside of Christ. Christ is the "Yea" (KJV), the Yes, the focus and fulfillment of all the promises made of old.[90] This text provides a Christocentric answer to the question of the inheritance of the Old Testament promises. Such a Christocentric response from the New Testament runs counter to the dispensational-futurist argument which links the promises to an ethnic, literal Israel.

A second question is asked: "Now to which of these promises



are Christians heir in union with Christ?"[91] We follow here the incisive points made by Poythress who refers to passages from the writings of the apostle Paul in answering this matter.

**Colossians 2.** In Colossians 2:9-10 Paul affirms that Christ's followers are "complete" in Christ. Verse 10 says, "In Him you have been made complete" (NASB). Our connection with Christ provides us with completeness in Christ, a completeness that includes also all the promises to which Christ is heir. Through Christ all believers, regardless of their national or ethnic origin, are heirs.[92]

**Romans 8.** In Romans 8:32 Paul emphasizes more specifically, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (NASB). God gives us with Christ "all things," including the promises made to His people in the Old Testament.

The two words, "all things," are comprehensive in intention. "All things" includes everything and leaves out nothing. If nothing is left out, then in Christ and with Christ all believers are given "all things," including the promises previously made to Abraham and his descendants.

We turn to an additional text in Romans 8 where this theme is developed more explicitly still. Paul insists in vss. 16-17: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ" (NASB). Here is an affirmation as to who are the "children of God."

Christians are "children of God." But believers are not orphaned children or disinherited children. We are children with all the rights and privileges of adopted children. And this means that those who belong to Christ are "heirs of God." As children of God we are "fellow-heirs with Christ." "That is to say that we inherit what he [Christ] inherits."[93] All believers in Christ become heirs to the OT promises through Him who is the heir of these promises.

Thus, there is no possibility to separate a "natural Israel," which is said to be earthly, from the Church, which is made up of the "children of God" on earth but which dispensationalists say are "heavenly." The true Israel of God are fellow-heirs of Christ.

**Galatians 3 and 6.** Paul provides additional points to his argument. He states in Galatians 3:29 unambiguously, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, and heirs

according to the promise" (NASB). The point here is that those who are Christ's are also "heirs" to the promises given by God in the Old Testament to His people.

The letter to the Galatians affirms that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-28, NASB). The distinction between Israelite and non-Israelite, or Jew and Gentile, with respect to salvation is removed. All human beings share in the same salvation and promises made to those who are God's people.

If this is the case, Who is Abraham's offspring/seed? Is Abraham's offspring/seed only an ethnic Jew? By no means! Abraham's offspring/seed consists of both believing Jews and Gentiles; those who have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. The offspring/seed of Abraham are those who belong to Christ and not those who are "natural Israel" as dispensational-futurists wish to hold.

It is pointed out correctly that "the Israel of God" referred to in Galatians 6:16 "is a profoundly religious qualification" which cannot be restricted to ethnic Israelites.[94] A recent commentator has summarized the meaning of this expression, "the Israel of God," as follows, "The expression [Israel of God] does not mean the unbelieving members of the Jewish people, it does likewise not mean the Jewish people in its totality and not even the Jewish Christians who have been converted, but *all believers in Christ regardless of their religious or ethnic origin.*"[95] The believing members of the Church are the "Israel of God" and the inheritors of all promises through Jesus Christ with whom they are fellow-heirs.

**Ephesians 2 and 3.** In Ephesians the apostle continues to maintain that there is an integration of the Gentiles into the community of the faithful. Gentiles, who were once "separated from Christ, . . . and strangers to the covenants of promise," are "no longer strangers and sojourners, but . . . fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:12, 19, RSV).

In Ephesians 3:5-6 Paul reaffirms that Gentile and Israelite believers are together heirs of the promises of God, "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (vs. 6, NASB).



This consistent Pauline picture in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians and Ephesians does not support the distinction between a "natural Israel" and the Church. The Church is made up of converted Jews and Gentiles and both together are fellow-heirs through Christ to the divine promises of the OT.[96]

**Parable of the Olive Tree.** The famous section of Romans 9-11 which climaxes with the picture of the olive tree (Rom 11:13-24) contains the famous sentence "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26). It also emphasizes the integration of Israelites and Gentiles.

