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## The Spurgeon Archive

### Charles H. Spurgeon and the Nation of Israel

*A Non-Dispensational  
Perspective on a Literal  
National Restoration*



by Dennis M. Swanson  
Head Librarian and Director of Israel Studies  
The Master's Seminary  
Sun Valley, California

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## Introduction

The reconstitution of the nation of Israel in 1948 precipitated a flood of prophetic literature, from all of the millennial perspectives, dealing with biblical and theological significance of this event. While this historic event was certainly a "beginning" it was also "the culmination of historical forces which had been gathering strength throughout the nineteenth century."<sup>[1]</sup> For the British it was the culmination of nearly 300 years of leadership in the "Restoration" movement. In the years leading up to the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917<sup>[2]</sup> discussion on the restoration of the Jews to the land had been waged on several fronts in England.

British interest in the Restoration had a background in the prophecies of the Old Testament. A sense of justice, the desire to rectify the wrongs committed by Christians against "God's chosen people," and a feeling of sympathy for the Jews and their aspirations, were also factors.<sup>[3]</sup>

As England's most influential non-conformist preacher and popular theologian in the last half of the 19th century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-92) added his considerable voice to the question of Jewish restoration to the Promised Land.<sup>[4]</sup> While the political, economic and social issues involved in the restoration movement were varied and complex, Spurgeon "worked only

through the power of the Word of God"<sup>[5]</sup> and his views on this issue were driven by his interpretation of Scripture.

Spurgeon was one of the most widely read men of his era. He had a photographic memory and one of the largest personally held theological libraries in the British Empire. He wrote extensive reviews of books<sup>[6]</sup> saw 67 volumes of sermons published; in fact he remains the single most published author in terms of volume in English history and has more material currently in print than "any other Christian author living or dead."<sup>[7]</sup> He stood against the encroachments of liberal theology and higher criticism in his own denomination. We would profoundly disagree with an article, published by the journal of this society, where the author asserted:

In the final analysis, Spurgeon's understanding of the nature and interpretation of the Bible does not adequately serve this generation of evangelical Christians who have come to accept the best of current Biblical scholarship while holding concurrently to the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Such a position held in the spirit of openness and dialogue rather than defensive retreat, is surely the best one for the evangelical Church today.<sup>[8]</sup>

On the contrary, Spurgeon has much to offer this current generation, not the least of which is an examination of the restoration of Israel to the land.

## Spurgeon's Eschatology: An Overview

Spurgeon's own views regarding eschatology and the millennium are germane here. As this writer has noted in two other works<sup>[9]</sup> adherents of virtually every eschatological nuance have sought to demonstrate that Spurgeon was "in their camp." While Iain Murray thought Spurgeon had a "fundamental uncertainty in his mind"<sup>[10]</sup> regarding eschatology a careful examination of his sermons, his two commentaries (*The Treasury of David* and *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom*) and his other writings reveal that he consistently and clearly not only affirmed a historic or covenantal premillennial position; he also rejected the salient tenets of the amillennial, postmillennial and dispensational premillennial schemes. He was not known for an abundance of preaching on eschatological themes, as he himself admitted:

You will bear me witness, my friends, that it is exceedingly seldom I ever intrude into the mysteries of the future with regard to the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection. As often as we come across it in our expositions we do not turn aside from the point, but if guilty at all on this point, it is rather in being too silent than saying too much.<sup>[11]</sup>

But, as he noted, when he did come across these points in his expositions, he was clear and throughout his ministry he presented a consistent eschatological position. In one of his most direct statements regarding eschatology Spurgeon stated:

If I read the word aright, and it is honest to admit that there is much room for difference of opinion here, the day will come, when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the

archangel and the voice of God. Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial—that is, after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth.<sup>[12]</sup>

He further stated:

Paul does not paint the future with rose-colour: he is no smooth-tongued prophet of a golden age, into which this dull earth may be imagined to be glowing. There are sanguine brethren who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at the last this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be able to sustain their hopes, for Scripture give them no solid basis to rest upon. We who believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King, and who expect no rule of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord, are nearer the mark. Apart from the second Advent of our Lord, the world is more likely to sink into pandemonium than to rise into a millennium. A divine interposition seems to me the hope set before us in Scripture, and, indeed, to be the only hope adequate to the situation. We look to the darkening down of things; the state of mankind, however improved politically, may yet grow worse and worse spiritually.<sup>[13]</sup>

At the height of the Down-Grade Controversy<sup>[14]</sup> Spurgeon and several others created and signed a statement of faith, to mark out the doctrinal point of reference which set them apart from those in the Baptist Union who were on the "down grade." The statement was published in *The Sword and Trowel* in 1891 and dealt mainly with the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, with nearly half of the confession given to that subject. It does close with the final point: "Our hope is the Personal Pre-Millennial Return of the Lord Jesus in Glory."<sup>[15]</sup>

