

Part 1: **Does the Church Fulfill Israel's Program?**

—
John F. Walvoord

[John F. Walvoord, President and Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary.]

One of the Major problems in the interpretation of the Bible is the relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament. Many volumes have been written to point out the diverse character of these major portions of Scripture. Old Testament theology has developed the major constituent elements of the Old Testament, and New Testament theology has made a similar analysis of the New Testament, but the relationship of the two continues to be a major issue in theological interpretation.

The Interpretation of the Old Testament

Liberal theologians, who are not concerned with the problem of the inerrancy and authority of the Bible, are free to declare that both the Old and New Testaments must be interpreted in the light of modern culture and that the Old and New Testaments are not to be taken literally. Conservative theologians, holding the concept that the Bible is inspired of the Holy Spirit and therefore cannot contain contradictory statements, are committed to the principle that both the Old and New Testaments are infallible in their presentation of divine truth. However, even in conservative schools of thought, there is the constantly repeated concept that the New Testament reinterprets the Old Testament and that one must accordingly be governed primarily by the New Testament in formulating theological truth. This has been a dominant premise of conservative amillennialism, which recognizes that the Old Testament anticipates an earthly kingdom, but which contends

that, based on New Testament revelation, these prophecies must not be interpreted literally. Appeal is often made also to the field of typology in which individuals, situations, and events in the Old Testament are interpreted as typical illustrations in the New Testament, with the result that the actual historical or theological import of the original statements is questioned.

Another problem area is the fact that many people in the lifetime of Christ misinterpreted the Old Testament. This has given rise to the constantly reiterated conclusion that the New Testament reinterprets the Old Testament and that the real meaning of the Old Testament is therefore to be found in the New. In the process of these various approaches to the interpretation of the Old Testament, the question as to what the Old Testament actually teaches as normative truth is sometimes obscured.

Among these problems, one of the definitive questions is whether the New Testament church fulfills Israel's prophetic programs. Here, among conservative interpreters at least, are two distinct schools of thought: (a) the teaching that Israel has a special program of God, beginning with Abraham and continuing on into eternity to come, and (b) the teaching that the programs of God for Israel and the church are essentially one and consist in the fact that both are the recipients of God's salvation.

This problem has been stated by Ladd in his brief but definitive work *The Last Things*. He points out the contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament in their presentation

of Israel and the church. He states, “In the Old Testament the eschatological salvation is always pictured in terms of the national, theocratic fate of the people Israel. *There are no clear prophecies of the Christian church as such in the Old Testament.*” By contrast, Ladd then points out:

Instead of being a nation, the church was an open fellowship of people who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. At first the church consisted largely of Jews, but Acts tells the story of how the church moved out into the Gentile world, accepted many Gentiles into its fellowship, and concludes with the story of Paul preaching to a largely Gentile church in Rome. Eschatology in the New Testament deals largely with the destiny of the church.

He concludes, “Here we have two different stories: the story of the nation Israel and the story of the church. What are we to make of this apparent dilemma?”

In discussing the problem, Ladd points out that two opposing answers have been proposed. He labels one the dispensational interpretation and he calls the other the interpretation of progressive revelation.

Two radically different answers have been proposed, and every student of prophecy must choose between them. The first is to conclude that God has two different programs: one for Israel and one for the church. Israel was and remains and is to be a theocratic people who are destined to inherit the promised land of Israel, for whom Jesus will be the literal Davidic king, when the prophecies of the Old Testament will be literally fulfilled. This system is called *Dispensationalism*.

He continues, “The two chief tenets of Dispensationalism are two peoples of God for whom God has two different programs and destinies—theocratic and earthly for Israel, spiritual and heavenly for the church.”

Ladd explains the second approach to prophecy in these words: “The second way of interpreting prophecy is to recognize the progressive revelation and to interpret the Old Testament by the New Testament. The Old Testament must be interpreted (and often reinterpreted) by the new revelation given in the person and mission of Jesus Christ.” He continues his discussion by supporting the second view, the reinterpretation of prophecy as he sees it in the New Testament as it relates to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

That many Jews in the time of Christ had misinterpreted the Old Testament is clear to all observers. It is also clear that none of the Jews then seems to have understood the difference between the first and second comings of Christ, nor did they comprehend the forthcoming program for the church such as the New Testament outlines. Whether this is reinterpretation or additional revelation remains to be considered. Ladd does not offer any detailed study of what he calls dispensationalism, and the issue remains, Does the New Testament effectively dispose of these promises and deny their literal fulfillment? Amillennialists usually say yes. Ladd, as a premillennialist, would be expected to say no, but he does not give a clear answer in this particular study. The question remains whether God has a special program for Israel which differs from His program for the church, or whether the two programs are identical. Before turning to the supposed “reinterpretation” of the Old Testament by the New, it may be well to set forth clearly what the Old Testament teaches on the subject of Israel’s future program, and then ask the question, What does the New Testament teach about this?