Modern dispensationalists have interpreted the phrase, "all Israel will be saved," to refer to a mass conversion of all Jews just before Christ's return.[97] Is this the meaning of the passage? Such a sense assumes that "Israel" here is literal, ethnic Israel.

It is imperative to take a more careful look into the parable of the olive tree found in Romans 11:17-24. The picture is of two olive trees, one cultivated, the other wild. The branches of *unbelieving* Jews are broken off from the trunk of the cultivated olive tree of Israel. Then branches of *believing* Gentiles from the wild olive tree are grafted in, leaving a tree of believing Jews and Gentiles.

God has not rejected His people Israel, says Paul (Rom 11:1). "At the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace" (vs. 5, NRSV). He insists that the natural branches of ethnic Israelites have been broken off "because of their unbelief" (vs. 20, NRSV). The matter of faith is what counts and not ethnicity. Non-Israelites, that is, Gentiles, were grafted in and are part of the olive tree "only through faith" (vs. 20, RSV). Unbelief keeps both Jews and Gentiles separated from the cultivated olive tree. But the branches of unbelieving Israelites, who had been broken off, can again be grafted back into their cultivated olive tree, "if they do not persist in their unbelief" (vs. 23, RSV) The point is that physical Israelites can be readopted as believers into the new community of faith.

The community of faith symbolized by the cultivated olive tree from which branches of *unbelieving* Jews were removed and branches of *believing* Gentiles were grafted in consists only of believers, believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Within this context the phrase "all Israel will be saved,"[98] refers to all believing Jews and Gentiles who will be saved (vs. 26).[99] Just as the Gentiles are grafted in during the entire span of time from the NT to the

Second Coming, just so believing Jews are grafted in during the same era. The same qualification for being grafted in, namely, faith in Jesus Christ, is required of both Jew and Gentile. There is no distinction in the way of salvation for Jew and Gentile.[100] There is also no "special way" of salvation for Jews to be saved without Christ.

Paul has stated already in Romans 9:6 that "not all Israelites truly belong to Israel" (NRSV) and in verse 7 he insists that "not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants" (NRSV). In verse 27 he notes with emphasis that "only a remnant of them [children of Israel] will be saved" (NRSV). Thus, the question is whether there is a contradiction on the part of the apostle Paul between these statements and the statement in Romans 11:26 "all Israel shall be saved?" There is a contradiction only, if one posits that the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 refers to literal Israel in the sense of ethnic Jews. If one follows the context of the Romans 9-11, then the picture of "all Israel" referring to all the true remnant believers of Jewish and Gentile origin is secured.

**Summary.** We may summarize the New Testament picture. The consistent convergence of the New Testament evidence points in a single direction. The "Israel of God" is the Church. The Church is the community of believers which is made up of both converted and believing Jews and converted and believing Gentiles.[101] Together they are the inheritors through Christ of all the covenant promises ever made in the Old Testament. Together they are the body of Christ in total unity.

There is no Church Age dispensation for Gentiles and a dispensation for Jews subsequent to it. In Christ all things are united. The total and full body of Christ, of which Christ is the head, cannot be split apart into sequential Church and Israelite bodies.[102] Christ has but one body of believing Jews and Gentiles. In short, both Old Testament and New Testament agree that the true Israel of God are believers regardless of ethnic origin or national identity.[103]

## Land Promises in the Old Testament

We need to inquire about another major issue. How are the land or territorial promises made by God to Israel to be regarded? Can they in any sense still be valid for "natural Israel," that is, for



Jews? Is the promise of the land of Canaan, made to Abraham and the other patriarchs, an eternal and irrevocable promise to their ethnic descendants in perpetuity?

Dispensationalists clearly maintain that all the promises given to Israel of old are to be fulfilled to the literal descendants of Israel on earth. Thus, the establishment of the State of Israel in the year 1948, the subsequent wars in 1956 and 1967, and the territorial expansions of the State of Israel, are all taken as fulfillments of Bible prophecies.[104] John F. Walvoord, a major defender of this position, argues as follows: "The theological implications of the promise of the land to Israel have been shown to be central in God's eschatological purpose for His ancient people."[105]

We wish to maintain again that our discussions of these exegetical matters of the Bible are in no way to be understood or to be interpreted as denying the right of the State of Israel to exist. The issue here is one of biblical interpretation and not of a political, national right.