A key difference between the premillennial and amillennial positions is the matter of whether there will be a single resurrection or two resurrections—of the just and then the unjust—separated by the 1,000 years of Revelation 20:1-15. On this matter Spurgeon repudiated the amillennial position in clear terms stating:

We expect a reigning Christ on earth; that seems to us to be very plain, and put so literally that we dare not spiritualise it. We anticipate a first and second resurrection; a first resurrection of the righteous, and a second resurrection of the ungodly, who shall be judged, condemned, and punished for ever by the sentence of the great King.<sup>[16]</sup>

In relation to the resurrection he also made this declaration:

You have perhaps imagined that all men will rise at the same moment; that the trump of the archangel will break open every grave at the same instant, and sound in the ear of every sleeper at the identical moment. Such I do not think is the testimony of the Word of God. I think that the Word of God teaches, and teaches indisputably, that the saints shall rise first. And be the interval of time whatever it may, whether the thousand years are literal years, or a very long period of time, I am not now about to determine; I have nothing to do except with the fact that there are two resurrections, a resurrection of the just, and

afterwards of the unjust,—a time when the saints of God shall rise, an after time when the wicked shall rise to the resurrection of damnation.<sup>[17]</sup>

In this sermon Spurgeon seems to be ambivalent towards the duration of the millennium, however, this is a characteristic figure for him, used of this subject and others in his sermons, when he is simply declining to go into specific details in that particular sermon. It is his way of saying that he will not "go off on a bunny trail" and will instead focus on the main thrust of his sermon.

While Spurgeon was clearly premillennial<sup>[18]</sup> in his eschatology, he was most certainly not dispensational. The *sine qua non* of Dispensationalism, to which even the Progressive Dispensationalists agree<sup>[19]</sup>, is the distinction between Israel and the Church. As Weber points out:

What separated dispensationalists from their fellow futurists was their strict literalism when interpreting biblical prophecy, their absolute separation of Israel and the church as two distinct peoples of God, and some conclusions which grew out of these two presuppositions.<sup>[20]</sup>

Spurgeon rejected any notion that separated the people of God into separate groups with separate purposes. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) had developed and popularized Dispensationalism in England and America and he and other Dispensationalists (Macintosh and Kelly in particular) often came in for the verbal and written wrath of Spurgeon.<sup>[21]</sup> In a clear reference to the teaching of Dispensationalists on this point, Spurgeon clearly rejected the concept of distinct peoples in God's salvific economy in a sermon when he said:

Distinctions have been drawn by certain exceedingly wise men (measured by their own estimate of themselves), between the people of God who lived before the coming of Christ, and those who lived afterwards. *We have even heard it asserted that those who lived before the coming of Christ so not belong to the church of God!* We never know what we shall hear next, and perhaps it is a mercy that these absurdities are revealed at one time, in order that we may be able to endure their stupidity without dying of amazement. Why, every child of God in every place stands on the same footing; the Lord has not some children best beloved, some second-rate offspring, and others whom he hardly cares about. *These who saw Christ's day before it came, had a great difference as to what they knew, and perhaps in the same measure a difference as to what they enjoyed while on earth meditating upon Christ; but they were all washed in the same blood, all redeemed with the same ransom price, and made members of the same body. Israel in the covenant of grace is not natural Israel, but all believers in all ages.* Before the first advent, all the types and shadows all pointed one way—they pointed to Christ, and to him all the saints looked with hope. Those who lived before Christ were not saved with a different salvation to that which shall come to us. They exercised faith as we must; that faith struggled as ours struggles, and that faith obtained its reward as ours shall<sup>[22]</sup> [emphasis ours].

In another instance Spurgeon wrote directly against the Dispensational teaching regarding the distinction between Israel and the Church while yet

maintaining his own eschatological position stating, "we shall at once profess our attachment to the pre-millennial school interpretation, and the literal reading of those Scriptures that predict the return of the Jews to their own land."<sup>[23]</sup>

That Spurgeon sees the Church and Israel united "spiritually" there can be no mistake. "Surely, beloved brethren, you ought not to stumble at the anachronism of comprising Abraham, David, and others, in the fellowship of the church."<sup>[24]</sup> It can also clearly be seen in Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*, that he viewed the church as the recipient of the kingdom promises of God. Also in his commentary on Matthew, while not stating so specifically, Spurgeon strongly indicates his belief that the church would go through the tribulation, being preserved and protected by the power of God. "His first coming to judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem had terrors about it that till then had never been realized on the earth; his last coming will be more dreadful still."<sup>[25]</sup>

While there are many features relating to dispensationalism on which Spurgeon is either silent or says very little; those features are not central to the issue. On the central feature of Dispensational Premillennialism, Spurgeon does not hold to the distinction of Israel and the Church that would be common to a "classic dispensational" approach. For Spurgeon the millennial kingdom was the culmination of God's program for the Church.