That there are many similarities between God’s program for Israel and God’s program for the church should be apparent. Israel has the same Savior, the same basis for her salvation in the

death of Christ, and the same prospect for eternal glory. Certain facets of Israel's program, however, are totally foreign to the church, just as certain promises which God has given to the church differ from those given to Israel. These form the basis for the conclusion of dispensationalism that there are two programs, so far as history is concerned, even though there is only one way of salvation.

Literal versus Nonliteral Interpretation

Ladd is correct that the issue in interpretation is whether Israel has a special program as contrasted to the program of God for the church, but the contrast is misstated as a contrast for or against progressive revelation. Dispensationalists all recognize that there is the element of progressive revelation throughout Scripture, and in fact this is inherent in and emphasized by dispensational interpretation. The difference between the dispensational interpretation and the nondispensational interpretation is not an affirmation or denial of progressive revelation, but rather is the contrast between literal versus nonliteral interpretation. It seems quite clear to most observers of the history of doctrine that prior to the writings of the New Testament, prophets as well as ordinary people in the Old Testament understood that God had a special program for Israel, and that this had its consummation in the coming of their Messiah and in their repossession of the promised land. The golden age predicted in the Old Testament for Israel anticipated a literal fulfillment.

The difference in interpretation originates when amillenarians and some premillenarians interpret the New Testament as contradicting or amending this concept to the extent of substituting a nonliteral fulfillment of these hopes voiced in the Old Testament. The issue accordingly is not progressive revelation versus nonprogressive revelation, but rather whether in progressive revelation there is contradiction or correction of what was commonly assumed to be the main tenor of Old Testament revelation. Accordingly the issue is whether the Old Testament teaches a literal fulfillment of specific promises for Israel and whether the New Testament contradicts or supports literal interpretation. Here is the major issue between amillennialism and premillennialism,

and also the issue between dispensational premillennialism and nondispensational premillennialism as these terms are commonly used today.

The extent to which the Old Testament specifically prophesies a special program for Israel has already been published by the writer, and the major contribution of the Old Testament to this subject needs only to be restated under four headings: (a) predictions concerning Abraham; (b) predictions concerning the nation Israel; (c) predictions concerning the land; and (d) predictions concerning the kingdom.

Predictions Concerning Abraham

According to Genesis 12:1-3, God made specific promises to Abraham as follows: "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing."

One is confronted immediately with the question as to whether these promises are literal. It seems clear that Abraham literally went from his country to another country and that he was to be literally separated from his relatives and his father's house. This is illustrated in the fact that Abraham made the journey to the promised land. The promise to Abraham that a great nation

would come from him, even though he had no children at that time, has been literally fulfilled in history.

God obviously blessed Abraham in many respects. His name is considered great, not only in Christendom, but also in Judaism and in Islam. The life and ministry of Abraham have been a blessing to the world. The principle that God would bless those who blessed Abraham has been illustrated abundantly in history, and those who have persecuted Israel have come under the promised curse.

The final promise that all families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham has been fulfilled literally, not only in the writing of Scripture from Jewish pens, but also preeminently through Jesus Christ. In the light of this pattern of literal fulfillment, it would seem strange on the surface that anyone would question the literalness of these promises. Conservative amillenarians usually recognize the literal fulfillment of these promises up to a point where it does not contradict their eschatological views, but they insist that any literal fulfillment of these promises

should not lead to the conclusion that there is a separate program for Israel.

Much of the discussion revolves around the meaning of “the seed of Abraham” (AV) or the meaning of his “descendants” (Gen 12:7). Here both Testaments seem to justify the conclusion that the descendants of Abraham are considered in three categories: (a) the natural or physical descendants of Abraham, (b) those who are the descendants of Abraham in the sense of being believing Israelites or true believers like Abraham, as illustrated in the contrast between natural Israel and spiritual Israel in Romans 9:6–8; (c) those who are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles, in that they believe in God even as Abraham did, as illustrated in Galatians 3:6–9. Accordingly, Gentile Christians are considered to be among the descendants of Abraham because they are in Christ, who is a descendant of Abraham.

