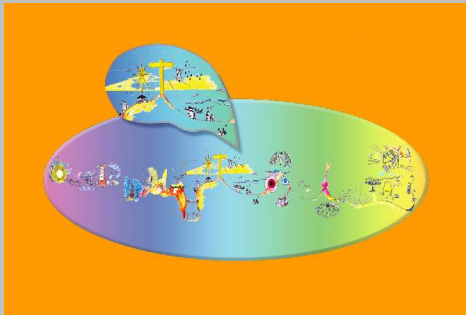


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Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【OLD TESTAMENT RESTORATION SCRIPTURES】

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD. ISAIAH2:2-5.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate...I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth ...The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, Your Saviour comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'" They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.

ISAIAH 62.

"You looked, O king and there before you stood a large statue –an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance... While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing-floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

DANIEL 2:31-35.

In the last letter, I explored the post-millennium or a-millennium interpretation of the triumphant church. In a book I have read, the author claims that, through his spiritual journey he has newly been awakened to understand the purpose of the church as a triumphant glorious end-time church (the so-called dominion theology). He claims that the purpose of the church lies in the context of witness, mission and bringing in the kingdom of God with its biblical emphasis on social justice and the relief of poverty. He believes that there will be a glorious end-time church that demonstrates the kingdom or rule of God as a 'city set on a hill' in every nation, city and village. He believes this vision of 'restoration of the church' to be God's plan and to be founded in the Bible.

Having started looking at the prophetic scriptures, what he has found out was the fact that there were so many exciting Old Testament restoration prophecies of a glorious Zion, which illustrate a wonderful day to come when Jerusalem would again be the praise of the whole earth, and he rightly concluded that the full extent of these prophecies has not yet been fulfilled in human history. Then he was caught by the fact that the New Testament authors applied these restoration scriptures to what God was going to do through His church in blessing many nations. Encouraged by the way of interpretation adopted by some New Testament apostles being found in two or three examples, he realised the importance of us interpreting the Hebrew Bible as the New Testament does, that is, he came to the conclusion that we should apply these Old Testament scriptures to the church in the same way.

While it is right for him to have pointed out several important issues that the present church has greatly missed out concerning mission and social work, and also the necessity of living out the gospel in the world, rather than withdrawing from the world into a comfortable Christian ghetto, he fails to recognise the tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the kingdom in the New Testament. Indeed, Christ has brought the kingdom to earth by His First Coming and yet, it has not completely come in its fullness, or in other words, it has been inaugurated but not consummated. While half of Jesus' parables about the kingdom envisage its coming as a gradual process, the other half depict it as a sudden crisis of divine intervention and therefore, it would be concluded that unless the king himself returns the ideal and final kingdom will not universally be established no matter how zealous and enthusiastic missionaries are sent to the whole world by man's effort.

The other short-coming of the 'Post-Millennium' view lies in the confusion between 'church' and 'kingdom', which are distinct from one another in the New Testament. The church is not the kingdom itself. Therefore, we must not be disillusioned to believe that the world can be Christianised without everyone in it becoming a Christian but only by the proportion of Christians in the population increasing to a certain degree, or by Christians successfully gaining power and authority. It must be an ambitious goal for Christendom, though. Although some Christian leaders' zeal is understandable in having such a high view of the role of the church, there seems a need to examine the Scripture itself as the decisive authority on the matter.

According to the author, Isaiah 2:2, 49:6, 54:1, and Amos 9:11-12 are good examples for application to the church mission. Isaiah's prophecy: "***It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.***"(Is.49:6) is part of the so-called servant songs referring to the messianic servant who will

succeed where Israel as a nation had failed. Paul indeed applied this scripture to announce that the mission of the servant of the Lord, inaugurated by Jesus Christ, is continued by His followers such as God-fearing Gentiles who confessed Christ.