## The Restoration of Israel in the Various Millennial Views

The restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land is normally viewed as a centerpiece to Dispensational Premillennialism, and rightly so. As Pentecost states:

This it will be observed that all Israel's hopes were based on the four determinative covenants [Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian and New] which God made with them, that these covenants confirmed certain national hopes and blessings and necessitate the preservation, continuity, and restoration of the nation if they are to be fulfilled literally.<sup>[26]</sup>

Blaising and Bock, admittedly the theological leaders in the Progressive Dispensational movement, affirm the same thing, "The notion of a political, earthly kingdom has not been dropped out or been resignified,"<sup>[27]</sup> what Glennly calls, "the error of those who see final fulfillment of these prophecies in the church."<sup>[28]</sup>

However, all of the millennial views have the restoration accounted for in their schemes in one way or another. The question comes down to three possibilities: (1) no future fulfillment at all with any OT prophecy regarding a restoration to the land being, those already having been fulfilled in the return after the Babylonian Captivity; (2) a spiritual restoration, or conversion; or (3) a literal restoration to the actual land of Israel and national conversion to Christ. Merrill, while opting for the former, details these possibilities:

Bible Scholars are virtually unanimous in their agreement that an exile of Israel did occur and that it was reversed by the return of the Jews to their homeland coincident with the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C. There is no consensus, however, about whether or not the historical restoration completely fulfills the prophecies. But it is clear to me that the condition of the restored community and the mode and process of

the return fell short of the extravagant prophecies. Therefore, the only way to harmonize the prophecies with the historical event is to find their fulfillment through the church—the new Israel—or to posit an eschatological fulfillment in which a literal, physical Israel will be gathered to the land and assume her role as a redemptive community functioning culturally and politically in a manner akin to that of the ancient covenant nation.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Amillennialism and the Restoration of Israel

The amillennial position on this question has been fairly consistent throughout the ages. The messianic age (or millennial kingdom) has already commenced; therefore no prophecies are yet to be fulfilled regarding Israel. Early on Origen championed this idea and spiritualized virtually all of the OT prophecies. While Origen outwardly argued against the supposed "Jewishness" and "worldliness" of the early Chiliasts or premillennialists, Wilken insightfully points out:

But, if one probes a bit deeper, it is clear that what disturbs him is that if the chiliasts are correct, the promises of the prophets cannot have been fulfilled in the coming of Christ and hence the messianic age has not yet begun. Origen cheerfully acknowledges that in Christ the prophecies were not fulfilled in the way there were *thought* to take place [emphasis in the original].<sup>[30]</sup>

This line of reasoning has been followed by amillennialists to this day. Roderick Campbell clearly states that if the words of the prophets are taken "in a strictly literal sense, we shall find nothing in history that can rightly be considered a fulfillment of the promise."<sup>[31]</sup> Oswald T. Allis in his *Prophecy and the Church*, written as the current events around a rebirth of the nation of Israel were unfolding but not yet certain, states:

The limitations and peculiarities of Judaism have been done away. They have been done away not for the time being only, but for ever [sic]. They are never to be restored, There is a great and glorious future for the Jews. But that future is to be found in and through the Christian Church.<sup>[32]</sup>

Allis further states, "whether the Jews are to return to the earthly Canaan is a matter of relatively little importance."<sup>[33]</sup> In his recent book O. Palmer Robertson continues the same line of thought, although obviously now dealing with the reality of a Jewish nation. Summarizing his position he states:

The modern Jewish state is not a part of the messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Even though it be affirmed that his particular civil government came into being under the sovereignty of the God of the Bible . . . It cannot be established from Scripture that the birth of the modern state of Israel is a prophetic precursor to the mass conversion of the Jewish people . . . Rather than understanding predictions about the "return" of "Israel" to the "land" in terms of a geo-political re-establishment of the state of Israel, these prophecies are more properly interpreted as finding consummate fulfillment at the "restoration of all things" that will accompany the resurrection of believers at the return of Christ (Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:22-23).<sup>[34]</sup>

For the amillennialist there is no future restoration of Israel in a biblical or prophetic sense. The rebirth of Israel in 1948 is no more or less significant than the creation of any new nation in any part of the world. Amillennial theologians thus view the present "restoration" of Israel, as an insignificant anomaly of history.