Having recognized this distinction, however, it should be observed that the promises also have to be classified as applying to one or more of these three concepts. Some promises apply to all physical descendants of Abraham, such as the promise that he would be the father of many nations (Gen 17:4). In the revelation of the law of Moses where specific promises are given Israel for obedience or for disobedience, the issue relates to spiritual Israel, not Gentiles. When considering the third aspect—spiritual descendants of Abraham—it should be noted that Galatians 3:6–9 specifically alludes to the blessings which are promised the Gentiles in Genesis 12:3, that is, blessings to “all the families of the earth.” Accordingly the principle of literal interpretation is supported, but proper distinctions do not blur the clear lines of demarcation among (a) the nation as a whole, (b) spiritual Israel or believing Israelites, and (c) the church composed of Jews and Gentiles.

Subsequent to the original promise given to Abraham, further details are given, largely relating to the natural descendants of Abraham as such or the particular portion of his descendants who are spiritual. As will be seen in the study of the promises concerning the land beginning in Genesis 12:7, it is demonstrable that these promises are to be interpreted literally to the physical descendants of Abraham and are never transferred to Gentiles. The same is true for other promises that relate to the nation of Israel as a whole, and the promises in regard to the Davidic kingdom again concern the physical descendants of

Abraham, excluding Gentiles. Amillenarians or nondispensational premillenarians who quote Romans 9, Galatians 3, or similar passages do not seem to realize that they are assuming what they are trying to prove. As far as the Old Testament is concerned, the promises given to

Abraham were literally fulfilled and this created an expectation on the part of those to whom they were revealed that a literal fulfillment was to be expected. This is supported and sustained by an examination of predictions relating to the nation of Israel, those relating to the promised land, and those relating to the Davidic kingdom.

Predictions Concerning the Nation Israel

In relation to promises concerning the nation Israel, the distinction has already been made between spiritual Israel, that is, those who were true believers in God, and natural Israel, that is, those who were simply physical descendants of Abraham. A further distinction, however, has to be made between those who are descendants of Jacob and his twelve sons and those who were descendants of Ishmael, Esau, or the children of Keturah.

In the unfolding revelation in the Book of Genesis, these distinctions are clearly made. Isaac, the son of Sarah, was to inherit the promises specifically given to the descendants of Abraham, not Ishmael. In like manner, Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac, are clearly distinguished, and Jacob, the younger of the twins, is the one who inherits the specific promises that God would fulfill for the nation Israel. Accordingly, in Scripture a sharp distinction must be observed between the descendants of Abraham in general and the descendants of Jacob, or Israel. This is the heart of the present Arab-Israel controversy and is important to the theological debate between amillennialism and premillennialism.

The specific promises given to Israel as descendants of Abraham are that they would be a great nation, that their numbers would be innumerable (Gen 26:4), and that God would bless them abundantly (Gen 12:2; 26:3–5). It is also clear that the promise of blessing on those who bless Israel, the promise of cursing on those who curse Israel, and the promise that all families of the earth would be blessed are to be fulfilled specifically through Jacob and his twelve sons, rather than through the other descendants of Abraham. These promises are further supported by the fact that the nation is promised continuity forever, a promise that is repeatedly made in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 17:7–8; Jer 30:11). Accordingly premillenarians hold that Israel's promised future includes her repossession of the land and her blessing under God in the future millennial kingdom following the second coming of Christ.

Opponents of premillennialism have followed two different courses. The more extreme have denied that the descendants of Abraham should be taken in any literal sense. According to Pieters, the term *Israel* merely indicates the people of God without relation to either national or racial characteristics. He avoids, however, the contradictory evidence in the Bible and, for instance, skips completely any discussion of Genesis 15 where Israel as a nation is promised her land.

A more conservative reply adopted by many amillenarians and some postmillenarians is that while Israel continues as a race, she does not continue as a political entity or as a nation. For instance, Hendriksen takes the position that the term Israel in Romans 11:25–26 refers to those Israelites who are believers in God and part of the church in the present age. In like manner, Charles Hodge, although a postmillenarian, takes the position that the word *Israel* in the Bible never refers to Gentiles. He does not believe that Israel has a political future, and he holds that the prophecies of Israel's future blessing are fulfilled in her role in the church in the present age. It is most significant that some amillenarians and postmillenarians concede that the word *Israel* normally means Israel. The remaining question is whether the prophecies relating to Israel can be fulfilled by Israel within the church in the present age. The answer is found in the promises

concerning the land and the kingdom, both of which lose significance if they are not interpreted literally.

