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THEME
**The promise
of the land**

*Promised Lands
for Every Nation*

THEME

The promise of the land

Return and restoration
(sermon meditation on Amos 9:11-15)
Rev. Jaap de Vreugd

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Israel and the Church is a journal for biblical and theological reflections concerning Israel and the Church in God's plan for this world in the light of His coming Kingdom.

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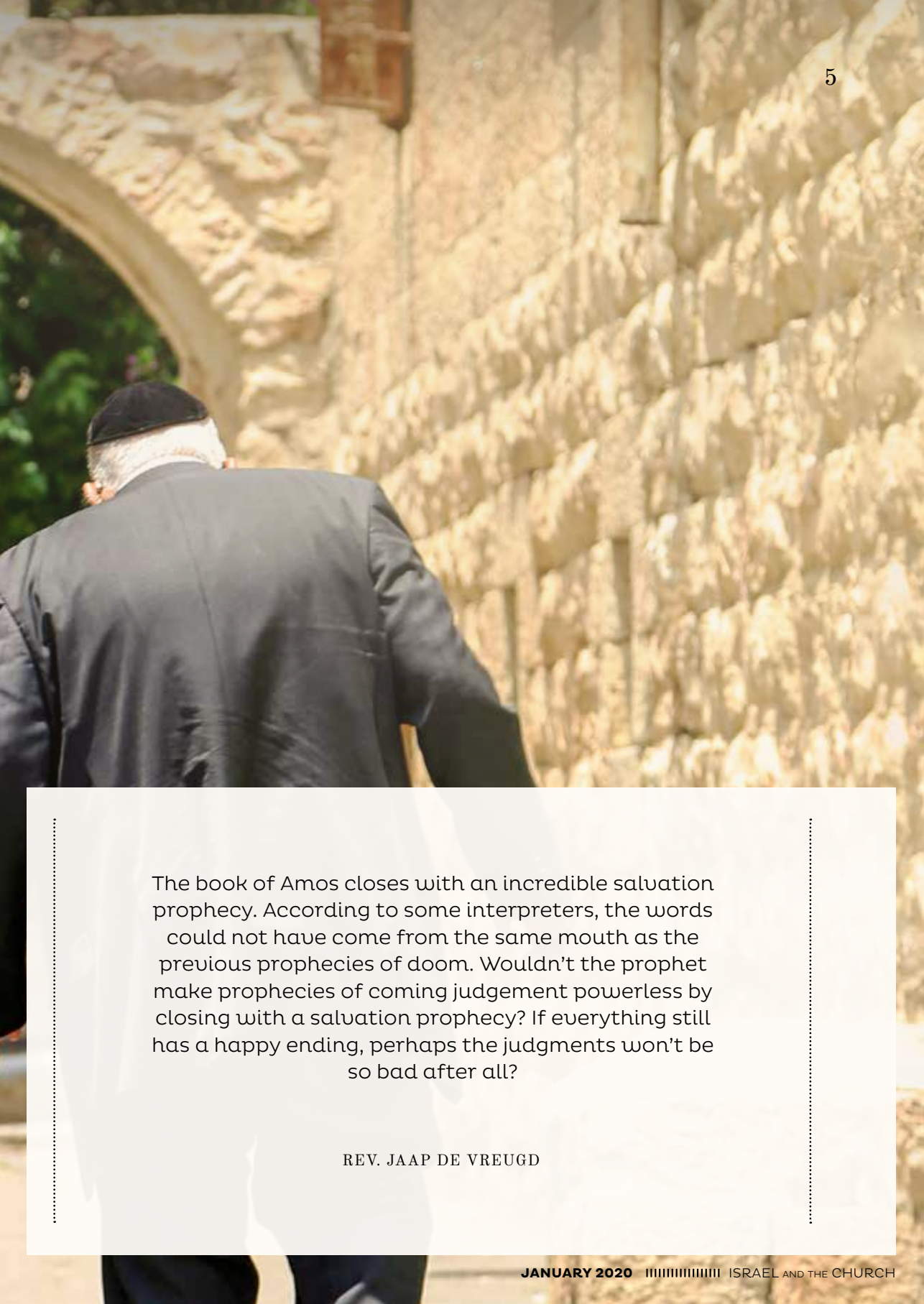
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A man with a white beard, wearing a dark blue suit and a grey hat, is seen from behind, walking through a stone archway. The archway is made of light-colored stone and is set against a background of lush green foliage and vibrant purple flowers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The man is walking towards the right side of the frame, and his hands are slightly visible as he walks.