## Postmillennialism and the Restoration of Israel

As opposed to Amillennialism, classic postmillennialism is somewhat divided on the issue. The great Princeton theologian Charles Hodge, rejected the idea of a "national restoration" to the land; but he spoke clearly of a "national conversion." He states:

The argument from the ancient prophecies is proved to be invalid because it would prove too much. If those prophecies foretell a literal restoration, they foretell that the temple is to be rebuilt, the priesthood restored, sacrifices again offered, and that the whole Mosaic ritual is to be observed in all its details.<sup>[35]</sup>

However, regarding the conversion of the Jews, he stated, "the gospel must be preached to all nations; and also that there is to be a national conversion of the Jews."<sup>[36]</sup> On the other hand, Erroll Hulse, a classic postmillennialist, posits that the restoration of Israel to the land is perhaps a precursor to their "spiritual restoration."<sup>[37]</sup> In recent years theonomic theologians have developed a new sort of postmillennialism.<sup>[38]</sup> The theonomic postmillennialism have taken the amillennial position on the restoration of Israel. Gary DeMar, a leading theonomist writer, states that, "Israel's national status today is no different from an other nation."<sup>[39]</sup> He also states, "Israel's future, like the future of all nations, is determined by what she does with Jesus."<sup>[40]</sup>

## Premillennialism and the Restoration of Israel

Having already mentioned Dispensational Premillennialism, it must be noted that Historic or Covenantal Premillennialism is split on the issue. Millard Erickson handles the question in a manner similar to classic postmillennialists. In his excellent *Theology*, after noting, "spiritual Israel has in many respects taken the place of literal Israel,"<sup>[41]</sup> he then states:

There is, however, a future for national Israel. They are still the special people of God. Having declared that Israel's rejection has meant the reconciliation of the world, Paul asks, "What will their [Israel's] acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15). The future is bright: "And so all Israel will be saved" (v.26). Yet Israel will be saved by entering the church just as to the Gentiles. There is no statement anywhere in the New Testament that there is any other basis of salvation.<sup>[42]</sup>

However, others see a restored Jewish nation in the millennium. "The messianic kingdom would be incomplete if that good which the pious Jews anticipated, a glorious kingdom on earth, were left out, thank God it will not be."<sup>[43]</sup> Nathaniel West also clearly points out:

The solution of the great problem of Israel's future, sprung from the breach in David's Kingdom, is the solution of the of the Millennial Kingdom, and comes with Israel's future acceptance of David's Son as their Lord, the closing up of the ancient breach in David's Kingdom, the union of Israel and Judah in on nation, on the mountains of the fatherland forever;—in short, Israel a converted people and nation, acknowledged by Christ in person, the nations applauding.[44]

It seems that this division of thought is of somewhat recent development and is largely, perhaps, attributable to the significant influence of George Eldon Ladd. Ladd notes that, "a millennial doctrine cannot be based on the Old Testament prophecies but should be based on the New Testament alone." [45] In his *Theology of the New Testament*, Ladd argues along the same line as the typical amillennialist:

It follows that if Jesus proclaimed the messianic salvation, if he offered to Israel the fulfillment of her true destiny, then this destiny was actually accomplished in those who received his message. The recipients of the messianic salvation became the true Israel, representatives of the nation as a whole. While it is true that the word "Israel" is never applied to Jesus' disciples, the idea is present, if not the term. Jesus' disciples are the recipients of the messianic salvation, the people of the kingdom, the true Israel.[46]

This idea would have been largely foreign to the Historic Premillennialists of previous generations and certainly foreign to the holistic approach to Scripture taken by Spurgeon.

## Spurgeon and the Restoration of Israel

Perhaps the clearest and most significant statement by Spurgeon as it relates to the restoration of the Jews to the land, was made in an address to the *British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Jews*. [47] Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on June 16, 1864, Spurgeon preached on "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews" and stated:

There will be a native government again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land. Her sons, though they can never forget the sacred dust of Palestine, yet die at a hopeless distance from her consecrated shores. But it shall not be so for ever, for her sons shall again rejoice in her: her land shall be called Beulah, for as a young man marrieth a virgin so shall her sons marry her. "I will place you in your own land," is God's promise to them . . . They are to have a national prosperity which shall make them famous; nay, so glorious shall they be that Egypt, and Tyre, and Greece, and Rome, shall all forget their glory in the greater splendour of the throne of David . . . I there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage [Ezekiel 37:1-10]—a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away—must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them.[48]

Hulse attempted to use this sermon to demonstrate that Spurgeon was postmillennial. "Spurgeon is included here [in his list of postmillennialists] on the grounds of his Puritanism and because of that magnificent sermon preached in 1864."<sup>[49]</sup> But on the basis of the overall evidence, especially his several direct statements against postmillennialism, this can be little more than wishful thinking.

