Fulfilled Prophecies

Did Jesus Promise To Restore The Kingdom To National Israel?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the passages that causes confusion for Christians leaving Dispensational Futurism is Acts 1:6-7. The disciples asked Jesus whether He was restoring the kingdom to Israel at that time, and Jesus didn't answer with a simple yes or no.

† Futurists often interpret His response as evidence that the restoration of national Israel was postponed until a future earthly kingdom. But is that what Jesus actually taught?

† The answer becomes clear when we examine what Jesus had already taught about the kingdom, what the prophets promised, what the apostles preached after Pentecost, and what happened during the first century.
† Jesus wasn't postponing the kingdom for thousands of years. He was correcting the disciples' understanding of how God's kingdom would be established and directing their attention to the mission they were about to receive.
† The kingdom wasn't going to be restored through political independence, military power, or a rebuilt national government. It was being established through Jesus Christ, the promised Son of David, and the fulfillment of God's covenant promises (Luke 1:32-33; John 18:36; Acts 2:29-36).
† The disciples were asking about Israel's restoration, but Jesus was preparing them to proclaim the kingdom to Israel and the nations (Isaiah 49:6; Acts 1:8).

The Disciples Asked About The Restoration Of Israel

Acts 1:6-7
So, when they had come together, they began asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" But He said to them, "It is not for you to know periods of time or appointed times which the Father has set by His own authority;
† Notice that Jesus didn't promise a future political restoration of national Israel. He simply told the disciples that the times and periods were under the Father's authority (Matthew 24:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2).
† Their question reflected the expectation that Israel's kingdom would be restored, but it didn't establish what that restoration would look like. Jesus had already explained that His kingdom wasn't established through the political systems of this world (John 18:36).
† Jesus didn't say the kingdom would be postponed for thousands of years. That conclusion must be imported into the passage because nothing in His answer identifies a future

earthly millennium (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36).
† The disciples still needed to understand how the promises to Israel were being fulfilled through Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the gathering of God's people (Luke 24:44-49; Ephesians 2:11-22).
† The immediate context provides the explanation. Instead of describing a future national government, Jesus directed them to the coming Holy Spirit and their mission of witnessing to the nations (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 2:1-4).

Jesus Redirected Their Attention To The Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8
but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth.
† Jesus answered their concern about Israel by explaining what would happen next. They would receive the Holy Spirit and become His witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem and extending throughout the nations (Luke 24:47-49).
† This wasn't a political program for restoring Israel's national independence. It was the fulfillment of God's promise that salvation would extend beyond Israel to the nations (Isaiah 49:6; Luke 2:30-32).
† Jerusalem was the starting point because the gospel was proclaimed to Israel first, but the kingdom wasn't restricted to Israel's national boundaries (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:13-19).
† The disciples would witness the gathering of Jews and Gentiles into one people under Christ, fulfilling the promise that Abraham's blessing would reach all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8, 28-29).
† Jesus wasn't telling them to wait for a future Jewish political kingdom. He was preparing them to participate in the establishment and proclamation of His kingdom during their own generation (Matthew 24:14; Colossians 1:23).

Jesus Had Already Announced That The Kingdom Was Near

Mark 1:14-15
Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the gospel."
† Jesus began His public ministry by announcing that the appointed time had arrived and God's kingdom was near. He didn't announce that the kingdom would be postponed for another two thousand years (Daniel 2:44; Galatians 4:4).
† The kingdom was connected directly to His arrival and ministry. His miracles, authority, and victory over evil demonstrated that God's reign was already breaking into Israel's history (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20).
† The kingdom was near because the promised King had arrived. The final removal of the Old Covenant order would complete the first-century transition into the established New Covenant kingdom (Hebrews 8:13; 12:26-28).
† Dispensational Futurism separates the kingdom from Christ's first-century ministry, but Jesus connected the kingdom directly to His presence and the fulfillment of the appointed time (Matthew 4:17; Luke 17:20-21).

