

Review of a paper on the subject of God's restoration of Israel

I have now been able to look at your paper. It is certainly a substantial piece of work; and with the core contention of your thesis I myself heartily agree, namely that it is God's purpose to restore Israel qua Israel, and that there is a time coming when Israel as a whole, 'all Israel', shall be saved.

Secondly, you rightly emphasise the fact that many, perhaps the majority, of modern Israelis and Jews throughout the world, are mostly agnostics, some of them atheists; and most of them, alas, reject their God-appointed Messiah. You rightly say, therefore, that the restoration of Israel will take place only when Israelites repent and accept their Messiah.

This, therefore, raises the question: What is meant by the term 'Israel'? Scripture says plainly: 'they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children' (Romans 9:6–7). If one therefore says that God has promised the land of Israel to the Israelites, one ought to explain which Israelites are included in his promise.

The covenant by which God undertook to give the land to Abraham and to his seed is recorded in Genesis 15. The New Testament explicitly says that the term 'the seed' in this covenant means Christ; i.e. God has promised to give the land to Christ (see Galatians 3:16–29). No Jew or Israeli can reject Christ and still claim that he has a God-given right to the land of Israel, simply because he is physically descended from Abraham.

I notice that in the earlier part of your paper you discuss Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God's provision for them on their journey, and their conquest of Canaan. But you do not discuss their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea (see Numbers 11–14). On that occasion, God swore that none of those who were above twenty years of age when they came out of Egypt would ever enter the land. What would you say about them? Would you have said that they had a God-given right to possession of the land because they were Israelites, or because they were physically descended from Abraham, even though according to Hebrews 3–4 they were unbelievers?

I think that if you ever thought of revising your paper, you would strengthen it by discussing these fundamental issues early on: i.e. the exact terms of God's covenant with Israel regarding the land (see Genesis 15), and the New Testament's interpretation of it in Galatians 3; the implications of Numbers 11–14 as interpreted in Hebrews 3–4; and the solemn warnings of Deuteronomy 28; 30.

Isaiah in his chapter 31 denounces the Judahites (i.e. the Jews) for 'going down to Egypt' for help against the Assyrians, instead of relying on God. For Israel today to rely on America to support them in their fight against the Palestine Liberation Organization is, according to the Hasidic Jews, a modern equivalent of 'going down to Egypt' for help. Only Messiah, they say, can save Israel; yet the Hasidic Jews of New York will have nothing to do with the Zionist movement. What would Isaiah say if he were alive today? What do you say on this matter?

And now a more general point. There are places in your paper when you seem temporarily to proceed as if you were preaching a sermon, or writing a devotional commentary. In sermons and devotional commentaries, it is perfectly acceptable that the preacher or writer simply states his own view; but in an academic paper a writer cannot merely state his view: he must argue his case and demonstrate that his view accords best with the evidence.

As an example, I cite your treatment of Moses' sin. You mention the views of various theologians. You then cite your own view, that Moses' sin was sad, and showed God's holy attitude to sin. That is true. But to establish your view against the other views you mention, which discuss whether Moses deserved his punishment or not, you ought surely to quote from passages like Numbers 20:12, which state explicitly what Moses' sin was: 'Because you believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel', and then give an interpretation of what 'not sanctifying God in the eyes of the people' means; and finally give reasons for thinking that this interpretation is most likely to be correct.

And now another general point. The early part of your paper necessarily involves reference to a great deal of Old Testament history and geography. To bring your thesis up-to-date with the findings of archaeology and with the understanding of technical and semi-technical terms in Hebrew, I strongly recommend that you read K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of The Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003.

Professor Kitchen is a believer and a conservative scholar. He would help you with many ideas about historical, archaeological and linguistic facts; ideas that used to be regarded as correct, but are no longer thought to be so.

Lastly, in the early part of your paper, grammar, syntax and spelling have suffered some accident or other. I suspect it was typed out in haste to meet a deadline, and that as a result many errors crept in. It is important for the thought flow in a sentence to make sure that one abides by the correct usage.

God's help and blessing be on your further studies.

Your fellow student,
David Gooding

Classification: Reviews

Topics: Abraham, Israel

Scriptures: Genesis 15; Numbers 11-14; 20:12; Isaiah 31; Romans 9:6-7; Hebrews 3-4

Copyright

David Gooding has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

Copyright © The Myrtlefield Trust, 2022

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Revised Version (1885), the King James Version, or are David Gooding's own translations or paraphrases.

This text is from a letter written by David Gooding in 2005.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce this document in its entirety, or in unaltered excerpts, for personal and church use only as long as you do not charge a fee. You must not reproduce it on any Internet site. Permission must be obtained if you wish to reproduce it in any other context, translate it, or publish it in any format.

Published by The Myrtlefield Trust
PO Box 2216
Belfast, N Ireland
BT1 9YR

w: www.myrtlefieldhouse.com

e: info@myrtlefieldhouse.com

Myrtlefield catalogue no: cor-std.019.02/sc

About the Author

DAVID W. GOODING (1925-2019) was Professor of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.