**The Problem of Literalism.** A brief consideration of the dispensational, literalist understanding for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies is in order. In dispensationalism, and its attendant futurism, "literal" or "literalist" interpretation and "literalism" is central. J. Dwight Pentecost writes, ". . . the primary consideration in relation to the interpretation of prophecy is that, like all other areas of Biblical interpretation, it must be interpreted literally."[106] Charles Ryrie maintains that "dispensationalism is the only system that practices the literal principle of interpretation consistently."[107] He continues, "The literal interpretation of Scripture leads naturally to a second feature—the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. This is the basic tenet of [dispensational-futurist] premillennial eschatology."[108]

It would go far beyond the confines of our purpose to engage in a detailed discussion on the correctness and adequacy of the hermeneutical principle of "consistent literal" interpretation or "consistent literalism."[109] That has been done by others already and need not be elaborated on here again.[110]

"Consistent literalism" holds that God promised to Abraham that his descendants would inherit "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen 17:8 RSV; cf. 12:7; 24:7).[111] It is con-

cluded that the Abrahamic covenant was an "unconditional covenant,"[112] which "has the guarantee of God that He will effect the necessary conversion which is essential to its fulfillment."[113]

For our purpose it is much more important to investigate key principles of prophetic interpretation which the Bible itself uses. In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we are told, "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own ["private," KJV; NKJV] interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (RSV).

Peter is not announcing a "consistent literal interpretation" or "consistent literalism," but an interpretation under the control of the Holy Spirit who is the Giver of all Scripture. Thus one's "own" or "private" interests in interpretation remain under the control of the Bible, which is its own interpreter.[114]

"Is the principle of 'consistent literalism' the legitimate method of interpreting Biblical prophecies?"[115] As Christian interpreters we cannot interpret the Old Testament as if the New Testament does not exist. As responsible interpreters of the Bible in its entirety we must find out how the Bible reveals the fulfillment of prophecy.[116]

**Conditionality of the Abrahamic Covenant.** Let us see whether the Abrahamic covenant is depicted in the book of Genesis as unconditional with respect to the human partner in the covenant bond. Does the book of Genesis support the widespread notion that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional? Does it guarantee that the covenant promises are to be given literally to the physical seed of Abraham? The book of Genesis provides a clear answer to these essential questions.

There are several passages in Genesis which indicate that the covenant with Abraham was not unconditionally bound to the physical descendants of Abraham. The covenant is dependent on Abraham's and his descendants' faithfulness. In Genesis 17:9 God gives His charge: "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations" (NRSV). Abraham and his descendants can break the covenant. If they can "keep" it, then it is conditional on their obedience. In the same chapter at the end of God's speech reference is made to the fact that



the covenant can be "broken" (vs. 14). Here again, as in "keeping," so in "breaking;" Abraham and his descendants can nullify the covenant promises. The language of "keeping" and "breaking" is typical of covenants in the Old Testament which are conditional.

This is made more explicit in Genesis 18. God, in conversation with Abraham, says that He has chosen Abraham "that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (vs. 19, NRSV,) "in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (vs. 19, NASB). Here is a clear statement from the Lord that the covenant will remain active only upon the obedience of Abraham and his descendants.

In Genesis 22:16-18 the blessings promised to Abraham will be his "because you have obeyed My voice" (vs. 18, RSV). The outworkings of the covenant are dependent on the obedience to God. In Genesis 26:3-5 God explicitly refers to the promise "to your descendants I will give all these lands" and to other covenant promises. They will be brought about "because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws" (vs. 5, NASB).

This series of texts is consistent. They reveal that the Abrahamic covenant was not unconditional.[117] The conditionality of the Abrahamic covenant rests on the faithfulness of the human partner. Incidentally, Ellen G. White speaks of "conditions of the covenant made with Abraham."[118] This means that there is no evidence that a literal or literalistic fulfillment of the covenant promises is mandated regardless of the faith relationship of those to whom the covenant was made.

Dispensationalism's insistence on "consistent literalism" forces a meaning upon the text which the biblical text and context resist. There is no statement anywhere in the OT that God would guarantee to literal, natural Israel "the necessary conversion which is essential to its fulfillment."[119] The principle at work is that those of faith are the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:7). There is no support for the view that those of ethnic descent are the true Israel, and that they would be converted en masse in the millennial kingdom or at some other time. "It is those who are of faith that are the sons of

Abraham" (Gal 3:6, NASB) and "heirs according to the promise" (vs. 29, RSV).