Jesus Explained That His Kingdom Wasn't Political

John 18:36
Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."
† Jesus didn't deny that He was a King. He explained that His kingdom didn't originate from the political authority and military power of this world (John 18:37; Luke 17:20-21).
† If His kingdom depended upon national independence, His followers would have fought to establish it. Instead, His kingdom

was established through His death, resurrection, exaltation, and the proclamation of the gospel (Philippians 2:8-11; Colossians 1:13-14).
† The kingdom wasn't a failed political opportunity that needed to be postponed. It was God's promised reign through the Messiah, whose authority extended over heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22).
† This is why interpreting Israel's restoration as a future political government misses the nature of the kingdom Jesus Himself described (Romans 14:17; Hebrews 12:28).

Jesus Promised The Kingdom Within That Generation

Luke 21:31-32
So you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.
† Jesus connected the fulfillment of His prophetic warnings with the generation listening to Him. He didn't identify a generation thousands of years in the future (Matthew 23:36; 24:34).
† The surrounding passage identifies Jerusalem's coming destruction as the fulfillment of what had been written, placing these events within Israel's first-century judgment (Luke 21:20-24).
† The kingdom was already present in Christ's ministry, but the removal of the Old Covenant system would publicly demonstrate the passing of the former covenant order (Hebrews 8:13; 12:26-28).
† Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 didn't create Christ's authority. It marked the decisive historical judgment upon the covenant system that had rejected Him (Matthew 21:42-43; 23:37-38).
† Jesus gave His disciples a generational time frame, not an indefinite postponement (Matthew 16:27-28; 24:34).

Peter Declared That Jesus Was Already On David's Throne

Acts 2:29-36
"Brothers, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. So because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. It is this Jesus whom God raised up, a fact to which we are all witnesses. Therefore, since He has been exalted at the right hand of God, and has received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-this Jesus whom you crucified."
† Peter explained the fulfillment of God's promise to David by connecting the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus with His promised royal authority (Psalm 132:11; Luke 1:32-33).
† Peter didn't announce that Jesus had failed to establish the kingdom or that David's throne would remain vacant for thousands of years. He proclaimed that Jesus had been exalted to God's right hand (Psalm 110:1; Ephesians 1:20-22).
† The promised Son of David was already reigning. His throne wasn't dependent upon a future political government in Jerusalem (Hebrews 1:3, 8; 10:12-13).
† The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was evidence of Christ's exaltation, connecting the promise of the kingdom with what the disciples experienced at Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32; John 7:39).
† Peter's explanation answers the question raised earlier. Israel's promised King had been enthroned through His resurrection and ascension, not through the restoration of a national monarchy (Romans 1:3-4; Philippians 2:9-11).

The Apostles Preached The Restoration Of All Things

Acts 3:19-21
Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouths of His holy prophets from ancient times.
† Peter connected the restoration of all things with what God had promised through the prophets. The passage must be understood within the prophetic promises concerning Christ and His covenant work (Luke 24:44; Acts 3:24-26).
† The restoration wasn't merely about rebuilding Israel's political government. It concerned the fulfillment of God's redemptive promises, including forgiveness, covenant renewal, and the blessing promised through Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:14).
† Peter was addressing the very generation that had rejected and crucified Jesus, calling them to repentance while the covenant transition was underway (Acts 2:36-40; Hebrews 8:13).
† The restoration of all things didn't require the restoration of animal sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, or the Old Covenant temple. Those institutions had reached their fulfillment in Christ (Hebrews 7:11-12; 9:11-12).
† The promise of restoration must be interpreted through Christ's completed work rather than through an expectation that the former covenant system would return (2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 10:1-14).

