

Apple of God's Eye

By Robert Garrett

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I. THE APPLE OF GOD'S EYE

Deut 32:10 *"In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye."*

Zech 2:8 8 *"For this is what the LORD Almighty says: . . . — for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye."*

Ps 17:8 *"Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings."*

Our eye, is not only essential for vision, but is the most sensitive part of our body. We flinch from the lightest touch to our eye. We guard and protect our eyes.

The Psalmist's prayer *"Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,"* is asking for the most intimate, the very closest, the most protected relationship with God.

Who can harm the one who is sheltered under the wings of God, who is as precious and protected as the apple of His eye? The expression, "to stick a finger into someone's eye" speaks of a most personal and injurious insult, and that indeed is how the TLB translates Zech 2:8.

"The Lord of Glory has sent me against the nations that oppressed you, for he who harms you sticks his finger in Jehovah's eye!"

Deut 32: 10 and Zech 2:8 are speaking of the nation of Israel, the physical, the genetic descendants of the man Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebecca,

This is not speaking of the church. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not in view here at all.

Of course the church also has that close relationship, for we have been blessed with "every spiritual blessing in Christ." (Eph 1:3). To be kept as the apple of God's eye, to be sheltered under the shadow of His wings. these are spiritual blessings. They are also ours in Christ Jesus. God has NOT taken them away from Israel, He has not transferred them to the church.

I repeat, Deut. 32: 10 and Zech 2:8 are speaking **only** of the physical, the genetic descendants of the man Jacob.

II. HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE, HIS TREASURED POSSESSION

Over and over, again and again, the nation of Israel, the descendants of Jacob are declared to be **God's chosen people**, Deut 76: Deut.14:2; 1Chron.16:13; Ps.105:6, Ps.105"43; Ps.106:4; Ps.135:4; Isa.41:8-9; Isa.43:20-21; Isa.44:1-2; Isa.45:4; Isa.49:7; Isa.65:9; Isa.65:22; Amos 3:2.

Six times Israel is referred to as God's **treasured possession** — Exodus 19:5; Deut 7:6; Deut 142, Deut 26:18; Psalms 135:4; Mal 3:17. One example of both is:

Deut 7:6 *"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has **chosen** you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, **his treasured possession.**"*

Certainly the Church is a *"**chosen people**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God,"* (IPet.2:9-10), because we have been blessed with *"**every spiritual blessing in Christ.**"* (Ephesians 1:3).

But that does not mean that the Church replaces Israel in God's plan of redemption, or make the Church to be "spiritual Israel." or "the new Israel" as some wrongly teach. The church is a new creation, the "new man" in Christ Jesus (Eph 2: 15) made up of both Jew and Gentile.

Those scriptures show us the special, the unique place that Israel has in the heart and purposes of Jehovah, of God the Father. We all know that Israel became faithless and departed from God. In judgment upon them He caused them to suffer under Gentile dominion. After more than 600 years of such suffering He sent His only begotten Son to them, but that nation rejected and crucified Him. A further 2000 years of dispersion and suffering bring us to the present day.

It was just a few years ago that the Israelites began a return to the land that God had promised to Abraham—and in 1948 became an independent nation. But this was. and is, not without difficulty as the Palestinians violently oppose their very right of existence.

Although many individual Jews turn to accept Jesus as the Christ, that nation as a whole—with its leaders—is still in unbelief and rebellion.

The Scriptures tell us that what lies ahead is the Great Tribulation, the time of Jacob's Trouble. (Matt 24: 15-24 and Jer 30:7) It is during that great agony that that nation, **led by its leaders**, will realize that all that has come upon them because they crucified their Messiah. Read Zech 12: 1-14, and 13: 1; Also read all of Jer. 31 as it tells us of the eventual outcome.

Romans chapter 11 speaks of Israel's eventual repentance. Notice especially vs. 1 and vs. 11-12 and vs. 25-27.

III. THE MARRIAGE METAPHOR

A. The Wife of Jehovah

The marriage relationship, the union, between husband and wife is the closest, most intimate of all human relationships. God uses the marriage metaphor to reveal the utmost closeness of His relationship to Israel.

IN THE OT, ISRAEL IS SPOKEN OF AS THE ADULTEROUS WIFE OF JEHOVAH, now, because of unbelief and apostasy, disowned and dishonored, but yet to be restored. Isa.54:5-8; Jer 3:14-18; Ezekiel 16:1-63; Hos 2:2, 7, 14-16, 21-23; Hos 3:4-5; Amos 9:13-15

B. The Virgin Bride of Christ

In the New Testament The Church is the **Virgin Bride of Christ, Not yet Married to Him**. — John 3:27-29; 2Cor.1:2; Eph.5:23-32; Rev.19.

In this figure of speech the Church is a **virgin bride, espoused to her bridegroom, but not yet married**. Therefore, to say that the Church is the "new Israel," or "Spiritual Israel" is to mix up these metaphors. For if, as the O.T. clearly states, Israel is the adulterous wife of the Father, it is absolutely impossible for the Church to be "Spiritual Israel" because the Son cannot take the father's wife!

