

*A Manual for
New and Prospective Members
of the
Church of God
of the
Abrahamic Faith*

Written by Norman J. McLeod
Former pastor of the
Pomona, California
Church of God.

A MANUAL FOR NEW AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS
OF
THE CHURCH OF GOD OF THE ABRAHAMIC FAITH

To become a member of the body of Christ is a most sacred privilege. It is not a thing to be done lightheartedly, and because a sweetheart, a relative, or a friend thinks we should. It should be of our own free will and desire, of our own conviction and belief. If it is not of our own conviction then it is worthless. It should not be undertaken as a burdensome duty, but as a pleasure and a privilege.

We, as a church, feel that belief is necessary, because belief is the foundation upon which faith is built. Immediately the question arises: will we be lost if we do not understand the teachings of the Bible? You will say that the Bible is a very difficult book to understand. It is true that many parts of it are difficult of understanding, but the important truths of God contained in the Bible are simple, especially if a little effort is put forth to understand them. As to any one being lost or saved, that is not for us to decide, but we have the statement of the Apostle Peter, as he stood before his prosecutors, speaking of Jesus Christ: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

Some will say to you that all that is necessary is belief in God and Christ. In one sense we agree with that statement. But, what, may we ask, constitutes belief in Christ? If we think that he was just a great teacher who lived and died some two-thousand years ago, we do not believe in

Christ. To believe in Christ we must believe that he died for our sins and was raised from the dead. Furthermore, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then he was not raised from the dead as is stated by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:12-18: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." So it goes! If we believe in Jesus Christ, we must believe in his resurrection. If we believe in Christ's resurrection we must believe also in the resurrection of the dead. Belief in these things leads to belief in other things which we shall come to in a moment. All of our textual citations are necessarily brief, and many text proofs are left out because of limited space. Our endeavor is to cite the simplest plainest stated ones.

CLEARING THE GROUND FOR BELIEF

Over the years since the time of Christ and the writing of the Bible, many ideas have crept into the church which prevent a true understanding of God's Word. Upon these erroneous ideas many whole systems of religion have been built. Let us clear

away the rubbish of false ideas before we try to lay the structure of our beliefs.

Perhaps the most basic of these errors is in the kind of a being man is. Strangely, people who have no religion at all still hold to the idea that man has some sort of a thing that dwells within him that does his thinking for him and operates his brain and nervous system much as a switchboard operator operates a telephone system. This thing has been variously named a soul, a spirit, or a mind. Early superstition gave this thing all kinds of unusual powers. Finally man looked upon it as an immortal thing that he called an immortal soul or spirit. The Greeks and Romans under the leadership of such philosophers as Socrates and Plato developed a belief in an immortal soul that lived on after the person died. This soul had all manner of superhuman powers after death that it never possessed in the course of the ordinary mortal life. This belief was taken into Christianity through Jewish contact with the Greek and Roman world.

Modern science shows that there is no such thing as the soul or the mind. Consciousness is a function of the brain. When the brain ceases to function, either in sleep, disease or death, consciousness ceases. Strangely, the Bible agrees with science on this point. Nowhere in the Bible is the immortality of the soul or spirit taught. A reward is hereby offered for anybody who can produce a text from the Bible which plainly states that the soul or spirit of man is immortal, or that uses the words "Immortality of the soul", or "immortal soul" or any such

phrase. We have no fear of having to pay the reward because many people have tried hard to find such a statement, and have failed. On the other hand, for every statement of the Bible that may be misconstrued to teach the immortality of the soul or spirit, we can point to several that plainly state the opposite. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:3,4) "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek.18:4). (If this last passage had been translated by one who understands the nature of man, the word soul would probably not have been used). From the New Testament we read: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." (Acts 2:29). If David, a man after God's own heart, a great prophet in Psalm and song, did not have a soul that soared to heaven at death, then certainly we are not to be so favored.

Related to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and based upon it, is the teaching of reward and punishment at death. In order to believe these errors, one must first believe in the immortality of the soul. Otherwise, the doctrine cannot be maintained. Nominal Christianity teaches that if you are Christ's, that at death your immortal soul will go to heaven to be with God and Christ throughout eternity. This teaching is not found in the Bible, nor any place else except in the imaginations of church leaders.