*Return and
restoration*

Amos 9:11-15



The book of Amos closes with an incredible salvation prophecy. According to some interpreters, the words could not have come from the same mouth as the previous prophecies of doom. Wouldn't the prophet make prophecies of coming judgement powerless by closing with a salvation prophecy? If everything still has a happy ending, perhaps the judgments won't be so bad after all?

REV. JAAP DE VREUGD

However, if you think this way, you ignore the power of the prophetic Word. God is indeed deadly serious with His announcements of coming judgements, and it is good that we tremble because of His Word! But, like another prophet has said, “Lord, ... in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2). God always remembers His mercy in His judgements. Judgement is never God’s last word. The entire message of the Bible, certainly that of the prophets, is full of tension between judgement and mercy, verdict and compassion. Whoever would try to remove this tension would render the biblical message powerless. This tension between judgement and mercy goes right back (if I may say so) to the heart of God Himself. He is moved with compassion for His people, and because of that He cannot just tolerate unrighteousness and sin. As a Father, He chastises His children, but He does not give up on them! He is faithful to His covenant. In Amos’ announcement, judgement is inevitable, still the Lord does not let go of His nation, but makes a new beginning.

He will again rebuild the “fallen shelter of David”: Israel and Judah will become one nation in the restored kingdom, whose borders are extended even wider; the nations around Israel and even *all* nations of the world will share in the utopia of the restored empire of David. The Lord shall give rich blessings; “new wine will drip from the mountains”. In conclusion, God will bring back again the remnant of His people. “I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them.” This is nothing less than a promise that, after the return from the great Diaspora, there will be no more exiles; God will plant them in the soil He will give them. We read it correctly – “*the land I have given them*” – because the land is God’s land. He intended the land to be for His people, preserved for those whom He has inscribed on the palms of His hands (Isaiah 49:16). He will plant them in Judea

**As a Father,
God chastises
His children,
but He does
not give up on
them!**

God loves Israel

*The basis of God's relationship
with Israel is: LOVE*

In light of the fact that God loves Israel and has chosen the Jewish people for Himself, one can conclude that “love and marriage”, confirmed by an oath, was and is the basis of God's relationship with Israel. After the Lord had chosen Abraham to be the father of the chosen people and the nation of Israel, the Scripture records that He decided to show that His choice was unchangeable by making an “everlasting covenant”.

REV. WILLEM J. J. GLASHOUWER

eternal, everlasting means forever. That Covenant is still valid today.

What was the content of this everlasting Covenant, based on a solemn oath that God had sworn by Himself? “To you I will give the land of Canaan.” That was what God said to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, and repeated to Isaac and Jacob, and at numerous other occasions. “It is My land,” said God (Lev. 25:23), “and I give it to you, O Israel.”

Was the land not inhabited when the Lord promised it to Abraham? Was it an empty land? No. It was inhabited by the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites (see Gen. 15:13–21; Deut. 7). Yet God gave the land to Israel.

Did He Himself see to it that before Israel took possession, those peoples had willingly moved on? Did Israel enter an empty land? No. Israel had to conquer the Promised Land in order to possess it. Moses’ successor, Joshua, under whose leadership the people of Israel would enter the land after wandering in the desert for forty years, therefore had to be strong and very courageous. Many times, he and the people of Israel were told, “I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses” (Josh. 1:3; see also Deut. 31:1–8, 23; Josh. 1:1–9). The promise by God meant that Joshua had to be very courageous. He and the people of Israel had to go in faith and put down the soles of their feet on the land. Step by step. Faith is like that. If you go in faith and obedience, you will find that you will possess what the Lord promised to you. But you have to go and move and take and claim God’s promises in faith.

JUDGEMENT IN SPITE OF COVENANT?

Why was the land of Canaan taken away from the heathen peoples who lived there? It was because the measure of their wickedness was full (see Gen. 15:16; Deut. 9:3–6). God’s

judgement and wrath was finally executed because of the appalling sins these nations had committed. “God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.’” (Genesis 15:12–19, NASB)

So the Lord was patient for four hundred years to give these Amorites a chance to change their terrible practices. During those years, His people Israel suffered in slavery in Egypt, where even their baby boys were drowned. All because the Lord was being patient with the Amorites. But finally, enough is enough.