The Kingdom Was Already Being Received

Colossians 1:12-14
giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

† Paul didn't describe the kingdom as something believers would enter only after a future earthly millennium began. He said they had already been transferred into the kingdom of God's Son (Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20).
† This happened during the first century, while the apostles were still preaching the gospel and the Old Covenant system was approaching its end (Hebrews 8:13; 10:37).
† If the kingdom had been postponed, Paul couldn't have described believers as already belonging to it (1 Thessalonians 2:12; Revelation 1:6).
† Christ's kingdom was a present spiritual reality, and the approaching judgment upon Jerusalem would complete the removal of the former covenant order (Hebrews 12:26-28; Matthew 21:43).
† The kingdom wasn't waiting for the establishment of another earthly Jewish government. Its citizens were already being gathered through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29; Philippians 3:20).

The Promise To Israel Was Fulfilled Through Christ

Galatians 3:16, 28-29
Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.
† Paul identified Christ as the promised descendant of Abraham and explained that everyone belonging to Christ shares in Abraham's inheritance (Romans 4:13-16; Ephesians 3:6).
† God's promises weren't abandoned, and Israel wasn't simply replaced by an unrelated people. The promises reached their intended fulfillment through Israel's Messiah (Romans 15:8-12; 2 Corinthians 1:20).
† Believing Jews and Gentiles became one people in Christ,

sharing the same inheritance rather than belonging to separate covenant kingdoms (Ephesians 2:14-19; 3:6).
† The restoration of Israel wasn't the recreation of the Old Covenant nation. It was the fulfillment of God's covenant purpose through Christ and the gathering of His people (Romans 9:6-8; 11:5-7).
† The kingdom belongs to Christ and everyone united to Him by faith, not to a future national system based upon physical ancestry (John 1:12-13; Galatians 3:7-9).

The Kingdom Cannot Be Shaken

Hebrews 12:26-28
And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;
† The writer of Hebrews described believers as receiving an unshakable kingdom while the former covenant order was approaching its removal (Hebrews 8:13; 10:9).
† The shaking represented the removal of what belonged to the temporary covenant system so that what was permanent in Christ would remain (Haggai 2:6-9; Hebrews 9:8-10).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 demonstrated that the former system had reached its end. Christ's kingdom remained because it wasn't dependent upon that earthly sanctuary (John 4:21-24; Hebrews 9:11).
† The kingdom Jesus established wasn't temporary, postponed, or awaiting a replacement. It was the everlasting kingdom promised through the prophets (Daniel 7:13-14; Luke 1:33).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, writing in The Jewish War, Books 5-7,

described the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the collapse of the Jewish national and religious center in AD 70. These events provide historical confirmation of the judgment Jesus predicted upon Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).
† Tacitus, in Histories 5.10-13, described the conflict surrounding Jerusalem and the Roman campaign against the city. His account provides additional historical context for the first-century destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20).
† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History 3.5-7, connected Jerusalem's destruction with the suffering of the Jewish nation and recorded the tradition that Christians had departed from Jerusalem before its fall (Matthew 24:15-16; Luke 21:20-22).
† These historical accounts don't establish doctrine by themselves. Scripture establishes the meaning of the events, while the historical writers help confirm that Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed within the generation Jesus addressed (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).

How It Applies To Us Today
† We don't need to wait for Jesus to become King. He already reigns at the Father's right hand, possessing all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22).
† We don't need a rebuilt temple, renewed animal sacrifices, or a restored Levitical priesthood. Jesus fulfilled what those institutions represented and established the better covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 9:11-12; 10:12-18).
† We don't need to divide God's people into separate Jewish and Gentile kingdoms. Everyone who belongs to Christ shares in the same inheritance and has access to the Father through the same Spirit (Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 2:18-22).
† We don't need to look for the kingdom through political events in modern Israel. Jesus taught that His kingdom wasn't established through the political power of this world (John 18:36; Romans 14:17).
† We have already come to Mount Zion, the heavenly