Science has long ago exploded the idea that the earth is flat and the blue sky above is solid, and is the place where God dwells. So far, God's throne has not been located by astronomers. Untold millions of miles away, space still stretches on beyond the ken of the largest telescopes. Why has God not been located? Because he is invisible to the human eye. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." (I Tim.1:17). The answer to where heaven is might be where God's throne is. Where is God's throne? Nobody knows. As was said about the immortality of the soul, so might be said about going to heaven at death: no such plain teaching exists in the Bible. On the other hand, statements to the contrary are found in the Bible. "And no man hath ascended up to the heaven, but he that came down from heaven." (John 3:13). "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lords, but the earth hath he given to the children of men." (Psalms 115:16).

On the other hand, the teaching that those who are not Christ's are thrown into fire where they will be tortured to all eternity is likewise not found in the Bible. Many figurative passages of Scripture are misconstrued to teach it. A God of love who has asked us to forgive our brother seventy times seven, would not assign one of his own creatures to such a place. We are told by John, the Apostle, that "He that loveth not, loveth not God; for God is love." (I John 4:8). Teaching of a God that would torment anybody eternally does not harmonize with that Scripture. The idea of a hell where wicked men should

be burned forever is again based upon Pagan teaching which has been refuted by science. Men used to think that under the flat earth was a region called Hades, part of which burned with eternal fire where wicked "souls" were sent at death. We know now, through modern science, that the earth is spherical, and that the nearer toward the center one goes, the more solid it becomes. That is true because of the tremendous pressure upon the center of the earth. No "infernal" region could exist there. Furthermore it is not God's purpose to torture anybody throughout eternity: "The wages of sin is death", not eternal torment. (Roms. 6:23).

With these false ideas out of the way, let us turn to the real teachings of the Bible. Ten tenets present themselves as the core of Bible doctrine.

I. One God. There is only one God who is taught throughout the entire Bible. Moses' statement serves as the unchanging tone of the whole Bible: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut.6:4,5). The Apostle Paul speaks of the unity of God in no uncertain terms: "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4-6). The worship of the Holy Ghost as a God, or Mary, and all the other so-called saints is not in accord with Bible teaching. Jesus' statement that he and God were one if taken literally would lead to a most peculiar form of worship because Jesus

said: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:21). Surely the apostles were not literally one with God, or in God as is commonly taught about Jesus!

II. The Sacrifice of Christ: In many respects the most important of all the teachings of the Bible is the sacrifice of Christ for us. This is often spoken of as the atonement. Man in his natural state is in a hopeless condition. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom.8:6-8). The psalmist in poetry states further the helplessness of man in his unredeemed condition: "God judgeth the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm 7:11). Self-righteousness is even worse and puts man in a frame of mind in which the Savior can be of no good to him. Isaiah said: "But we are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf: and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away." (Isa.64:6). Israel went about to establish their own righteousness, and a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge and so were not acceptable to God. "For I bear them word they they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto

the righteousness of God." (Rom.10:2,3). Paul, writing further to the Philippians says, referring to Christ: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith....." (3:9). Speaking of both Jew and Gentile Paul says: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". (Rom.3:24). Man in his utterly desititute condition is described by Paul in Romans 7. He shows how we do the things we should not do, and do not want to do, but leave undone the things we should do and want to do. He ends with an exclamation: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death." (vs. 24). Then to answer his own question he says: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:25). In other words, we are lost without the sacrifice of Christ for us. To take advantage of that sacrifice, we must be obedient to God in Baptism, and have faith in his promises. We shall come to these teachings presently.

III. The Second Coming of Christ. This teaching has become quite popular in many churches in recent years. But there are some aspects of it that are not well understood. No subject is mentioned so often in the Bible, nor implied in so many other statements in the Bible. Its plainest statement is in Acts. After Jesus' resurrection, his disciples were questioning him on the top of the Mt. of Olives, when he was taken up from them into heaven. As they stood looking after him, two men stood by them in white clothing, "which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why

stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11). Two passages of Scripture give details that echo this statement. Revelation 1:7 says: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Clouds received him out of the Apostles sight. Behold, he cometh with clouds! He left from the Mount of Olives, he shall return to the Mount of Olives: "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east....." (Zech.14:3,4). These prophecies one written three hundred years before Jesus' birth, and the other many years after his ascension agree astonishingly in minor details as well as the great central theme.

Many who believe in Jesus' return say that he has already come and is only known to his few followers, the particular people that hold that view. Such ideas are refuted by plain statement of Scripture: the one previously quoted from Revelation (1:7) says that his enemies are going to see him and wail because of him. Furthermore, we have Jesus statement also: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert: go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be". (Matt. 24:26,27).