Yet just as God punished the wickedness of the nations in Canaan, so also He had to punish the wickedness of Israel. Moses warned them:

“If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name – the Lord your God – the Lord will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants... Just as it pleased the Lord to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please Him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. Then the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other.” (Deuteronomy 28:58–59, 63–64a; see also 28:60–68; 11:22–32; 12:29–32; 8:19–20)

During Israel’s history, that punishment was enforced several times. The ten tribes of Israel were taken into Assyrian exile (2 Kings 17:20–23) and the two tribes of Judah into Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 25:8–12). A remnant remained in Judah (2 Kings 25:22), and after

all the countries and bring you back into your own land.” (Ezekiel 36:24). The Jewish people are returning from the four corners of the earth where they were scattered: this is Israel’s national restoration.

The Lord says to Israel by mouth of the prophet Isaiah: “Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by My Name, and whom I have created for My glory. Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” (Isa. 43:5-7)

We see with our own eyes the prophecies being fulfilled

When you hear about North, South, East and West in the Bible, you of course have to put your feet in Jerusalem, in Israel – because

there the Bible originated – and then look on the map of the world to the North, South, East and West.

We see with our own eyes the prophecies being fulfilled, even as we speak. For over a hundred years by now, the Jewish people have been returning from all over the world to the Promised Land.

BEGINNING OF REDEMPTION

The modern State of Israel has been in existence for seventy years now. It is the beginning of redemption, as the rabbis call it. But the formation of the Jewish State of Israel and the return of the Jewish people to Israel and to its capital Jerusalem set an irreversible process into motion. We have passed points of no return.

The prophet Amos says, “I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from their land I have given them, says the Lord your God” (Amos 9:15). Israel is there to stay. It will not be exiled again. Only two times the Lord raises His hand to bring Israel back to the land. The first time was after the Babylonian Captivity between 600 – 500 BC, the second time is now, after the ‘Roman’ Captivity of almost two thousand years.

“In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His place of rest will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out His hand a SECOND time to reclaim the remnant that is left of His people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.” (Isaiah 11:10-12)

Nowhere do we read in the Bible that the Lord will raise His hand a third time. Israel is here to stay. They will not be uprooted again. The redemption process has started. Natio-

nal restoration happens first, and it will be followed by spiritual restoration. Messiah is coming.

Ezekiel 39:28 promises in God's Name: "Then they [Israel] will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations [already fulfilled] I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind." So ultimately all the Jews will return to the Promised Land, back to Zion.

ISRAEL HAS (THE) FUTURE

8 "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham My friend,

9 I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are My servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.

10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

11 All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish.

12 Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all.

13 For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, 'Do not fear; I will help you.'

14 Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob, little Israel, do not fear, for I myself will help you,' declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

(Isaiah 41:8-14 NIV 1984)

And suddenly you realise: God is on their side. He gave everlasting promises to them. He made everlasting Covenants with them. And everything He promised to Israel He will fulfil for Israel. Just as all the promises He gave to the Church He will fulfil for the Church. It never gets out of His hand. Israel has the guarantee of the Creator of heaven and earth for their existence. As long as heaven and

earth are in existence, there will be Israel. So says the Lord God.

35 "This is what the Lord says, He who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the Lord Almighty is His name:

36 'Only if these decrees vanish from My sight,' declares the Lord, 'will Israel ever cease being a nation before Me.'

37 This is what the Lord says: 'Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,' declares the Lord."

(Jeremiah 31:35-37 NIV 1984)

May the Prince of Peace, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Messiah of Israel, come in our days, to sit upon "the throne of His father David [in Jerusalem]" and "rule over the House of Jacob [the ten plus the two tribes of Israel]" (Luke 1:32-33), to rule over all nations, so that of His Kingdom there will be no end, and so that peace will flow forth from Jerusalem to cover the earth.

"Deliver Israel, O God, from all their troubles!" (Psalm 25:22)

Rev. Willem J. J. Glashouwer

President Christians for Israel International

Honorary President European Coalition for Israel

For further reading: Hosea 11:1; Deuteronomy 4:37-38; Psalm 44:3; 2 Chronicles 2:11; 2 Chronicles 9:8

THEME **THE PROMISE OF THE LAND**



In most books of the New Testament, the land of Israel is a given. In the Gospels, the land constitutes the territory and background of Jesus' work. The first part of the book of Acts takes place entirely in the land of Israel, and even when Luke in the latter chapters recounts Paul's missionary travels, we see that Israel is the motherland to which the great apostle of the Gentiles every time returns. In different letters, Paul is busy raising money for Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the starting point of the worldwide preaching of the Gospel and the centre to which everything returns. Jerusalem is also the final destination of the whole of the New Testament; the book of Revelation ends in a great vision of Jerusalem, into which the kings of the earth bring their treasures (Revelation 21:24).