The Scriptures are explicit that Israel has perpetuity as a nation. In relating the New covenant to the nation Israel, God describes her millennial blessings in Jeremiah 31:31–37 and specifically states in verses 35–37, “Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: ‘If this fixed order departs from before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.’ Thus says the LORD, ‘If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,’ declares the LORD.” It would be

difficult to find a more specific statement that Israel as a nation will continue forever.

Amillenarians contend, however, on the basis of the quotation of this passage in Hebrews 8, that this is applied to the church. This will be discussed in part 3 of this series.

The promise given to Jeremiah is repeated in many other portions of the Old Testament which affirm the absolute certainty of the fulfillment of the promises to Israel as a nation.

Predictions Concerning the Land

The crux of the question of literal interpretation is found in the many promises given in the Old Testament concerning the land of Israel. Amillenarians are forced to adopt one of two explanations: either that the promises are not literal but refer to heaven, or that the promises are literal but are conditional and Israel failed to meet the condition.

A study of the promises to Israel concerning the land demonstrate that both of these explanations are without support in the Old Testament.

The literalness of the promises concerning the land are supported by the fact that Abraham left his home in Mesopotamia and traveled to the promised land. If the promises concerning the land were only to be considered spiritually and referred to heaven, he could have remained where he was without any geographical movement. It is also clear that when he did come to the land, God said in Genesis 12:7, “To your descendants I will give this land.” It is evident that He was referring to the land in which Abraham was residing. In Genesis 13, when Abraham separated from Lot, he was instructed, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever” (13:14–15). It is obvious that God is not talking about heaven, but about a literal land.

This is further brought out in the confirmation of the covenant by the shedding of blood in Genesis 15, where Abraham is assured not only that he will have physical offspring, but also that his descendants will literally possess the land. According to Genesis 15:18, God’s covenant stated, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.” The Scripture goes on to define the heathen tribes that lived in that area at the time, certainly not a fitting description of heaven. Amillenarians like Pieters find it convenient to skip this passage entirely.

The promise is once again repeated in Genesis 17:8. “And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting

possession; and I will be their God.” It is obvious that Abraham understood these promises as intended to be fulfilled in their literal sense.

This is confirmed by later passages in Genesis. According to Genesis 26:3, Isaac is promised that his descendants will possess the land, in contrast to the descendants of Ishmael. In Genesis 28:13, God assured Jacob that the promises of the land will be for his descendants, not the descendants of Esau, and He further promised to bring him back to the land at a later time.

At the end of the Book of Genesis the entire family of Abraham was back in Egypt, out of the promised land and without fulfillment of the promises. However, even before the children of Israel went to Egypt, God had predicted that they would make this departure. According to Genesis 15:13–14, God promised them that they would be strangers in a land that was not theirs, but that later they would return to their land. This was literally fulfilled in the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent possession of the land by the people of Israel under Joshua. Although they did not possess all the land, it is quite clear that they were proceeding on the basis of literal fulfillment of the promises.

According to Joshua 1:2–4, Joshua was told, “Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun, will be your territory.” It should seem clear that the promise of the land was partially fulfilled.

While returning to the land, however, Israel was solemnly warned by Moses, as recorded in Deuteronomy 28:63–68, that if they disobeyed the Law, they would be driven out of the land again. Subsequent history reveals that this was also literally fulfilled. First the ten tribes were carried off into captivity in 721 B.C. by the armies of Assyria, and the two remaining tribes were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar by 605 B.C. and subsequently carried off to Babylon. Here again, the literalness of the promise is brought out in the prophetic Scriptures.

But they were also promised later possession of this land. Jeremiah, the prophet of the Babylonian captivity period, declared in Jeremiah 29:10, “For thus says the LORD, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’” Sixty-eight years later the captive Daniel came into possession of the written prophecies of Jeremiah and on reading this verse immediately gave himself to prayer and fasting to God in anticipation of the fulfillment of this promise (Dan 9:1–19). Again it is clear that Daniel regarded the promise of the return to the land as literal and regarded the land itself as literally belonging to Israel. The Book of Ezra records that two years later, in answer to Daniel’s prayer, approximately fifty thousand exiles returned to begin the reestablishment of the nation in their ancient land. The whole tenor of Scripture and its fulfillment in these stirring events support the concept of a literal land and of literal possession of it by the nation Israel.

But the end was not yet, for the same prophecies which predicted that Israel would go back from the Babylonian captivity also predicted eventually their worldwide dispersion. In the words of Moses, it was predicted, “Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known” (Deut 28:64). The prophecy goes on to picture the sad lot of Israel, persecuted and without security of life, in her dispersion among the Gentiles.