Ellen White writes, "All who through Christ should become the children of faith were counted as Abraham's seed; they were inheritors of the covenant promises; like Abraham, they were called to guard and make known to the world the law of God and the gospel of His Son."[120] There is no restriction here to ethnicity or a natural derivation.

"Consistent literalism" reveals that it superimposes on Scripture a principle that seems alien to the plain and literal meaning of the text within its own biblical context.[121]

**Conditionality of the Davidic Covenant.** The claim for "consistent literalism" is also made for the Davidic covenant. Here is a key statement of a futurist, "According to the established principles of interpretation the Davidic covenant demands a literal fulfillment. This means that Christ must reign on David's throne on the earth over David's people forever."[122] Of course, the Davidic covenant is also understood to be unconditional by many today.

The conclusion that the Davidic covenant is totally unconditional and has to be literalistically fulfilled is based on a one-sided reading of the Old Testament, not to speak of the New Testament. Certainly God had promised in the covenant to David, "I will raise up your descendant after you" (2 Sam 7:12), and "your throne shall be established forever" (vs. 16). This is repeated in several parts of the Old Testament (2 Sam 23:5; Ps 89:3-4, 26-28, 34; cf. Isa 55:3-4).

Before we consider the biblical evidence for the conditionality of the Davidic covenant, it is important for us to analyze the major passage found in 2 Samuel 7:8-16. Students of Scripture have recognized that there are two parts to the covenant.[123] The first part has promises to be fulfilled during the lifetime of David (2 Sam 7:8-11a). These consist of matters that will take place before David's death: a great name (vs. 9); a place for his people (vs. 10), and rest (vs. 11).

The second part of the covenant is separated from the first one by the statement, "the LORD declares to you" (vs. 11b), and by a change from first person speech (vss. 8-11a) to third person speech (vss. 12-16). Furthermore, there is a clear statement that the promises given in verses 12-16 are to take effect in the future,



"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors" (vs. 12a, NRSV). The promises to be fulfilled after David's death consist of: an offspring (vss. 12b, 16); an eternal throne (vss. 13, 16); and an eternal kingdom (vss. 12c, 16).

The whole biblical evidence must be considered when one wishes to find an answer for the question of the conditionality of the Davidic covenant. There is ample evidence that God has made a divine commitment to fulfill the covenant. Does this mean, however, that the covenant is to be literlistically fulfilled regardless of the faith relationship of the human covenant partner(s)? There are a number of passages in the Old Testament which answer this question.

Psalm 132:11-12 refers to the Davidic covenant. Here it is seen to be dependent on the following condition, "If your sons will keep My covenant, and My testimony which I will teach them, their sons will also sit upon your throne forever" (vs. 12, NASB).

The theme of the conditionality of the Davidic covenant is maintained in Psalm 89:30, 31: "If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgressions . . ." (NRSV). The conditionality of the Davidic covenant is maintained with the conditional "if" in the Old Testament.[124] The conditional aspect of the Davidic covenant is here established as incontrovertible.

God would be able to fulfill the covenant made to David only to those who maintain a spiritual relationship with God.[125] Considering the condition of faithfulness to God's testimony, the conclusion of dispensationalists that "Christ must reign on David's throne on earth over David's people forever" is hardly faithful to the biblical witness itself.

The biblical evidence leads the careful student of the Bible to conclude that "consistent literalism" of dispensationalism cannot be reconciled with the internal testimony of the Bible. "Consistent literalism" is an external system that is superimposed on the Bible and does not allow the Bible to speak on its own terms. Therefore, dispensationalism seems to be a system that puts meanings on the Bible that are out of harmony with the simple and plain meaning of the witness of Scripture.

## Land Promises in the New Testament

How are the promises about the land which were repeatedly made in the Old Testament to be fulfilled? We have seen that both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are conditional as far as the human partner is concerned. We know also that it is a fact in the Old Testament, and maintained in the New Testament, that Israel of old did not remain faithful. Furthermore, Israel as a national entity rejected Christ. In view of these facts can we conclude that the land promises made in the Bible still need to be fulfilled to literal, ethnic Israel, to Jews? Or, does the Bible support the conclusion that the "new Israel" of believing Jews and Gentiles inherit the land promises?