ISRAEL'S LAND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The land of Israel is mentioned as such only once in the New Testament. That is in Matthew 2:20-21. There we read that in Egypt, Joseph receives in a vision the instruction to "go into the Land of Israel". Thereupon, he "took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel". Thus, they returned from their Egyptian exile. These few words also make clear the identification of Jesus with (the people of) Israel: "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1). People and land are given to each other, as the Son is to the people, and people and land are given to the Son. Thus, prophecy is fulfilled.

A few times more, Israel is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, but in all those cases you could think both of the land and of the people. We find an example in Jesus' words in Matthew 8:10 (and the parallel verse Luke 7:9): "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel." Perhaps in the following verse, too, we have to think of the land of Israel, only then in a future (eschatological) perspective: "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in

the kingdom of heaven." In Jewish parlance of those days, 'heaven' is a euphemistic reference to God, used out of reverence and fear of the Name of God. The kingdom of heaven is therefore God's rule on earth, of which Jerusalem is the capital (Psalm 48:3, cf. Matthew 5:35; Zechariah 14:9, 16).

We also have to take into account the unity of people and land in the words of Simeon, spoken to Mary: "Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel..." (Luke 2:34), and in the question asked by the apostles just before Jesus' ascension to heaven: "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

Individual parts of the land, on the other hand, are mentioned quite often in the Gospels. Jesus' public ministry begins in Galilee (Matthew 4:12; Luke 4:14). Matthew gives an even more precise location: Jesus went to live in Capernaum, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, two tribes of Israel that Isaiah prophesies about. From Galilee, Jesus later on went to Judea (Matthew 19:1; Mark 10:1), to accomplish His 'exodus' (Luke 9:31) in Jerusalem. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus travels several times from Galilee to Jerusalem and back. On His way to Galilee, "He had to pass through Samaria" (John 4:4). He stays there for two days. In Luke 9:51-53, however, the Samaritans do not want to receive Him, because He is traveling to Jerusalem.

COVENANT

In the covenant that God made with Abraham, the promise of the land takes a prominent place (e.g. Genesis 17:8). Even though Israel in its history has known periods of being expelled and living in exile (though there are always those who remain in the land), we never hear that this covenant and this promise are annulled. The announcement of the punishment of exile is always followed by the promise of return to the land (e.g. Deuteronomy 30:5; Jeremiah 33:23-26). The apostle Paul writes that the covenants and the promises are valid for Israel (Romans 9:4). He writes in

truth of God (Romans 15:8).

However, the Most High did not promise a land only to Israel. To all nations He has allotted their own land. He did this “according to the number of sons of Israel” (Deuteronomy 32:8). What does that mean? After the tower of Babel there were seventy nations that spread out to settle the earth, according to the Jewish interpretation of Genesis chapters 10–11, just like Jacob went down to Egypt with seventy people (Exodus 1:1–5). Just as Israel is set apart as the special possession of the Lord, every nation has its own nature within the boundaries that are set to it.

The apostle Paul gives expression to this in his speech to the Areopagus in Athens: “He [God] made of one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God” (Acts 17:26). That applies to the nations. But as a matter of principle, it must precede that this still applies to Israel. The nations receive their own domicile just as Israel has received his.

SPIRITUALI- SATION

And what about those texts that seem to spiritualise the land or the city? Does not Paul say clearly that it was promised to Abraham