One thing has discredited the Adventist cause and that is date setting. The Bible is quite emphatic that we do not know the time of Jesus' second coming. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matt. 24:36). "Watch therefore for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh". (Matt.25:13).

Many people who believe in the second coming of Christ do not understand why he is coming back. Gleaning through the Scriptures we see several things. He is going to raise the sleeping dead: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first....." (I Thess. 4:16). He shall establish his kingdom. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:...." (Matt.25:31). He is coming to reward his saints. Jesus said that these adjudged worthy at his coming should be rewarded: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34. He shall accomplish the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21).

IV. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Four facts should be borne in mind first before examining the gospel of the Kingdom of God: (1) There is only one gospel: "But through we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we

have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8). Paul repeated that statement twice in his letter to the Galatians to make sure that he meant it and that there would be no doubt in their minds.

(2) It is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God".

(Mark 1:14). Many teach that there is a gospel of grace to be preached to gentile Christians instead of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God". (3) It was preached to Abraham many centuries before the birth of Jesus: "And the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gal.3:8).

(4) It is necessary for us to believe the gospel in order to obtain salvation: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16).

The kingdom of God will be on earth: "And the kingdom, and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Dan. 7:27). Daniel in telling Nebuchanezzar what should happen at the coming of Christ said: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and it shall not be left to other people, but it shall consume and break in pieces all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Dan. 2:44).

Two statements which are some of the most basic of all Scriptures to the Christian religion tell of the location of the Kingdom of God. An angel said to Mary before the birth of Jesus: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:31ff). Of like import is the one quoted so often from Isaiah: "Unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders.....Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." (Isa. 9:6,7). Isaiah locates the seat of government further: "The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3). And the same statement is made in Zechariah (2:12); "The Lord shall inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." God's kingdom is going to be on the earth with the glorified saints as co-rulers with Jesus. It shall cover the whole earth and shall last forever.

V. The Resurrection. The Bible teaches the literal resurrection of the dead. Paul says that if we do not believe the resurrection of the dead, then we do not believe in Christ's resurrection. "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead. But if

there be no resurrection of the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." (I Cor. 15:12-15). When Jesus was confronted by the sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection he said: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken of God saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living." (Matt. 22:31,33). Belief in the resurrection goes along with the idea that man is mortal by nature and does not have that so-called "spark of immortality" in him. Jesus spoke of death as a sleep. The only way in which death and sleep are alike is in the fact that in either state man is unconscious. Jesus spoke of the resurrection of Lazarus as waking him out of sleep. If man were already immortal, the resurrection does not seem sensible. If one has gone to heaven, or hell, why have a resurrection?

VI. The Promises to Abraham. The Gospel teaching in as small number of verses as can be found tells of the promises that God made to Abraham. If one understands these verses, he is ready to become a Christian: "For as many of us as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Gal.3:27-29). If we

go back to Genesis 12 and 22, we find that God promised Abraham a seed in whom all the nations should be blessed. In Galatians (3:16) Paul says: "He spoke not of seeds as of many, but of one which is Christ." God Promised Abraham the possession of the Land of Palestine, though Acts 7:5 says: "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." Abraham did not yet receive his inheritance and so there must be a future date when he will receive it from God. According to statements in the letter to the Hebrews, the promises made to Abraham are the surest thing in the world: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them the end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have for an anchor to the soul both sure and stedfast" (Heb. 6:13-19). God promised Abraham would be a blessing to the world. So we have the promised land, which is the earth; the promised seed, which is Christ; and the promised blessing, which is life eternal in the Kingdom of God.

VII. Baptism We obtain the promises to Abraham by baptism into the name of his seed which is Christ. Baptism saves us. Peter says, speaking of baptism: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (I Pet.3:21). Baptism saves us because it is an act of obedience and consecration.

Baptism is a threefold enactment of Christian teaching: (1) it commemorates Christ's death, burial and resurrection; (2) it sets us on the path of our Christian walk; and (3) it points forward to the resurrection day when Christ shall return.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom.6:3-5). We can immediately see from this that sprinkling a few drops of water on a person, or pouring some water on him would not be a burial. Only immersion in water fits the figure.

Baptism also requires knowledge and so infant baptism is not valid. Jesus said to his apostles after his resurrection: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16). We hear, believe, repent of our sins

and are baptized. That is the proper order.