**Christ's Testimony**. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ gives a beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5, RSV). Hans LaRondelle states that two conclusions need to be drawn: (1) In this beatitude Jesus Christ assigns the whole earth to his spiritual followers. In another beatitude the kingdom of heaven is assigned to the poor in spirit, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 3). Jesus assigns the inheritance of heaven and earth to the meek and the poor in spirit. (2) The original promise made to faithful Abraham is expanded for the Church to include the earth made new.[126]

This New Testament view is based, of course, on the Old Testament. The Psalmist had stated already in Psalm 37:11, 29 that the "meek" and the "righteous" would inherit the "land." The term for "land" here (as in the original promises made to Abraham) is expressed by the Hebrew term *'erets*. This Hebrew term can have the meaning of either "land" or "earth."[127]

When Christ speaks of the inheritance of the "earth" He brings out the larger meaning inherent in the Old Testament term. Christ wants his followers to have more than a limited "land." They shall inherit the whole earth! Christ brings the "land/earth" promises to include the whole earth. Paul likewise saw this fullness of intention in the Abrahamic covenant promise itself. "The promise to Abraham and his descendants that they should inherit the whole world (Greek *kosmos*), did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom 4:13).

This view is not alien to the Old Testament itself. The ultimate



view that God's people will be the inheritors of a recreated new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:17-19) is present in the prophetic eschatology. The condition for receiving the "new haven and the new earth" is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ's Promises.** The letter to the Hebrews and the writings of Paul agree that from the days when Christ had come in the flesh and when literal Israel had failed to accept Him the geographical and territorial promises were to be understood in their complete sense. Earthly Jerusalem was no longer the holy city and the dwelling place of God. The earthly temple had lost its meaning with the death of Christ as well.

The Israel of faith of the new covenant has a new city. It is the heavenly Jerusalem. The new covenant Israel has a new temple, the one which is in heaven. The new covenant Israel has a new High Priest, the exalted heavenly Christ. The new covenant Israel has a new country, the heavenly one.

The best question to ask is, How did Abraham understand the covenant promises made to him?[128] Abraham sojourned "by faith . . . in the land of promise as in a foreign country, . . . for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:9-10, NKJV). The city he was looking for was not the Jerusalem of the Jebusites, but the one in heaven, the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22).

How about the "land" that was promised to Abraham and his descendants? Hebrews 11:13-16 tells us, "And having confessed that they [Abraham and his descendants] were strangers and exiles on earth, . . . they [Abraham and his descendants] desire [were longing for] a better country, that is a heavenly one" (NASB).

How did Abraham understand the covenant promises? He understood them to involve the entering of the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly country. Abraham, according to Scripture, did not understand the promises to be literally or literalistically restricted to Palestine in the past or in the future.

It is helpful also to consider Hebrews 12:22, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (NASB). Here believers, both Jews and Gentiles, have in a sense already reached the heavenly Jerusalem and, as it were, the heavenly Mount Zion. This is in fulfillment of the Abrahamic

and Old Testament promise of Isaiah 60:14 and Micah 4:1-2. In another sense every follower of Abraham still "seeks the one [city] to come" (Heb 13:14). We have reached the heavenly Jerusalem through Jesus Christ, our Forerunner, who is already there while we are still on the way.

The book of Revelation reveals that the covenant promises given to Abraham will not be literally fulfilled to Jews during the millennium. Since every believer has proleptically come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem as Hebrews 12:22 affirms—and thus there is no need to wait for a millennial fulfillment as futurists and dispensationalists hold—the final reality of the fulfillment in its completeness awaits the believer according to Revelation 21-22. It will be fulfilled in its finality and in its most comprehensive divine intention when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. "Since Christians share in Abraham's inheritance of the heavenly city now, they will share in it then also."[129]

All the promises made by God will be fulfilled to the believer without any regard to ethnicity. The qualification of fulfillment on the part of humans is faith, genuine faith, in the Lord of Scripture, manifesting itself in faith obedience. That faith is never linked to any ethnic background or national entity. It is a gift and quality of life available to every human being.

## Endnotes

1 Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (new revised ed.; London: W. H. Allen, 1975) 993, 1151.

2 For a defense of the historical-critical method, see Edgar Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

3 For critical reactions and/or rejection of the historical-critical method, see Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation. Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode* (2nd ed.; Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 1975), English transl. from 1st ed. *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990).

4 See the detailed description of this principle by Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer. The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan Comp., 1966), pp. 69-74.