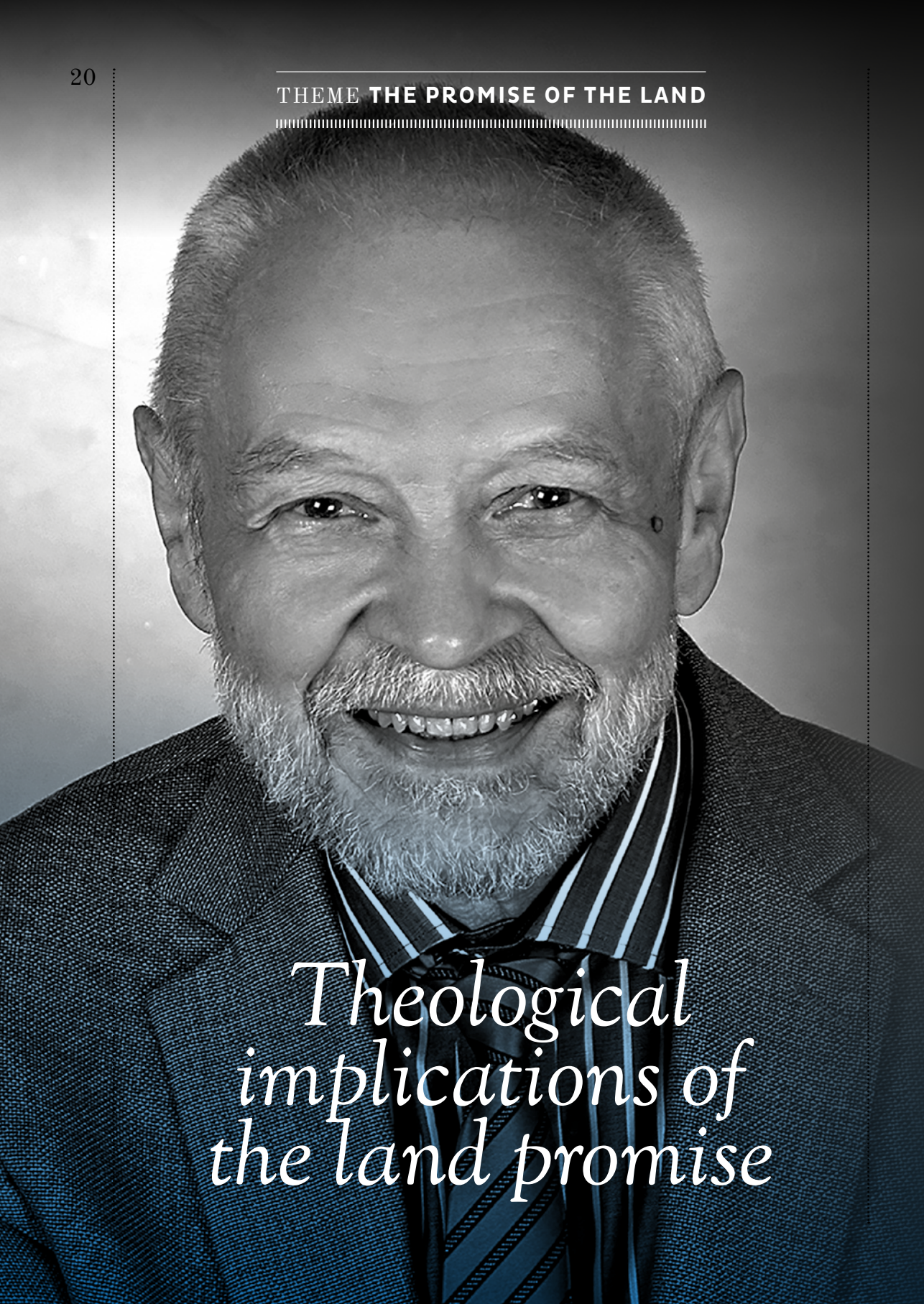
that he would be “heir of the world” (Romans 4:13)? And do we not read in the letter to the Hebrews that this same Abraham lived in the land of promise as in a foreign land, and

that he, just like other heroes of faith, desired “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:9–10, 16)? And what about the heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:25)?

Careful reading is – as always – required. In Hebrews 11:9–10, there surely is an antithesis, but a different one than we tend to assume. That is, the “city which has foundations” is opposed to the “tents” in which Abraham dwelt, and not to the land in which he lived. Abraham was looking for God to establish this city in the land of promise. Then, it will no longer be a “foreign land”, but he and his offspring will finally inherit the land according to the promise. Nowhere in the letter to the Hebrews is it written

**The nations
receive their
own domicile
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has received
his**

that this promise to, or this covenant with Abraham, was revoked. When the letter to the Hebrews speaks about the Law as a shadow (Hebrews 10:1), or about a covenant that is ready to disappear, then it is clearly about the covenant of Sinai through Moses, and even more precisely, about the sacrificial service, and not about the covenant with Abraham. Moreover, we have to take into account the historical context of the letter. Jerusalem at the time was under Roman occupation. The



*Theological
implications of
the land promise*

So the triangle stands, which is of fundamental importance for biblical thinking. God has made Israel His people and Israel receives a gift for the wedding - the land. God plus people plus land. This triangle is indissoluble. Therefore God has an “allergic” reaction when you are against Israel, when you touch his people or divide his land (Zech 2:12; Joel 4:2). This can be compared to a husband defending his wife or property. So God watches over Israel. Therefore God is also the God of the land: It is *his* land, for *his* people.