Spurgeon held that literal interpretation was the manner in which the Scripture was to be interpreted. He told his students that, "The first sense of the passage must never be drowned in the outflow of your imagination; it must be distinctly declared and allowed to hold the first rank; your accommodation of it must never thrust out the original and native meaning, or even push it into the background."<sup>[50]</sup> Spurgeon, while not known as an "expositional preacher" and one who never attended college, nevertheless was an exacting exegete. One visitor to Spurgeon's study commented:

I was at first surprised to find Mr. Spurgeon consulting both the Hebrew and Greek texts. "They say," he said, "that I am ignorant and unlearned. Well let them say it; and in everything, by my ignorance, and by my knowledge, let God be glorified." His exegesis was seldom wrong. He spared no pains to be sure of the exact meaning of the text.<sup>[51]</sup>

Spurgeon "himself interpreted the text quite literally, he took its promises at face value and used them in his personal prayer life and preaching."<sup>[52]</sup> He refused to retreat to a "spiritualized" interpretation which either negated or obfuscated what he viewed as a clear teaching of the text. In fact he once chastised a famous commentator for spiritualized interpretation of the resurrection in Revelation 20 by saying, "Would any man believe this to be its meaning, if he had not some thesis to defend?"<sup>[53]</sup>

Spurgeon repeated the theme of the restoration of Israel to the land on many other occasions. He clearly linked that restoration together with the Jews national acceptance of Christ as their Messiah. "It is certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet own Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David as their King, and that they will return to their own land, and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the old cities, the desolations of many generations."<sup>[54]</sup> Again he states:

The hour is approaching, when the tribes shall go up to their own country; when Judea, so long a howling wilderness, shall once more blossom like the rose; when, if the temple itself be not restored, yet on Zion's hill shall be raised some Christian building, where the chants of solemn praise shall be heard as erst of the old Psalms of David were sung in the Tabernacle . . . I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough about it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the Children of Israel . . . For when the Jews are restored, the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in; and as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion with his ancients gloriously, and the halcyon days of the millennium shall then dawn; we shall then know every man to be a brother and a friend; Christ shall rule with universal sway.<sup>[55]</sup>

Israel's place in the kingdom was viewed by Spurgeon to clearly be by God's

grace and a fulfillment of prophecy. There would be a national conversion and Israel would enter into God's salvation as a member of the church, as we have already noted in his disputations with Darby and dispensationalism. However, Israel would be more than just another nation, they were the nation from which the King came and where the King reigned the world from:

If we read the Scripture's aright the Jews have a great deal to do with this world's history. They shall be gathered in; Messiah shall come, the Messiah they are looking for—the same Messiah who came once shall come again—shall come as they expected him to come the first time. They then thought he would come a prince to reign over them, and so he will when he comes again. He will come to be king of the Jews, and to reign over his people most gloriously; for when he comes Jew and Gentile shall have equal privileges, though there shall yet be some distinction afforded to that royal family from whose loins Jesus came; for he shall sit upon the throne of his father David, and unto him shall be gathered all nations.<sup>[56]</sup>

While Spurgeon views the millennium as the culmination of God's promises to the church, both the Old Testament and New Testament church, he still maintained that Israel as a nation would have a distinct and special role and even perhaps have some of the Old Testament forms of worship restored to functionality. In one sermon he did make an interesting comment in one sermon in speaking about the millennial kingdom. "There may even be in that period certain solemn assemblies and Sabbath days, but they will not be of the same kind as we now have."<sup>[57]</sup> Certainly he was no dispensationalist, he would neither make the millennium the exclusive domain of Israel without the church, nor would he exclude the national Israel from the glorious church of the millennium. While not elaborating anywhere else on this point he clearly maintained an attitude that the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of such things (e.g. Ezekiel 40-48) could not simply be ignored or swept away by non-literal exegesis.

Regarding the restoration of national Israel to its land Spurgeon consistently and clearly taught to the following key points:

1. Israel as a nation will come to faith in Christ.
2. Israel will have a national or geo-political identity.
3. The political system will be a monarchy, "a king shall reign"
4. Israel will be in the Promised Land<sup>[58]</sup>
5. The borders will correspond to the promises given to Abraham and David.
6. Israel will hold a special place among the nations in the millennial kingdom.
7. However, Israel remains spiritually part of the church.
8. There will be a national prosperity that will be the admiration of the world
9. That the prophecies of the Old Testament should not be handled in a non-literal fashion

Secondary features, which Spurgeon speculates as possibilities, are as follows:

1. During the millennial kingdom there may be a temple or "Christian Structure" built on the Temple Mount for worship of God.
2. During the millennium there may be some forms of Old Testament ceremonial adherence (Sabbaths, News Moon, etc.), but that those forms will be modified to be appropriate for the church.

Certainly Spurgeon would have agreed with Kaiser's interpretation of Jeremiah 16:14-15 where he states:

If the dispersion was a mark of God's judgment, according to the prophets, then Israel's return to the land is the mark of God's grace. In fact, so astounding will be the future return of Israel that it will make the exodus from Egypt seem small in comparison.<sup>[59]</sup>

## Conclusion

Regardless of one's own position, Spurgeon's attitude towards prophecy serves the church well, he eschewed the methodology of "exegesis by current events" which was just as popular in his day as it is presently. He was also clear that excitement over prophetic speculations should never supplant one's affection for the gospel itself.