Jerusalem, and the assembly of those who belong to God (Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:26).
† Our responsibility isn't to wait for an unfinished prophetic program. It's to live faithfully under Christ's present reign, proclaim the gospel, love one another, and serve God with gratitude (Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 12:28).
† The question in Acts 1 wasn't whether Jesus would someday become King. The apostles soon proclaimed that He had already been exalted as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:33-36).
† The restoration promised to Israel was fulfilled through Israel's Messiah, and everyone who belongs to Him now shares in the blessings of His everlasting kingdom (Romans 15:8-12; Galatians 3:29).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Why didn't Jesus simply answer yes or no when the disciples asked about restoring the kingdom to Israel?
A: Jesus redirected their attention from the timing of Israel's restoration to the coming Holy Spirit and their mission as witnesses. His answer didn't promise a future political kingdom, and His earlier teaching had already established the spiritual nature of His reign (Acts 1:6-8; John 18:36).

Q: Doesn't Acts 1:7 prove that the restoration would happen sometime in the future?
A: It establishes that the Father controlled the times and periods, but it doesn't identify a restoration thousands of years later. The following verse directs the disciples toward the first-century proclamation of the gospel (Acts 1:7-8; Luke 24:47-49).

Q: Were the disciples wrong to expect the restoration of Israel?
A: They weren't wrong to expect God's promises to Israel to be fulfilled. The misunderstanding concerned the nature and manner of that fulfillment. Jesus was establishing His kingdom through His resurrection, exaltation, and the work of the Holy Spirit rather than through a national political government (Luke

1:32-33; Acts 2:29-36).

Q: Did Jesus postpone the kingdom because Israel rejected Him?
A: No. Jesus announced that the kingdom was near, and Paul later declared that believers had already been transferred into Christ's kingdom. Scripture doesn't teach that the kingdom was postponed because Israel rejected its Messiah (Mark 1:14-15; Colossians 1:13-14).

Q: What about the promise that Jesus would sit on David's throne?
A: Peter connected God's promise to David with Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. Christ was already reigning at God's right hand when Peter preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:29-36; Psalm 110:1).

Q: Doesn't Israel still need to become a powerful nation to fulfill God's promises?
A: God's promises find their fulfillment in Christ. The New Covenant inheritance isn't based upon national power or physical ancestry, but upon belonging to Abraham's promised descendant, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16, 28-29; Romans 4:13-16).

Q: Did the church replace Israel?
A: No. Israel's covenant promises reached their intended fulfillment in Jesus, Israel's Messiah. Believing Jews and Gentiles were brought together into one body through Him. The church didn't replace Israel, God's promises reached their fulfillment in Christ (Romans 15:8-12; Ephesians 2:14-19).

Q: What does the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 have to do with the kingdom?
A: It marked the historical removal of the Old Covenant temple system and fulfilled Jesus' warnings about Jerusalem's coming judgment. Christ's kingdom continued because it wasn't

dependent upon the earthly temple (Luke 21:20-24, 31-32; Hebrews 8:13; 12:26-28).

Q: If the kingdom has already been established, what are Christians waiting for today?
A: We're not waiting for Jesus to receive His kingdom or for Old Covenant prophecy to be fulfilled. We live under His present reign, enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant, and continue proclaiming His salvation to the world (Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 22:17).

Q: What is the clearest answer to someone using Acts 1:6-7 to defend Dispensational Futurism?
A: Read verse 8, then read Peter's sermon in Acts 2. Jesus directed the disciples toward the Holy Spirit and their mission, and Peter proclaimed that the promised Son of David had already been raised and exalted. The passage doesn't teach a postponed kingdom. It points toward the fulfillment of God's promises through the reigning Christ (Acts 1:6-8; 2:29-36).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Acts 1:6-7; Acts 1:8; Mark 1:14-15; John 18:36; Luke 21:31-32; Acts 2:29-36; Acts 3:19-21; Colossians 1:12-14; Galatians 3:16, 28-29; Hebrews 12:26-28
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories 5.10-13; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5-7

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