In summary, the Scriptures predicted that Abraham’s people would leave the land promised to them, and that was literally fulfilled in their bondage in Egypt. It was also predicted they

would come back to the literal land, and they did. The Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were predicted, and they were literally fulfilled. It was predicted that Israel would come back to the land, and this again was literally fulfilled.

Subsequent to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, and the people of Israel were indeed scattered throughout the whole world. All of this illustrates and supports the pattern of literal fulfillment in relation to a literal land for a literal nation Israel. The only real question which remains is whether the Bible predicts that they will come back to the land a third time and possess it forever.

Here, if anything, the prophets are more explicit than in any of the preceding dispersions or regatherings. It is almost the

theme song of the major and minor prophets that Israel will ultimately possess the land.

According to Isaiah 11:11, the children of Israel will return “from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.” It should be obvious that this description is of the final regathering of Israel from her worldwide dispersion. This theme is repeated again and again in Scripture, as in Isaiah 43:5–7 where Israelites are said to come from “the ends of the earth.” Isaiah 60:21 states categorically, “They will possess the land forever.” Isaiah 66:20 refers to them as being gathered “from all the nations.”

Jeremiah 16:14–16 indicates that the regathering of Israel will be complete and not partial. “‘Therefore behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when it will no longer be said, “As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,” but, “As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.” For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,’ declares the LORD, ‘and they will fish for them; and afterwards I shall send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and from the clefts of the rocks.’” This promise has certainly never been fulfilled up to the present time.

A most illuminating promise is given in Jeremiah 30:1–7 where the return of Israel to the land is said to follow her future time of tribulation. Jeremiah 32:37 states, “Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety.” The passage goes on to describe the nation’s spiritual blessing.

Many additional quotations could be cited. Among the more significant is the promise of Amos 9:14–15, “‘Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,’ says the LORD your God.” This passage pictures a revival and blessing under the hand of God, and the promise is given of permanent possession. James alludes to this passage in Acts 15:15–18.

Another dramatic passage is Ezekiel 39:27–28. “When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of

their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer.” Significantly, this passage not only mentions the regathering of Israel, but also the fact that none

of the Israelites will be allowed to remain scattered among the Gentiles. To date, this has not been fulfilled.

If the promises of the land as already fulfilled in history have been fulfilled literally, on what basis can the promises of the future be denied their literal fulfillment? Certainly this cannot be done on the basis of the Old Testament prophecies, and few amillenarians care to debate it on this basis. Almost always the reference is made to the New Testament handling of these promises. The issue, however, is whether progressive revelation ever reverses preceding revelation and denies its validity. It is on the basis of consistency of fulfillment of prophecy historically that premillenarians project a consistent literal fulfillment of prophecy in the future.

Predictions Concerning the Kingdom

According to 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17, David was promised that his kingdom would continue forever. “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:12–16).

In this prophecy, in addition to God predicting that David’s son would build the Temple and that he would have a child to succeed him on the throne, God specifically promised that the throne of David’s kingdom would continue forever and never be taken away from the descendants of Jacob. It is clear from subsequent Scripture that there would be a long period of time during which no one would sit on the throne, as indicated in Hosea 3:4–5. But Hosea 3:5 states plainly, “Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.”

All conservative interpreters recognize that the prophecy is ultimately to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ as the Son of David. The difference in point of view, however, is whether it will be a spiritual reign in the hearts of believers or a literal reign on earth.

The testimony of the prophecies in the Old Testament supporting this Davidic covenant indicate that it is an earthly kingdom, basically political in its nature, although it involves spiritual blessings. This is brought out in Isaiah 9:6–7. “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.” Again this fact is supported in Jeremiah 23:5–6. “‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, “The LORD our righteousness:”’” “This reign of the seed of David is related to the return of Israel to the land, as brought out in Jeremiah 23:7–8. “‘Therefore behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when they will no longer say, “As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,” but “As the LORD lives, who brought up and led

back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.” Then they will live on their own soil.”“ The promise is repeated so often and in such similar terms that it is amazing that anyone would attempt to spiritualize it and find other than a literal fulfillment.

Further examination of such passages as Jeremiah 30:8–9; 33:14–17 ; Ezekiel 37:22–25, and similar prophecies makes it clear that the Old Testament prophecies are presented as if intended for literal fulfillment. If one had only the Old Testament, even some amillenarians would agree that the indications are that the promises were intended for a literal fulfillment. They claim, however, that the New Testament justifies taking these promises in a nonliteral sense.

Accordingly, a thorough study of the New Testament

aspect of this doctrine is necessary in order to confirm the literalness of Israel’s future program.

This will be the subject of parts 2 and 3 in this series.