Your guess at the number of the beast, your Napoleonic speculations, your conjectures concerning a personal Antichrist—forgive me, I count them but mere bones for dogs; while men are dying, and hell is filling, it seems to me the veriest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon at Sebastopol or Sadowa or Sedan, and peeping between the folded leaves of destiny to discover the fate of Germany.<sup>[60]</sup>

It is certainly impossible to declare with certainty that the present State of Israel is or is not prophetically significant. If it is not, God could certainly sweep them out of the land, to regather them "in belief" at a yet later date. However, it does seem more likely that God has in fact established the nation again to set the stage for the final regathering and restoration in belief. As Hendrikus Berkhof stated,

At any rate, with the surprising geographical and political fact of the establishment of the State of Israel, the moment has come for us to begin to watch for political and geographical elements in God's activities, which we have not wanted to do in our Western dualism, docetism, and spiritualism.<sup>[61]</sup>

Some years ago this writer had an encounter at the Western Wall in Jerusalem with some members of an Ultra-Orthodox Jewish group. In the conversation one of the Rabbis asked me if I thought the current government and nation of Israel was "of God." The conversation lasted for some time and I discovered that this group was one that does not pray at the wall and believes that the government in Israel is not a legitimate manifestation of God's blessing. They are waiting for the first coming of Messiah; the Messiah who has already come to take "away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). They are expecting the Messiah to establish a righteous nation and govern the world from the throne of David. He will of course, we believe, do those things sometime in the future. However, it reminds us of what Spurgeon said about issues of the practical issues of prophetic study:

Jesus is not coming in a sort of mythical, misty, hazy way, he is literally and actually coming, and he will literally and actually call upon you to give an account of your stewardship. Therefore, now, to-day, literally not symbolically, personally and not by deputy, go out

through that portion of the world which you can reach and preach the gospel to every creature according as you have opportunity.<sup>[62]</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Esco Foundation for Palestine. *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, Volume One. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1947), 1. [\[return to text\]](#)
2. The Balfour Declaration went through several revisions between July and November, 1917 (see *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, 75-118, for a history of the declaration), culminating with the final version, which reads:

His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use its best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

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3. Esco Foundation, *Palestine*, 1. Additionally, Matar expands on this summary by stating:

Three factors were seen to be instrumental in generating a heretofore novel principle in Christian theology: the military Turko-Catholic threat to Protestant Christendom, the Puritan millenarian speculations between 1640 and 1660, and England's moral responsibility to the Jews. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the fear of Catholic Turkish military power led theologians to believe that the Jews' conquest of Palestine would necessarily be preceded by victory over Islam and Catholicism. Consequently they supported this Restoration as a means to their political ends. Moreover, they believed that such a restoration would lead to the fulfillment of the Pauline expectation of the millennial kingdom; the Jews' Restoration to Palestine would inaugurate England's messianic age. Also by concentrating on Romans 11, these English evangelists felt that they owed the Jews a debt which they could repay only by converting them to Christianity and restoring them to Palestine. This became the Englishman's burden of responsibility to the Jews whose rejection of Christ in the first century had allowed the overall salvation of the Gentiles.

N. I. Matar. "The Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1661-1701." *Harvard Theological Review* 78:1-2 (1985), 115. See also R. H. Popkin, "The Lost Tribes, the Caraites and English Millenarians." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37:2 (1987), 213-27. [\[return to text\]](#)