ISRAEL'S EVENTFUL HISTORY

Abraham did not experience the fulfillment of the promises in his lifetime. It took centuries for Israel to become a great nation and to return to live in the Promised Land. In-between, there was the stay in Egypt, the Exodus, the desert time and the Mosaic covenant at Sinai. At Sinai, Israel was given the Torah. Through the Torah, the standards of God were revealed to Israel. Israel alone received the privilege of knowing what a life looks like that pleases God. Conversely, Israel itself was also measured by these standards. Israel often transgressed the commandments of God and experienced judgment. The strongest form of judgment was that Israel lost its status as a nation of God. That meant that Israel had to give back the promised land (the bridal gift of God!), and was “pulled out” of the land and scattered into the nations (e.g. 2 Chr 7:19-20).

God had threatened this judgment, and he fulfilled it. For centuries, the land was under foreign rule: Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Seljuks, Crusaders, Mamelukes, Ottomans, British. They all occupied the land, while a large part of Israel lived in the diaspora, far from home and far from the destiny of being a nation of God. The loss

of home, property, security and community as a people was hard. Even harder was the loss of the temple and of life as a chosen people in the Promised Land. That was God’s judgment. Thus, both the loss and the gift of the land are ways that God communicates. The breaking of the covenant leads to the loss of the land, while the obedience of Israel leads to being allowed to remain in the land. Judgment and grace manifest themselves in the possession of the land. In the end, God’s *grace* is for his people.

But misunderstandings also threaten here. The loss of the land could be interpreted in such a way that God has rejected his people. This approach, which is the basis of replacement theology, completely ignores the Bible. Israel should understand the judgment only as a *punishment*, not as the end of God’s choice of them (Jer 24:4-7). Israel’s election remains forever, “for God does not regret his gifts and calling” (Rom 11:29). That is why God also proclaimed the greatest promises of salvation through the great prophets of judgment. One example is Jeremiah. In long passages, Jeremiah announces that God will bring Israel back from exile and “plant” them again in his country (Jer 30-33). In the middle of this scenario is the promise of the new covenant: God will write the Torah into the hearts of His people (Jer 31:31-34) so that Israel will be obedient from the heart and remain God’s nation forever. The new covenant has the function of enabling Israel to remain in the land and finally live in its destiny to be the nation of God. This is salvation for Israel!⁴

Another misunderstanding hits God even harder. For one could understand the scattering of Israel in such a way that God is not capable of preserving his people. Through the scattering of Israel into all the world, God’s name is desecrated among the nations. The nations mock Israel, and thereby, they mock God. That is why God brings his people back to his country. It is about the glory of God and the sanctification of His name among the nations (Ezk 36:19-25).

⁴ This has not yet been fulfilled completely. It is a great miracle that Israel exists again as a state since 1948, that the Jews return to the land and that daily there are Jews who come to believe in Jesus. Today we live in the time when God is restoring his people as he promised through the prophets.

THEME THE PROMISE OF THE LAND



*Promised
Lands for
Every Nation*

descendants in their future land would serve Shem and his descendants (9:26; 10:15-19). This is why Abram's father Terah, direct descendant of Shem, chose to leave Ur to go to the land of Canaan (11:31). When Abram finally came to Canaan, trusting God's promise, he found that the city of (Jeru)Salem had already been built, and was ruled by the 'King of Righteousness' who gave him a blessing (14:17-20). We therefore see the beginning of the age-old contest between man's city of Babylon and God's city of Jerusalem. It is not a coincidence that the ziggurat-temple of Babylon was shaped like a mountain, and Jerusalem is also a mountain city. Even the New Jerusalem will be a square-based pyramid or mountain (Revelation 21:16). The first Garden of Eden was a mountain (Ezekiel 28:13-16), which is why its river could flow in four directions. Babylon was a man-made Eden, but God had instead chosen the land of Canaan and the city of Jerusalem to be his new Eden, the source of life for the whole world (Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35).

From the very beginning, God has prepared lands for people to live in, but they can only possess what legally belongs to them if they trust God. Adam was made outside the Garden and brought into it (Genesis 2:7-8, 15). Noah was brought back into the re-created earth by faith and obedience. Abram was given a covenant promise of the land of Canaan because he trusted God and did not take the land for himself (13:10-17; 14:21-15:21). Lot was also a legal heir of Shem, but lacking faith, he did not inherit. God also confirmed Abraham's land covenant to Isaac (26:1-6, 23-25) and then to Jacob (28:13-22; 35:1-15) only after they chose to obey His commands in faith. Their brothers were legal heirs too, but they did not inherit by faith. The whole nation of Israel after leaving Egypt could not possess Canaan until they were willing to trust and obey God (Numbers 13-14; Joshua 2-4), even though it was promised to them. This also applied to each tribe of Israel (Joshua 14; 17:14-18).

