

EVANGELICAL ZIONISM

AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE TO ISRAEL'S EVANGELICAL ENEMIES

PART VI

The Allegedly Silent New Testament

One of the key arguments of those who reject the biblical concept of the restoration of Israel is that the New Testament is silent. For example...

Colin Chapman states:

...the New Testament writers showed no interest in a literal interpretation. Since they were silent about the future of the Land...¹

An open letter from Knox Theological Seminary states:

No New Testament writer foresees a regathering of ethnic Israel in the land.²

And David Devenish said this:

What does the New Testament teach about the land of Israel? Answer: absolutely nothing.³

Just for a moment let's imagine that what they are saying is true - that the New Testament is silent on this issue.

To that I would respond: *So What?*

We have already seen that the Old Testament was Bible of the first believers. It was the very foundation of their faith. There was no need for Israel's unconditional and unambiguous promises to be restated.⁴

Of course, the majority of the Jewish people rejected Jesus, and still do. Doesn't that change everything? The fact is that the rejection of Messiah, whether he be Jesus or someone else, is predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures⁵ - even in the same context as the ultimate regathering and restoration of Israel.⁶

¹ Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?: The continuing conflict over Israel and Palestine*, Grand Rapids, 2002, p262

² "An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel". The letter is apparently no longer available at Knox Seminary's site. It can be viewed elsewhere online, however.

³ David Devenish, 'The Land in the New Testament', *Challenging Christian Zionism*, <http://www.christianzionism.org/biblesays/devenish01.asp>

⁴ S Lewis Johnson: "...[the Old Testament] was the Bible of the Christian Church for a lengthy period of time. And the promises concerning the land are written over and over again in the Old Testament. ...there seems to be lurking behind the demand that the promises set out so clearly and fully in the Old Testament must be repeated in the New Testament in order to validate them... ...a false principle." <http://sljinstitute.net/divine-purpose-in-history-and-prophecy/part-vi-2/>

⁵ Isaiah 53:3,4; Psalm 118:22.

⁶ Isaiah 49:7 (1-26); Zech 12:10 (Zech 12-14).

I have been very happily married for nearly 30 years. Neither my wife nor I feel any need to read and recite our marriage license in order to confirm that we are married. Similarly, even if the New Testament were silent on the issue of Israel it would do nothing to undermine Israel's covenant standing.

My wife and I made solemn vows to one another. But those promises are trivial and insignificant compared to God's covenant promises to Israel. As we have seen, no declaration of Scripture is stated in more emphatic terms.⁷

But, we need not argue as though the New Testament were silent on the issue of Israel and her land. It is *not* silent.

Shaul, whom Christians usually call Paul, mentioned the covenants and promises - *plural* - explicitly affirming that they belong to Israel.⁸ And those covenants to which he referred include unambiguous promises of the land of Israel and the regathering of the Jewish people⁹ -not as a secondary detail but as a central theme. He describes Israel's gifts and calling as irrevocable¹⁰ and states that Jesus had come not to annul or reinterpret the promises made to the patriarchs, but to confirm them.¹¹ The specific wording of those promises is clear to any honest reader.

Within the gospel accounts we find repeated mention of Jerusalem¹² (it is the very *centre* of the land, after all) and those who were looking forward to its redemption¹³.

While religious Jews will of course strongly disagree with us as to who the Messiah is, on this both they and the New Testament are in full agreement:¹⁴ he will come to Jerusalem¹⁵, where he will establish his kingdom¹⁶, just as the covenants demand.

In Acts, the apostles' clear assumption was that the kingdom would be restored to Israel¹⁷, in fulfilment of the teachings of the prophets¹⁸ - and that kingdom is centered in Jerusalem, the heart of the land of Israel.

⁷ See Parts I and II.

⁸ Romans 9:4.

⁹ Genesis 15:7; 17:8; 28:13, Deuteronomy 30:1-3; Jeremiah 31:31-37; 32:37-41; 33:15-26.

¹⁰ Romans 11:29.

¹¹ Romans 15:8.

¹² Matthew 5:35; Luke 19:11; 21:24.

¹³ Luke 2:25,38.

¹⁴ e.g. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, 'All About the Messiah', <http://www.aish.com/jl/li/m/48944241.html> and http://www.chabad.org/library/moshiach/article_cdo/aid/1157486/jewish/Introduction.htm

¹⁵ Matthew 23:37-39.

¹⁶ Matthew 19:28.

¹⁷ Acts 1:6,7; 26:6-7.

¹⁸ Acts 3:21.

In addition there are a number of New Testament predictions that necessitate the regathering of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. ¹⁹

It is simply wrong to say the New Testament is silent concerning the land.

What the New Testament *is* silent on is any statement annulling Israel's covenant relationship to her God and to her land. That should not surprise us as the land promise is said to be irrevocable in both Old and New Testaments. ²⁰

¹⁹ e.g. Matthew 23:37-39; 24:15-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

²⁰ Genesis 15:6-19; Jeremiah 33:19-26; Romans 11:29; 15:8.