4. Note that throughout this essay the collection of sermons by Spurgeon are distinguished as follows: NPSP: *The New Park Street Pulpit*, Six Volumes. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1856-61; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990) and MTP: *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 56 Volumes. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1862-1917; reprint Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1973). [\[return to text\]](#)
5. Helmut Thielicke. *Encounter with Spurgeon*. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1963), 1. [\[return to text\]](#)
6. See Spurgeon's, "Commenting and Commentaries: Two Lectures Addressed to the Students of The Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle Together With a Catalogue of Biblical Commentaries and Expositions" in *Lectures to My Students*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893; reprint Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1990). [\[return to text\]](#)
7. Eric W. Hayden. "Did You Know: A Collection of True and Unusual Facts About Charles Haddon Spurgeon." *Christian History*, 29 (1991), 2-3. [\[return to text\]](#)
8. Duncan S. Ferguson. "The Bible and Protestant Orthodoxy: The Hermeneutics of Charles Spurgeon." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 25:4 (December 1982), 466. [\[return to text\]](#)
9. See "Charles H. Spurgeon and Eschatology: Did He Have a Discernable Millennial Position?" Unpublished Thesis, Sun Valley, California: The Master's Seminary. This work is also available in an online version available at <http://www.spurgeon.org/eschat.htm>. See also this author's, "The Millennial Position of Spurgeon" *The Master's Seminary Journal*, 7:2 (Fall 1996): 183-212. [\[return to text\]](#)
10. Iain H. Murray. *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*. (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 263. [\[return to text\]](#)
11. Spurgeon, "The First Resurrection," MTP, 7:345. [\[return to text\]](#)
12. Spurgeon, "Justification and Glory," MTP, 11:249. [\[return to text\]](#)
13. Spurgeon, "The Form of Godliness Without the Power," MTP, 35:301. [\[return to text\]](#)
14. was a controversy that precipitated Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Baptist Union. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give space to present a discussion of this controversy. In short this was a controversy that began when Spurgeon issued a series of articles in *The Sword and Trowel*, chronicling the decline of Biblical Christianity in his time. He cited higher criticism from Germany and its effect on authority of the Scripture and the natural decline in doctrinal purity and evangelical fervor as the chief problems. He and Mr. Robert Shindler commented on this issue in *The Sword and Trowel* for several months with the culmination coming in his withdrawal from the Baptist Union in October 1887. There are several excellent sources for information on this subject. See: *The Down Grade Controversy: Collected Materials which Reveal the Viewpoint of the Late Charles H., Spurgeon* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, n.d.); John F. MacArthur Jr. *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World*. (Waco, Texas: Word Publishing Company, 1993), particularly appendix one; Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966); and Lewis A. Drummond. *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1992). Also J. C.

- Carlile's *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1933) is an excellent source as he evaluates the history of the controversy and shows that Spurgeon had been vindicated. [\[return to text\]](#)
15. Spurgeon's Confession of Faith," in *The Sword and Trowel*, (August 1891): 26:446-48. See also C. W. H. Griffiths, "Spurgeon's Eschatology." *Watching and Waiting: A Publication of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony*, 23:15 (July-Sept. 1990), 227. Here Griffiths gives an excellent description of the men who signed this statement with Spurgeon and the circumstances around it. [\[return to text\]](#)
  16. Spurgeon, "Things to Come," MTP, 15:329. [\[return to text\]](#)
  17. "The First Resurrection," MTP, 7:346. [\[return to text\]](#)
  18. Spurgeon was universally declared to be a premillennialist by other preachers and publications of his day. See S. H. Kellog, "Christ's Coming: Will it be Premillennial," in *Premillennial Essays of the Prophetic Conference held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York City*. Nathaniel West, editor. (Chicago, Illinois: Fleming H. Revell Publishers, 1879; reprint Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bryant Baptist Publications, 1981), 74. See also Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1992), 650. Also, *The Coming of Christ: The Prophetic Bible Conference, Chicago, 1914*. (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1914), 241-49. [\[return to text\]](#)
  19. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock. *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought* (Wheaton, Illinois: BridgePoint Books, 1993), 21, 39, 266-70. [\[return to text\]](#)
  20. Timothy P. Weber. *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1983), 17. [\[return to text\]](#)
  21. On this point it should be noted that it is an oversimplification to assume that all of the Plymouth Brethren (of which Darby was leader of a faction who split off with him) were dispensational. According to Bebbington dispensationalism was "never the unanimous view among Brethren." (David W. Bebbington. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989], 62). All were premillennial, but many, such as B. W. Newton, George Mueller and S. P. Tregelles, were not dispensational. Interestingly enough Spurgeon maintained warm and cordial relations with all three of these men. Muller was often a companion of Spurgeon when he was in Mentone France. [\[return to text\]](#)
  22. Spurgeon, "Jesus Christ Immutable," MTP, 15:8. [\[return to text\]](#)
  23. Charles H. Spurgeon, "Jerusalem Which is Above," *Sword and Trowel*, (August 1866), 372. Interestingly enough in the same paragraph Spurgeon refers to other eschatological positions that can only be Amillennialism and postmillennialism, "equally repulsive" to dispensationalism. [\[return to text\]](#)
  24. Charles H. Spurgeon, "There Be Some That Trouble You." *Sword and Trowel* (March 1867), 120. [\[return to text\]](#)
  25. Charles H. Spurgeon. *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893), 217. Spurgeon's view stands in stark contrast to the "neo-Hymanean" heresy of the so-called full-preterists who teach that all of the prophecies of the Bible, including the resurrection, occurred in A.D. 70. John Noe, a leading author in this movement has written that Christians should "acknowledge that the world is never going to end." *Beyond End Times: The Rest of the Greatest Story Ever Told*. (Bradford, Pennsylvania: Preterest Resources, 1999), 270. For a refutation of this heresy see John F. MacArthur, *The Second Coming*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1999), 9-13. [\[return to text\]](#)
  26. J. Dwight Pentecost. *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), 535. [\[return to text\]](#)
  27. Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 237. [\[return to text\]](#)
  28. W. Edward Glenny. "The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, editors. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 187. [\[return to text\]](#)
  29. Eugene H. Merrill. "Pilgrimage and Procession: Motifs of Israel's Return," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*. Edited by Avraham Gileadi. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 261-62. [\[return to text\]](#)
  30. Robert L. Wilken. *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992), 77. [\[return to text\]](#)
  31. Roderick Campbell. *Israel and the New Covenant*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1954), 200. [\[return to text\]](#)
  32. Oswald T. Allis. *Prophecy and the Church*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1945), 259. [\[return to text\]](#)
  33. *Ibid.* [\[return to text\]](#)
  34. O. Palmer Robertson. *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2000), 194. [\[return to text\]](#)
  35. Charles Hodge. *Systematic Theology*. (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1871; reprint Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), 3:807. [\[return to text\]](#)
  36. *Ibid.*, 3:812. [\[return to text\]](#)
  37. Erroll Hulse. *The Restoration of Israel*. (London: Henry E. Walter Ltd., 1968), 16-17. Hulse also notes that David Brown, another postmillennialist, wrote a small book, *The Restoration of Israel* (which this author was unable to locate) in which he taught, "Israel would be territorially and spiritually restored" (99). [\[return to text\]](#)
  38. See Dennis M. Swanson, "Theonomic Postmillennialism: A Continuation of the Princeton Tradition?" A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Far-West Region of the Evangelical Theological Society, Sun Valley, California, 1994. [\[return to text\]](#)
  39. Gary DeMar. *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*. (Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision Inc., 1994), 307. [\[return to text\]](#)
  40. *Ibid.*, 308. [\[return to text\]](#)
  41. Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1998), 1053 [\[return to text\]](#)
  42. *Ibid.* [\[return to text\]](#)
  43. H. Lummis. "The Kingdom and the Church," in *Premillennial Essays*, 179-80. [\[return to text\]](#)