God told Israel that "the land is Mine;

for you are aliens and sojourners with Me" (Leviticus 25:23), but the Bible also says that "The earth is the LORD's, and all its fulness" (Psalm 24:1). He owns all the earth, and so He gives territories to every tribe and people group (Acts 17:26). In Deuteronomy 2, Israel was warned not to try to take any territory from Edom, Moab or Ammon, because God had given land to these nations (each also descended from Shem). In Amos 9:7, God says He led both the Philistines and Arameans in their own Exodus and Conquest, just like Israel. This is why He also punishes other nations for their sins, even if these are not against Israel (Amos 1-2; Jonah; Isaiah 13-21; 23; etc.). "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance." (Deuteronomy 32:8-9) Every nation therefore has its own promised land, with Israel and its land as the prototype for every other nation. But this legal inheritance can only be possessed permanently in peace if they trust in God.

NATIONS THAT ENTER THE DEATH OF EXILE CAN BE RESURRECTED BY GOD'S SPIRIT

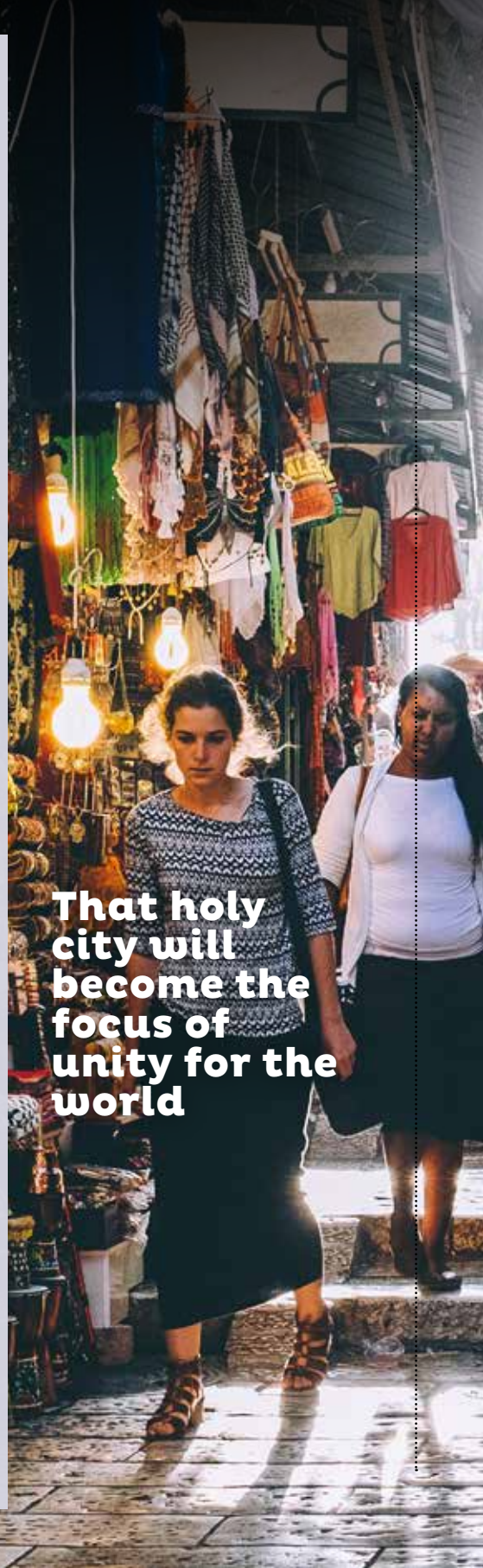
So far, we have seen how God's original plan was for every nation to inherit its own land by trusting Him, across the whole earth. But Adam and Eve were exiled from their Garden of Eden when they disobeyed God. Just as God warned Adam, they died on the day they sinned, by being separated from the source of both spiritual and physical life (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24). Nations are also exiled from their lands when they disobey God, and being outside of their lands and cut off from God, they will inevitably die. Sodom was the first kingdom to die for its sin (Genesis 14:1-17; 18:16-19:29), but at that time Abraham negotiated a legal principle with the Judge of All the Earth. God agreed that any people group will be spared judgement if it has a minimum of ten righteous men (18:32; see Zechariah 8:23).