IV. DID THE DISCIPLES MISUNDERSTAND?

After His resurrection, and just before He ascended to heaven, the apostles asked Jesus a question, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Examine almost any Bible Commentary written by one who holds to the amillennial view and you will find the following kind of statement —

Matthew Henry, "They thought Christ would restore the kingdom to Israel, that is, that he would make the nation of the Jews as great and considerable among the nations as it was in the days of David and Solomon, . . . whereas Christ came to set up his own kingdom, and that a kingdom of heaven, **not to restore the kingdom to Israel, an earthly kingdom.**" (emphasis mine).

Many an amillennial theologian or preacher deem themselves wiser and more understanding than the apostles. **Are they? Let us examine the record:**

1) **John the Baptist** came to prepare the people for the coming of the Christ. He preached "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.**" (Matt 3:2).

What did he mean by the "**kingdom of heaven?**" **What did he and the people understand by "the kingdom of heaven"?** **What did they expect?**

Those people were not pagans ignorant of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, the prophecies about the kingdom, were often read to them when they met in their synagogues and they were looking for the Messiah to come and **restore the kingdom to Israel.**

Their expectations included:

- a) A son of David to rule over Israel on David's throne — Isa.9:7; Lk.1:33.
- b) A literal kingdom of Israel here on the earth — Dan.7:27; Amos 9:14,15.
- c) Righteous government, perfect justice for all. — Isa.9:7; 11:4-5; 42:1.
- d) The Kingdom to be over all Gentile nations. — Psalms 72, Rev.11:15.
- e) A time of universal peace with all nations worshipping the Lord, **because:**
- f) "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." -Isaiah 11:9.
- g) There would even be changes in nature with much of the curse being lifted. "*the lion will eat straw like the ox.*" — Isa.11:6-10; Rom.8:21; Acts 3:17-23, especially vs. 21.

2) **Jesus also preached "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."** (Matt 4: 17)

What did He preach? The apostles were with Him for three years and heard what he preached. He knows all things, so, if God was not going to restore the kingdom to Israel; If God was going to take all those wonderful kingdom promises away from Israel and transfer them to the Church (which did not even exist at that time), why did He not explain that to the people? Is God a deceiver? Where is it recorded that Jesus preached something different from what the people expected? The import of His message was that their expectations could only be met upon their repentance!

3) **Jesus sent out the twelve to preach the kingdom of heaven** —Mattt 10:1 ff.

What did they preach?

The amillennialists are fond of saying that the disciples of Jesus did not understand the nature of the kingdom. **If so, they must have preached a falsehood.** If so, why did Jesus fail to correct them? What did their hearers understand and believe?

4) **Jesus also sent seventy-two others to preach the kingdom** - Lk.10:1-10 ff.

What did they understand and preach?

V. THE 40 DAY SEMINAR ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His Apostles

- a) "over a period of forty days, and
- b) spoke about the kingdom of God." — Acts 1 :3.
- c) He gave them the Holy Spirit. - John 20:22. (This was before Pentecost).

He also

- d) "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." -Lk.24:45.

Jesus, the greatest teacher that ever lived. conducted what I like to call a Postgraduate Seminar with His Apostles. Subject: the Kingdom of God. If they misunderstood the nature of the kingdom, surely this was the lime for Jesus to correct them! **(a) He gave them the Holy Spirit. (b) He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and then. (c) Taught them over a 40 day period about the kingdom of God.** How could they fail to understand? I strongly suggest that it is those quoted commentators, the amil- lennialists, the replacement theologians, that fail to understand. Theirs was not a casual question. In Luke 22:30. Jesus had promised them to sit on thrones over the 12 tribes of Israel. They are excited. "Lord, are you going to do it now? We are ready"! His answer does not deny, it confirms their expectation. He answers, *it is not for them to know when*. It will be sometime in the future. But now—*until that time comes*—He has another job for them to do. Preach the Gospel to the whole world.

VI. Historically, the premillennial belief was held by the Church for the first 200 to 300 years. This fact is testified by the vast majority of Historians who have studied the writings of church leaders from the Apostolic days.

The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia says, "It is commonly agreed by the best modern historians that, from the death of the Apostles till the time of Origen, premillennialism was the general faith of those who were regarded as strictly orthodox Christians."

In his book "Until The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom" Robert Shank quotes from a number of Church historians, who were themselves antimillennial, who nevertheless said that Premillennialism was the accepted teaching of the Church in the days of the Apostles and for centuries after .

One such antimillennial historian, Bp Russell. admitted that the early church was premillennial, but he rejected the premillennial belief, calling it a "*Rabbinical fable*" and asserting that the Apostles and the early Christians failed to understand the symbolism of the OT prophecies concerning Israel and the Kingdom!

VII. God will protect and preserve Israel as the apple of His eye.

Jer.31:35-37 and many others speak of the permanence of the nation of Israel.

We conclude with excerpts from Amos 9:1-15 . . . vs.8 "*I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,*" . declares the LORD. . .vs 9 "*I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground.*"

Vs.14-15 "*I will bring back my exiled people Israel, they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,*" says the LORD your God.

Prov 30:5-6 "Every word of God is flawless: . . . **Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.**"

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