5 Ibid., p. 15.



6 Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publ. House, 1990), p. 126.

7 Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, pp. 38-67.

8 For example, Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed. Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 112-120; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 19-52; Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

9 G. Ernest Wright, *Isaiah* "The Layman's Bible Commentaries" (London: SCM Press, 1964), 8. Wright speaks of the "rule of thumb" of predictive prophecy in the following way: "A prophecy is earlier than what it predicts, but contemporary with, or later than, what it presupposes."

10 Ibid.

11 This is well stated by Klaus Koch, *The Prophets. The Babylonian and Persian Periods* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 2:73-80, and Wright, p. 8: "The prophet had thus messages for his own people in his own day. It would not be within the primary function of his office to address another people in another time than his own."

12 John J. Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1981), pp. 11-12, writes about "the authenticity of Daniel's prophecies" as follows: "The issue is not whether a divinely inspired prophet *could* have foretold the events which took place . . . years before they occurred. The question is whether this possibility carries any *probability*: is it the most satisfactory way to explain what we find in Daniel? Modern [historical-] critical scholarship has held that it is not" (italics his).

13 Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 346.

14 Luis de Alcazar, *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apoclypsi* (published posthumously in 1614). See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1948) 2:506-10.

15 See L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*. 4 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 1946-54).

16 See the paper produced by the Biblical Research Institute and Ellen G. White Estate entitled, "Critique of *Give Glory to Him* by Robert Hauser" (August 1984).

17 See George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope. A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 35-60.

18 Froom, 2:489-93.

19 Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 37-38.

20 Froom, 2:495-502.

21 Froom, 2:511.

22 So among others John F. Walvoord, *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 19-26 of the section "Israel in Prophecy."

23 Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last-Day Events* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 18.

24 Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), p. 54.

25 For example, C. F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 606.

26 So Thomas S. McCall, "Problems in Rebuilding the Tribulation Temple," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan. 1972), 79.

27 John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), p. 125; cf. Charles L. Feinberg, "The Rebuilding of the Temple," *Prophecy in the Making*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Carol Stream, IL: InterVarsity, 1971).

28 John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979). Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1986), pp. 213-62, provides an evaluation and critique of futurist-dispensationalism. His arguments against the "rapture" theory include: (1) The terminology for the Second Coming of Christ in such passages as 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 2:8; 1 Cor 1:7; 1 Tim 6:14 and Matt 24:27, 37, 39 provide evidence for a single, one-stage and not a two-stage Second Coming. (2) Paul in 1 Thess 4:15-17 describes the Lord as descending "from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God," which are paralleled in Matt 24:31 and 1 Cor 15:52, and demonstrated that there is no "secret rapture." (3) In Matt 24:31 the rapture is placed after the tribulation and not before and protection is granted in the tribulation (Rev 3:10). (4) The book of Revelation gives no evidence for a pretribulation rapture, but a posttribulation return of the Lord (pp. 246-51).

29 See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), pp. 156-217.

30 See particularly the definitions provided in the dissertations of Samuel Nunez, *"The Vision of Daniel 8: Interpretations from 1700-1900"* (Ph. D. diss., Andrews University, 1987), 10-11; Gerhard Pfandl, *"The Latter Days and the Time of the End in the Book of Daniel,"* (Ph. D. diss., Andrews University, 1990), 5-6, published as *The The Time of the End on the Book of Daniel* "Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series" (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992).

31 For the purpose of this study it will not be necessary to distinguish between "futurists" and "dispensationalists" (see Pfandl, 7-8), because the latter are futurist in outlook.

32 Crutchfield, p. 244 [see below note 45], states, "The bulk of end-time events is still ahead of us as it was future to those of the Biblical period." Darby, *Writings, 2:Prophetic No. 1*, p. 279 had himself stated, "The greater part of the prophecies, and, in a certain sense, we may say, all the prophecies, will have their accomplishment at the expiration of the dispensation in which we are."

33 C. C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 156-76.

34 See Charles L. Feinberg, *Israel At the Center of History and Revelation* (Portland,OR: Multnomah Press, 1980); Walvoord, *Israel and Prophecy* reprinted in *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, pp. 15-133, and many others.

35 Walvoord, *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, pp. 103-20, with emphasis on the section "The Nations in Prophecy."

36 Pentecost, pp. 340-58, with earlier literature; Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), p. 349; Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences* (New York, 1983).

