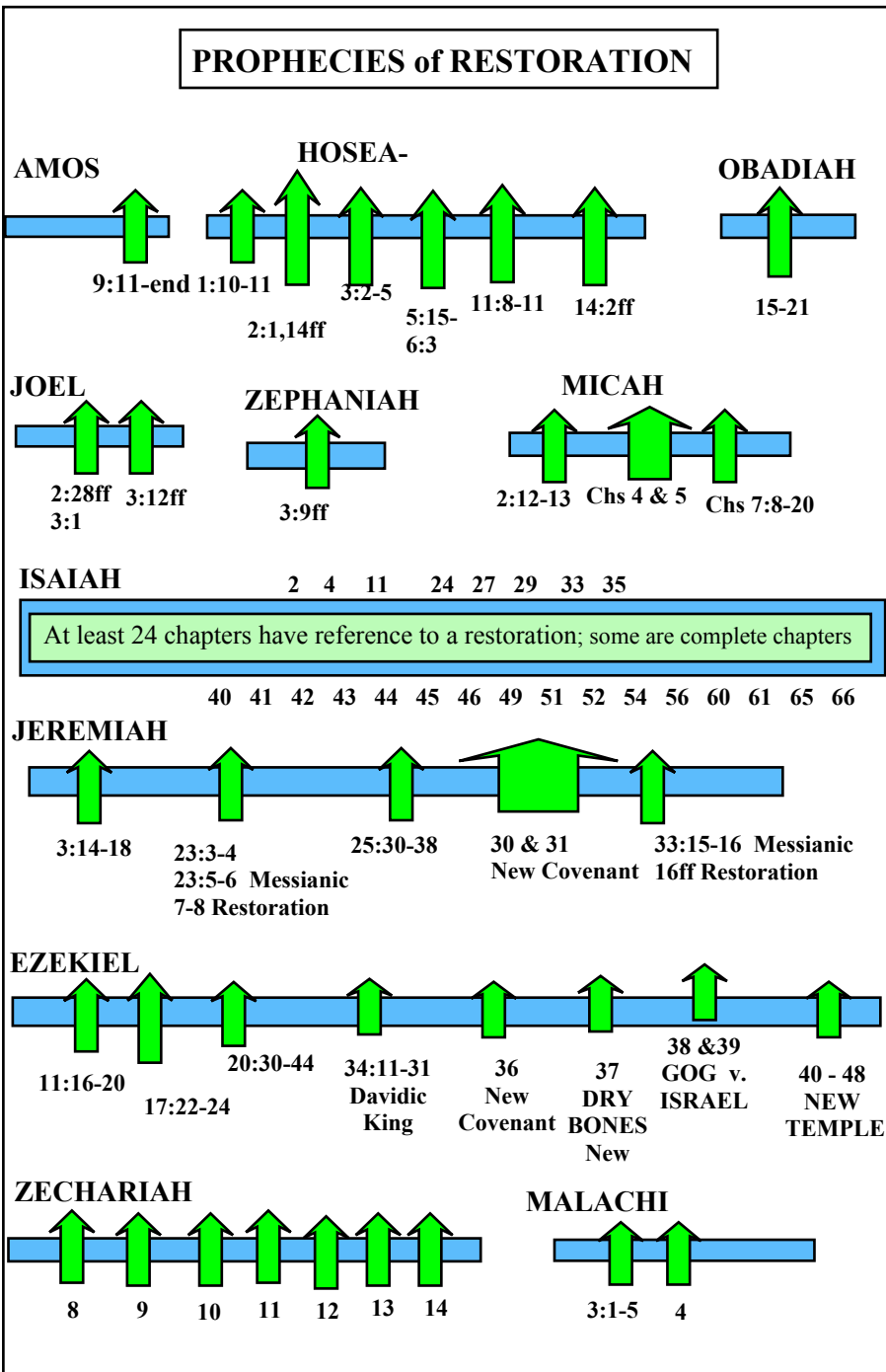


THE CERTAINTY of RESTORATION

"I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob" Micah 2:12

The Jewish prophets whose writing we have recorded in the Old Testament had as their main theme a severe warning for the Jewish people. This warning came in two waves, first to the northern kingdom of Israel and second to the southern kingdom of Judah, with something like a century between the two. Particular prophets can be assigned to each wave. Thus for over 200 years, from Amos to Ezekiel, strong powerful and persistent warnings were sounded that God would take away the land from the people amidst appalling destruction. That was the essential prophetic theme and the refusal of the Jewish nations to heed the warning with its consequential exile has been one of the greatest watersheds in the natural and spiritual life of that people. The whole process has a big place in Old Testament scripture. In the providence of God it stands as a stark warning for all generations that God holds all nations, and Israel in particular, responsible for their actions.

