**“The True Israel” The Present Truth 6, 10.**

E. J. Waggoner

The promise is: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” Revelation 3:21. Now the word “Israel” signifies, “a prince of God,” or “one who prevails.” It was given to Jacob after he had wrestled all night with the angel, and had gained the victory. The Lord said to him: “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” Genesis 32:28. Therefore an overcomer is an Israelite; and the promise is that to those who are Israelites Christ will grant to sit with Him on His throne. {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 153.1}

The natural descendants of Abraham were never considered as the true Israel, and heirs according to the promise, unless they were, like Him, righteous. When Christ told the Jews that if they believed in Him they should know the truth, and the truth should make them free, they replied, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man.” John 8:33. But Jesus showed them that they were in the worst bondage than any human slavery, namely, the bondage of sin (verse 34); and to their repeated statements that they were the children of Abraham, He replied: “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham.” “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” Verses 39, 40, 44. {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 153.2}

In like manner, also, John the Baptist told the wicked Pharisees and Sadducees not to flatter themselves that they were the children of Abraham, because God was able of the very stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Matthew 3:7-9), plainly implying that sooner than fulfil the promise to such unworthy descendants as they were, God would take stones and raise up children unto Abraham. That this was not a new idea, is evident from the fact that even in the wilderness, from the very time that the promise was renewed to the Jews at the exode, the stubborn Jew who refused to humble himself before God, and confess his sin, on the day of atonement, was cut off from among his people (Leviticus 23:28, 29), while a stranger was at any time permitted to identify himself with Israel by circumcision. {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 153.3}

Circumcision was the mark of Jewish citizenship. The man who was circumcised was known to be an Israelite; yet, as has been stated, this was a rite administered to foreigners, after which they were considered the same as those that were born of Jewish parents, thus showing that the natural descendants of Abraham did not comprise all Israel. More than this, we have evidence to show that the Lord never regarded the outward mark of circumcision, whether in the person of a native, or a foreigner, as evidence that that individual was really an heir of Abraham. In the following passage we learn what circumcision implied:- {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.1}

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Romans 4:8-11. {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.2}

Abraham received circumcision as a sign that he had obtained “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.” Circumcision was there for a sign of righteousness. If a person was circumcised, but was not righteous, he was no more a child of Abraham than any other man; and whoever was righteous, like Abraham, was really his child. So Abraham was the father of all that believed, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. That outward circumcision did not make the man an Israelite, unless he was righteous, is plainly declared by Paul in Romans 2:25-29:- {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.3}

“For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? ... For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.4}

This was true, not simply when the apostle wrote, but from the beginning of the history of the Jewish nation. When the Lord gave laws to His people, from Mount Sinai, He said that if they disobeyed Him, He would bring desolation upon their land, and they should perish among the heathen; but,- {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.5}

“If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and that also they have walked contrary unto Me; ... if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.” Leviticus 26:40-42. {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.6}

And so it was in the days of Moses, as well as in the days of Christ, that “an Israelite indeed” was one in whom was “no guile.” {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.7}

In the eleventh of Romans the apostle very forcibly illustrates the way in which the promises to Israel could be fulfilled, even though all the literal descendants of Jacob should forfeit their right to the inheritance. In the first and second verses he declares that God has not cast away His people. This might lead us to suppose that literal Israel are yet the chosen people of God, if he did not say in verse 5 that those that remain are “according to the election of grace.” Then he represents Israel by an olive tree. Some of the branches have been cut off, and the Gentiles, a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. This grafting is contrary to nature, for the grafts partake of the root and fatness of the tame olive tree into which they are grafted, and bear the same kind of fruit. He warns those who are thus grafted in not to boast, since they stand only by faith, and as natural branches were broken off because of unbelief, so they may likewise be removed. The Jews, the natural branches, they become part of the tree, but if they do, it will not be as original branches, but as spiritual grafts. Thus the people of Israel will be only a spiritual people, those who are Christ, “and so all Israel shall be saved.” {PTUK May 8, 1890, p. 154.8}

E. J. W.

**“The Gathering of Israel” The Present Truth 6, 11.**

E. J. Waggoner

We can now pass rapidly to the close of our subject, with a view of the gathering of Israel, and of their establishment in their own land. We turn first to the prophecy of Ezekiel, and must necessarily quote a large portion of the thirty-seventh chapter. The prophecy was uttered soon after the Jews were carried away to Babylon. And here we would remark incidentally, that the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, are the only prophesies that were not spoken either before or during the captivity, and that Haggai and Zechariah were written before the complete restoration after the captivity. Therefore whatever portion of the prophesies refers to the restoration of literal Israel, was fulfilled by the decrees of the kings of Persia. As we shall see, however, the greater portion of the prophecies refers to the final gathering of the true Israel of God. Now for Ezekiel’s prophecy:- {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.1}

“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, Son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.” Ezekiel 37:1-10. {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.2}

It is useless to spend time conjecturing what this may mean, when we have the Lord’s explanation given in connection with it, so we quote further:- {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.3}

“Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.” Verses 11-14. {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.4}

This is nothing less than a prophecy of the resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Christ. But the Lord continues the interpretation thus:- {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.5}

“Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.” Verse 21. {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.6}

No one can deny that the gathering of Israel of which Ezekiel speaks, is the same gathering that is spoken of by the other prophets. It is evident that the words, “Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and *bring them into their own land*,” is the same promise that the Lord made to David, through the prophet Nathan, when he said (2 Samuel 7:10), “Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.” And this gathering of the children of Israel into their own land is accomplished only by opening their graves and bringing them up out of their grapes. In this prophecy of Ezekiel, therefore, we have the most positive assurance that the promises to Israel never contemplated anything else but an eternal inheritance; their own land is the earth made new. {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 169.7}

With Ezekiel’s statement that the gathering of Israel shall follow the general resurrection, compare the following:- {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 170.1}

“And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:30, 31. {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 170.2}

When this gathering of the people of God takes place, “the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. And this is what Paul calls “our gathering together unto Him.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1. {PTUK May 22, 1890, p. 170.3}

E. J. W.