37 This designation is used by Arnold D. Ehlert, *A Bibliographic History of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 5, who provides a bibliographical study of earlier writers who depict a "history of the subject of ages and dispensations." Ehlert seeks to show that dispensationalism is old indeed. Nevertheless, "modern dispensationalism" seems to be unique. Simply to find pre-Darby writers who have dispensations does not make them into dispensationalists. See the incisive critique by Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 9-11.



38 John N. Darby, *The Collected Writings of John Nelson Darby*, ed. W. Kelly. 34 vols. (reprint; Sunbury, PA; Believers Bookshelf, 1971).

39 W. G. Turner, *John Nelson Darby* (London: Hammond, 1944), pp. 13-15; C. B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), pp. 48-99.

40 H. Pickering, *Chief Men Among the Brethren* (2nd ed.; London: Pickering and Inglis, 1931); W. Blair Neatby, *The History of the Plymouth Brethren* (2nd ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902).

41 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Dispensationalsism* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1936); idem, *Systematic Theology*. 8 vols. (Dallas Seminary Press, 1947); idem, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. by John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974).

42 Published first in Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.

43 So claimed by Hal Lindsay in his subsequent book, *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (Toronto/New York, 1981), pp. 4, 11.

44 For sober reactions and critiques of Lindsey's futurism, see George C. Miladin, *Is This Really the End? A Reformed Analysis of 'The Late Great Planet Earth'* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publ. Co., 1972); T. Boersma, *Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle . . . An Evaluation of Hal Lindsey's Writing* (St. Catherines, Canada, 1978); Cornelius Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy* (St. Catherines, Canada, 1978); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle. Five Predictions that Failed* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985).

45 The seven dispensations in their classical form are those of "innocency" (Gen 1:26-3:24), "conscience" (Gen 4:1-7:24), "human government" (Gen 8:1-11:26), "promise" (Gen 11:27-Ex 18), "law" (Ex 19:1-Acts 1:26), "grace" (Acts 2:1-Rev 19:21) and "kingdom" (Rev 20:1-6) according to Larry V. Crutchfield, *"The Doctrine of Ages and Dispensations as Found in the Published Works of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)"* (Ph. D. Diss., Drew University, 1985), pp. 58-68.

46 C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., n.d.), pp.12-16.

47 See Crutchfield, pp. 48-56, upon whom I depend heavily in this section.

48 Crutchfield, pp. 68-71.

49 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 44-45; similarly John F. Walvoord, "Dispensational Premillennialism," *Christianity Today* 15 (September, 1958), p. 13; Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 93 (1936): 448.

50 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 159.

51 Crutchfield, p. 49.

52 See Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 133-40.

53 Ibid., p. 136.

54 For a penetrating analysis and critique of the origins and changes in the rapture theory, see Dave MacPherson, *The Great Rapture Hoax* (Fletcher, N.C.: New Puritan Library, 1983). For an adjusted view of the post-mid-week rapture, see now Marvin Rosenthal, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1990).

55 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 159.

56 Crutchfield, p. 71.

57 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 156-161.

58 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:47-53.

59 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come. A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), pp. 201-202.

60 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 158.

61 Ibid., p. 546.

62 Ibid., p. 140.

63 For a critique of the "secret rapture," see Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, pp. 89-104; Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Co., 1977), pp. 181-91.

64 See Gerhard von Rad, "Israel," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:356-59; R. Mayer, "Israel, Jew, Hebrew, Jacob, Judah," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 2:304-16.

65 Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), p. 82.

66 H.J. Zobel, "*yisra'el*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:401.

67 Ibid.

68 A. R. Hulst, "'*am/goj* Volk," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, eds. E. Jenni and C. Westermann (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag/Munich: Kaiser, 1976), 2:312-14.

69 N. A. Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes* (Oslo, 1941), p. 19.

70 Hulst, p. 315.

71 R. E. Clements, "*gôy*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:427.

72 E. A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nation' of Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960): 160-170.

73 LaRondelle, pp. 83-85.

74 See on the conditionality of the Abrahamic covenant as regards the human partner, Gerhard F. Hasel, *Covenant in Blood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1982), pp. 52-62; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Phenomenon of Conditionality within Unconditional Covenants," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration. Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), pp. 123-139; Ronald Youngblood, "The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?" *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, eds, Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 31-46; Oswald T. Allis, *God Spake by Moses* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), p. 72.