These prophecies of warning, however, have another theme running through them which is as unmistakable as the warnings themselves, and that is the theme of a restoration beyond the judgement. It is a theme which applies to some extent to nations in general, but it is a theme that applies in great depth to Israel in particular. It is the purpose of this pamphlet simply



to indicate **how clear and persistent is that particular theme for Israel.** It is very important that this basic recognition of such persistent promises of restoration for Israel is made. Later pamphlets will seek to give some kind of interpretation of what the nature of that restoration has meant or might mean in the history of the Jews, but the certainty of some sort of restoration can be in no doubt. It constitutes a great message of hope.

The extent of these restoration prophecies is indicated by the diagram below which shows essential passages referring to that subject taken from the biblical prophets. The first thing that is obvious from the diagram is that the theme is **not the narrow interest of just one or two of the prophets.** The vast majority (including prophets from the nation when it came back from Babylon) makes reference to a restoration; it is not something that belongs only to "Major" prophets, but the so-called "Minor" make their own contributions. If any particular prophet is to be singled out, then undoubtedly it would have to be Isaiah, where out of 66 chapters at least 24 have reference in some way to a restoration of the fortunes of Israel, and some of those references are in fact complete chapters. However, Hosea and Zechariah have an equal proportion devoted to a restoration in their writings, and like Isaiah, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel have numerous concluding chapters which have a major concentration on the theme.

Ten prophecies concerning restoration have been taken from ten different prophets and are printed below. This is done so that seeing them printed in sequence the full weight of this prophetic strand might be adequately felt.

*“In that day I will restore
David’s fallen tent.
I will repair its broken places,
restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be,
I will bring back my exiled people Israel;
they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. Amos 9:11, 14*

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days. Hos. 3:4-5

*“I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel.
I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture;
the place will throng with people. Micah 2:12*

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. Is. 11:11-12

*“In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Joel 3:1-2*

*But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy,
and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. Ob. 17*

At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,” says the LORD. Zeph 3:20

“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: ‘He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’ For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. Jer 31:10-11

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’ Ez. 17:12-14

This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.” Zech 8:7-8

Whilst more detailed comment on verses such as these will be the subject of other pamphlets, one or two basic features are worth underlining at this point.

First, **the clarity of the statements** that there would be a restoration of the Jewish nation is very obvious. The statements were made at a time when the destruction and exile of the two divisions of the nation was imminent, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the intent of the prophetic word was to re-assure them, as a nation, that there would be a return. The plain intent of the words was to announce national restoration. Any “spiritualization” of such words which obscures that hope of national restoration would be contrary to the basic requirement of biblical understanding that requires first and foremost an acceptance of the plain sense of the wording. If there is no compelling reason to the contrary we must take the obvious meaning.

Second, these words do not contain the fond human hope or wishful aspirations of the prophets themselves. **The source of their prophetic inspiration was not essentially human, but the Holy Spirit.** He spoke to them as their hearts and minds considered what they were witnessing in their own nation and in the nations around them. Undoubtedly they would have been aware of other prophets who had made and were making statements of restoration, and the later prophets in particular would have been aware of building on the earlier prophets. But they were not imitating each other; the fact is that each would have found the others a great source of strength and confirmation for their own prophetic insight but which they were receiving directly from the Spirit of God.

Third, **such prophecies demand an attempt to understand them.** History has shown only too well how accurate the prophets were in their proclamation of judgement. It would be a bold person who took the view that they might be wrong in their prophetic word about a restoration. So we are left with such questions as, “Have we seen the fulfilment of restoration?” “Has it been merely partial, or not at all?” “Is it all yet to come? If so, when and how?” “Does the fulfilment of such prophecies have a bearing on our own generation, and how relevant is it for us today?”

Those questions are the issues succeeding pamphlets will address.

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