When we come out of the waters of baptism, we rise to walk a new life. From that time on, if we sin, we have an intercessor in the person of Christ. He is the go-between between us and God. Those who say that a Christian is often no better than any other person do not appreciate this difference. The Christian has somebody to plead his pardon with God, the non-Christian does not.

VIII. Communion. The communion, like baptism, is a re-enactment of Christian teaching. In the bread and wine we keep in memory Christ's death, burial and resurrection, or in other words his sacrifice for us; it is for our daily Christian walk; and it points forward to the establishment of his kingdom. Two passages of Scripture give us these facts. The Apostle Paul said: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he break it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." (I Cor. 11:23-26). When Jesus set up the communion he said: "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it

new with you in my father's kingdom." (Matt.26:29). We keep in memory past events at the present time to keep us in the way of Christ until he returns.

Although Jesus was not talking about the communion in his statements that are recorded in John 6, there are some things in that teaching that apply to it. Jesus said: "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:53,54).

IX. The Consecrated Life. All the items of belief we have discussed are as nothing unless we lead a consecrated Christian life. So voluminous is the literature on this particular phase of Christian teaching, that all that we might say about it seems trite. Only one side of it is neglected and that is that the foregoing doctrines are the basis upon which faith hope and love are built. Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" is an example of this principle. Each item of command has a hope with it. We are not told merely to be "poor in spirit", but because there is a promise attached to it. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3).

The consecrated life is best expressed by Jesus' statement recorded in the book of Matthew: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt.6:33). The work that we do to earn

a living, the routine things of life, and many of its pleasures are all right in themselves, but if we put them before our religious life, then they are wrong. We should devote our time and our money to the Lord's work, and then whatever is left we devote to ourselves. Most nominal Christians are the reverse: they give the Lord the small change that they have left at the end of the month.

X. The Regathering and Restoration of Israel. This tenet of belief has been left till the last for two reasons: first, it is not considered an essential doctrine. One could achieve salvation without believing it. But secondly, it is so important in the understanding of the Bible that it well deserves this position of emphasis.

Two of the key passages of Christian teaching which we quoted previously (Luke 1:31ff) and (Isa. 9:6,7) speak of Jesus as sitting upon the Throne of David and ruling over the house of Jacob forever. Jesus is going to be king of the Kingdom of God which is the nation of Israel restored and cleansed. What of the apostles? Jesus told Peter: "In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. 19:28). In the visions of John in Revelation, the foundations of the New Jerusalem are the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the corner stone. We are also part of that ruling class if we belong to Christ's real church.

But to the Gentile, one of the most important points of the status of Israel is as a sign of the truth of God's Word, and of the approach of Christ's second coming. Over 3000 years ago Moses, in the latter part of the Book of Deuteronomy, set the pattern for a large part of the rest of the Bible on this subject. He told of how the Jews would be scattered into all parts of the world because of their disobedience to God's commands. He predicted that they would be an "astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." (Deut.28:37). "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone." (Deut.28:64). Moses spoke in great detail of the terrible persecutions that would come upon them, prophecies that have been carried out for centuries, and had one of their latest chapters in the Russian trials in the Balkan countries. Zionism was one of the worst crimes that could be committed. But Moses did not stop with the scattering of the Children of Israel. He spoke of the fact that they would some day be regathered to their land and live there in peace and prosperity. The other prophets took up the same theme in so many places we cannot begin to cover the subject. Isaiah 11:10 speaks of the events of that day: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to

recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush,... And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Ezekiel tells the story of the valley of dry bones, and then says: "Then he said unto me, Son of man these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts; Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves." (Ezek.37:11-13). Isaiah said that before the coming of Christ that the Jews "shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolation of many generations." (61:4). Jeremiah said that God will "set mine eyes upon them (the Jews) for good, and I will bring them again to this land, and I will build them and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up". (Jer.24:6). "Behold I will gather them out of all countries, wither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath: and I will bring them again into this place, and I cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:...And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good: but I will put my fear in

their hearts, and they shall not depart from me...and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." (Jer.32:36-44). One more passage from the Old testament will suffice to show God's plan with Israel: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them saith the Lord thy God." (Amos 9:14,15).

Jesus is coming back some day to establish his eternal kingdom here in the earth. If we are obedient to him in baptism and in the way of our lives according to his instructions, we shall be joint rulers with him in that kingdom. Do you not want to join him now in his great work?! Hearing his word, believing in him and his word, repenting from the evil of our former lives, and obedience to him in baptism are the steps by which you may become a member of the body of Christ. A consecrated life then will lead us to God's eternal kingdom.