75 Those who wish to claim that Abraham did not have his faith reckoned as righteousness by God but that Abraham "considered the promise of seed[s] justice" (see M. Oeming, "Ist Genesis 15, 6 ein Beleg für die Anrechnung des Glaubens?" *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95 [1983]: 182-197, who was opposed by Bo Johnson, "Who Reckoned Righteousness to Whom?" *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 51 [1986]: 108-115) have difficulty with the Hebrew syntax and the New Testament (see Rom 4:3 where God is the subject of the second clause).

76 Zobel, "*yisra'el*," 401.

77 Ibid.



78 F. I. Anderson and D. N. Freedman, *Amos. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* "Anchor Bible, vol. 24a" (New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 130-32.

79 Ibid., p. 403.

80 Ibid., p. 404.

81 Gerhard F. Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:132.

82 Ibid., 4:133; idem, *The Remnant. The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (3rd ed.; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), pp. 170-215.

83 Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:133.

84 LaRondelle, pp. 90-91.

85 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 138.

86 For a full study of Israel and its implications, see the excellent work cited previously by Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).

87 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 138.

88 LaRondelle, pp. 98-99.

89 Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, p. 69.

90 See G. Friedrich, "*Epangelia*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 2:584.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid., p. 127.

94 LaRondelle, pp. 110-111.

95 Joachim Rhode, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1989), p. 278 (emphasis mine).

96 Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1986), pp. 228-29.

97 Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:105-107; Pentecost, p. 298: John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959), pp. 171-73, and others.

98 That this term includes both Jew and Gentiles is held among many others also by John Calvin and K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 416, who take "all Israel" as the Church.

99 Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:134.

100 It had even been claimed that Paul argues for a "special way" of salvation for Jews who are saved without faith in Jesus Christ. The whole argument of Paul and his insistence on faith in Jesus Christ counters such a view. God has only one way of salvation for all of humankind.

101 See also William Sanford La Sor, *Israel. A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 83-108.

102 Poythress, p. 129.

103 A more extensive analysis is provided by LaRondelle in his book, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, from whom we have extensively benefitted in this section as well as in the following.

104 John F. Walvoord, "Israel's Restoration," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102 (1945),

405-16; idem, "Israel in Prophecy," in *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, pp. 15-138.

105 Walvoord, "Israel in Prophecy," in *The Nation, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, p. 78.

106 Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 60.

107 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 158.

108 Ibid.

109 Herman Hoyt, ""Dispensational Premillennialism," *The Meaning of the Millennium*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), p. 66.

110 Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, pp. 87-110. See also Bacchiocchi, *Advent Hope*, pp. 220-25, and particularly Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).

111 See also Gen 13:14-15; 13:17; 15:7-21; 17:8; 26:3-4; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24; Exod 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Num 11:12; 14:16, 23; 32:11; Deut 1:8, 35; 4:31; 6:10, 18, 23. There are thirteen additional promises to the land in the OT outside the Pentateuch.

112 *The New Scofield Bible*, pp. 20, 1318.

113 Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 98.

114 See Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), pp. 66-82.

115 Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope*, p. 221.

116 Gerhard F. Hasel, "Fulfillments of Prophecy," *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook "Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, Vol. 3" (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), pp. 288-322.

117 Hasel, *Covenant in Blood*, pp. 38-41.

118 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 138.

119 See above note 113.

120 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 476.

121 For other examples, see LaRondelle, pp. 23-34.

122 Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 112. See also Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 80.

123 We follow here the suggestions of R. A. Carlson, *David and the Chosen King* (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksell, 1964), pp. 111-14.

124 Frank Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 232, believes that this conditionality is an early form of the Nathan oracle. John Bright, *Covenant and Promise. The Prophetic Understanding of the Future in Pre-Exilic Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 64, states that "the continuance of the dynasty [of David] is made subject to conditions!"

125 See Waltke, pp. 131, 132; David Noel Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: The Covenant Theme," *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 426; Avraham Gileadi, "The Davidic Covenant: A Theological Basis for Corporate Protection," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration. Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), pp. 161, 162.

126 LaRondelle, p. 138.

127 H. H. Schmid, "'*æræṣ* Erde, Land," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 1:228-36; M. Ottosson, "'*erets*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:393-405.



128 In the following I largely follow the points made by Poythress, pp. 120-21.

129 Poythress, p. 123.