44. Nathaniel West. *The Thousand Year Reign of Christ*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1993), 9. Originally published as *Studies in Eschatology* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1890). [\[return to text\]](#)
45. George Eldon Ladd. "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium*. Robert G. Clouse, editor. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 32 [\[return to text\]](#)
46. George Eldon Ladd. *A Theology of the New Testament*, Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 106. [\[return to text\]](#)
47. This mission still exists today as "Christian Witness to Israel" (CWI). See a description and history of this agency at <http://www.cwi.org.uk/BriefHis.html> Their history states briefly:

During the early part of the nineteenth century various meetings were held in London and Scotland to consider what steps should be taken to reach the Jewish people with the gospel. As a result, a meeting was held in the National Scotch Church, Regent Square, London on 7th November 1842 to form the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews. Those present included the famous Robert Murray M'Cheyne. It was agreed to co-operate with the Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews. The society later became the International Society for the Evangelisation of the Jews. In 1879 "an agency for gospel work among the Jews conducted by Hebrew Christians" commenced work in the Barbican district of London which, in 1891, became the Barbican Mission to the Jews.

See also, Rich Robinson, "Jewish Missions," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. A. Scott Moreau, editor. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2000). [\[return to text\]](#)

48. Spurgeon, "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," MTP, 10:426. [\[return to text\]](#)
49. Hulse, *The Restoration of Israel*, 154. [\[return to text\]](#)
50. Charles H. Spurgeon. "On Spiritualizing," in *Lectures to My Students* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1890), 108. [\[return to text\]](#)
51. Charles H. Spurgeon. *Autobiography: The Full Harvest*. (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 346. [\[return to text\]](#)
52. Ferguson, "The Bible and Protestant Orthodoxy," 462. [\[return to text\]](#)
53. Spurgeon, "The First Resurrection," MTP, 7:346. [\[return to text\]](#)
54. Spurgeon, "The Harvest and Vintage," MTP, 50:553. [\[return to text\]](#)
55. Spurgeon, "The Church of Christ," NPSP 1:213-14. [\[return to text\]](#)
56. Spurgeon, "The Leafless Tree," NPSP, 3:114. [\[return to text\]](#)
57. Spurgeon, "The Lamb, The Light," MPT, 10:439. [\[return to text\]](#)
58. Interestingly enough, some of the early Zionist leaders thought that Argentina, not Israel would be the best place for a new or restored Jewish homeland. See *Palestine: Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, 34. [\[return to text\]](#)
59. Walter C. Kaiser. "The Land of Israel and the Future Return," in *Israel: The Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*, edited by H. Wayne House. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1999), 224. [\[return to text\]](#)
60. Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 100. [\[return to text\]](#)
61. Hendrikus Berkhof. *Christ the Meaning of History*. (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1966), 153. [\[return to text\]](#)
62. Spurgeon, "The Ascension and Second Advent Practically Considered," MTP, 31:23.

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