2Kings 21:10-15; 23:24-27). How then could they be resurrected as a nation in their land? The prophets realised that the sins of a king can bring exile/death to a nation, just like Adam, but in that case the faithful obedience of a king can resurrect a nation. Isaiah taught that the future son of David, God's Servant, would pay for the sins of His people Israel (God's blind Servant – Isaiah 42:19), credit them with His righteousness, and lead them back from exile into their land to reign over them for ever (Isaiah 49; 53-54). Those returning would not be just the southern tribes in Babylon, but also the northern 'ten lost tribes' (Ezekiel 37:15-28), who never returned during biblical times (Zechariah 10:3-12). Israel as God's Servant, fully restored by their King, will only then finally be able to bless all nations (Isaiah 55).

This even greater promise was already taught by Moses, who said that God would turn His favour to the nations instead of His own unfaithful people, to make Israel jealous (Deuteronomy 32:21, 43). Isaiah saw further that just as David had ruled over nations surrounding Israel, so the future Son of David would be raised like a banner to summon the nations, and become their rescuer and saviour too. Then with the help of these newly obedient nations, this anointed Servant would finally bring the tribes of Israel back into their land (Isaiah 11:10-12; 49:22-23; 55:1-5; 60-61). In this way, all nations will receive their promised inheritance together, just like all the tribes of Israel had to help each other possess their appointed territories together. At the end of this age, Jerusalem will again be the final city for the Prince of Peace to conquer (Zechariah 12 and 14). When David's Son builds His permanent temple-palace there, then all nations will gather to it to worship the Lord (Micah 4:1-8). That holy city will become the focus of unity for the world, the new Garden of Eden.

MESSIAH BEGAN THE PROCESS OF RESURRECTION AND "RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS"

Inspired by Isaiah's prophecy about Tyre in



That holy city will become the focus of unity for the world

them). Soon He would lead them through the wilderness of the nations by His Spirit, as the “church in the wilderness”, and gather to them other lost sheep of the nations, to make them all one flock with one shepherd (Ezekiel 20:33-44; Isaiah 63:7-14; Acts 7:38 – this is what the word “church” originally referred to).

But wandering in the wilderness is only a preparation for being brought back into the promised land. Israel would not be able to possess their promised land fully until all other nations had received their inheritance too. They must also be restored to a right relationship with God through the Messiah,

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to be able to live in their own lands in peace with God and with each other. So Jesus blessed His Jewish followers to “multiply and fill the earth”, going out from Jerusalem as far as the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). When they did not go, like Noah’s family after the Flood, Jesus scattered them with persecution (Acts 8:1-4; James 1:1; 1Peter 1:1, 17). But He also confronted the Jew who began this persecution, and appointed him as His special messenger

to the nations. Paul became part of the first generation of Israel to receive the promised Holy Spirit as a pledge of their future inheritance – dwelling with God in their promised land (Ezekiel 37:24-27). But he turns from “we who were the first to hope in Messiah” to “you also”, that is, the other nations who were also “sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:11-14; see also 2:11-13; 3:6). It was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles, just like He had filled the Jews at Pentecost, which persuaded the apostles that Jesus did want to bless every nation with their own promised land and relationship with God through Messiah (Acts 10:44-48; 15:7-9; Galatians 3:2-5).

Jesus described Jerusalem as “the city of the great king” (Matthew 5:35), quoting from Psalm 48:2. Psalm 47 explains even more clearly that “great king” means an emperor, the “king of all the earth” who “reigns over the nations”. So Jesus looked forward to the time when He would reign as King of kings (Psalm 2; Revelation 11:15; 19:16), from His imperial city of Jerusalem. He therefore rode into Jerusalem on a donkey – the prophetic sign of the King who will “speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth” (Zechariah 9:9-10), while also restoring all twelve tribes of Israel from exile “because of the blood of My covenant with you” (9:11-10:12). Jesus then chose to ascend to heaven from the Mount of Olives opposite Jerusalem, rather than from the mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16), because Scripture promises His return in the same way to the same place (Acts 1:9-12; Zechariah 14:1-7; Daniel 7:13-14). When He comes, He will rescue Jerusalem from invading international armies, and then reign as “king over all the earth”. At that time, “living waters will flow out of Jerusalem” in different directions, just as they did from the Garden of Eden (Zechariah 14:8-9). From then on, the survivors of all nations will “go up from year to year to worship the King”