In the context of Acts 13:42-52, many God-fearing Gentiles who attended the Jewish place of worship showed an interest in Paul's proclamation of forgiveness of sins through Christ and they begged Paul to come to address them with God's Word again. These Gentiles were those who had been attracted by the pure worship of Judaism and they may well have been keeping the Jewish law to some extent. Through Paul's teaching, such Gentiles were offered equal rights before God with Jewish believers through Christ without the necessity of observing the Jewish ceremonial law and becoming proselytes. This news spread throughout the city and ***'on the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.'*** This influx caused by Christ's Apostle Paul naturally filled the conservative Jews with ***'jealousy'*** and they simply could not accept that the Gentiles should be made equal with their privileged position as God's chosen. It was under such a situation that Paul quoted the scriptures from Isaiah 49:6 and announced that he would henceforth concentrate on the Gentiles because the Jews rejected the Word of God and consequently they did not consider themselves worthy of eternal life (the life of the age to come, i.e., the messianic age) by manifesting their annoyance. This turned out to be a decisive step for Paul to launch out on making God known to the Gentiles according to his initial calling from the Lord as an apostle to the Gentiles. However, his commission had also been to reach out to his own people Israel and his heart's desire for her salvation never left him. Therefore, this passage in Acts 13 tells us that God's salvation work is neither limited to the few, nor is it exclusive to the Jews, but simply extends to many, even the Gentiles, if each of them confesses personal faith in Christ. The role of the servant of the Lord as a ***'light for the Gentiles'*** will be succeeded from Christ to His faithful followers. ***'When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.'*** In other words, responding to the Spirit's prompting, all those who had set themselves for eternal life became believers in Christ. Apparently, Paul's intention for quoting from the Hebrew Scripture here is not to endorse church mission but simply to show his henceforth direction for the outreach according to God's will of bringing out His salvation to everybody on earth.

At the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, when the leaders of the church expected James, the head of the church in Jerusalem to show the scriptures to furnish a defence against the Gentiles' inclusion in the people of God, what he quoted as the words of prophets was Amos 9:11-12: ***"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, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name."*** The passage speaks of the 'restoration of the nation' as the united nation of Israel under a king ***'as it used to be,'*** as well as the 'restoration of the kingdom,' incorporating the neighbouring countries. James adopted the Greek version and there is said to be some difference between the Greek version LXX and the Hebrew. First, the Hebrew text says that the house of David is to possess what is left of the land of Edom and also all the nations that were once God's, or in other words, all the countries that once made up David's kingdom. But the LXX says that the rest of mankind, i.e., the Gentiles are to seek the Lord who calls them his own. Second, while the Hebrew text reads the non-vocalised Hebrew word as ***'Edom'*** and made it object of the sentence, the LXX text reads the same word as 'men' and made it the subject. Accordingly, in the LXX, Israel will not possess the lands, instead, the nations will be converted to seek the Lord. Although there is a difference between the two texts, when it comes to the Gentiles' inclusion to salvation the result is the same. Both address the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom of Israel to come. Therefore, it should be noticed that quoting the Hebrew Scripture seen in this example is one of those that the prophecy was used in a sense very different from the original intention. Thus, interpreting both the house of David as his church, and the gathering of the remnant to David's tent as the gathering of the nations to the church in this passage should be

concluded to be not the original address.

Isaiah 54:1, ***“Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labour; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,”*** illustrates the future glory of Zion, and Paul applied this prophecy originally addressed to the exiled and thus, barren Jerusalem, to the future ingathering of believers, in his Epistle to the Galatians. He adopted this quotation to reinforce his point that the progeny of the new Jerusalem will be produced not by natural generation of Israel but by supernatural, spiritual Israel, i.e., heirs through the promise of grace. The term ***‘the Jerusalem that is above’*** in the preceding verse to Galatians 4:27 where Paul quoted this Isaiah’s verse, means the heavenly archetype that would be let down to earth in the messianic period according to Rabbinical teaching. Accordingly, Paul here refers to the heavenly city of God, of which Christ’s followers are citizens. Therefore, the passage has nothing to do with the church’s mission on earth in the New Testament era.

In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul primarily challenged the Judaisers (Jewish Christians) who claimed the necessity of abiding in the Old Testament rites and of remaining under the law. In verses 22-23, Paul’s argument starts with the historical situation of Abraham’s two sons, Ishmael from Hagar, the slave woman, and Isaac from Sarah, the free woman. Though it was Sarah herself that gave her servant-woman Hagar to Abraham to achieve God’s promise by human effort and wit, after Hagar started despising and mocking Sarah and then, the promised son Isaac was born to her, the tension between the two women and two sons increased. Sarah said to Abraham ***“Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac”*** (Ge.20:10). What she demanded was in accordance with the legal code of the times when having more than two wives was common practice. Paul, with anticipation, concludes that Ishmael was a natural descendant and the son of bondage, but Isaac was born of grace and free-born of promise.

In the following verses 24-27, Paul interprets that the two women represent two covenants, of law and of grace. ***‘Mt. Sinai in Africa,’*** corresponding to ***‘the present city of Jerusalem,’*** i.e., the Jerusalem under Judaism is represented by Hagar, whose descendants are in bondage. Mt Sinai and Hagar are both of Arabia and it means that both are outside the land of promise. On the other hand, ***‘the Jerusalem that is above’*** represented by Sarah is the spiritual Jerusalem and of God’s heavenly kingdom, whose descendants are the heirs of promise.

Then, in verses 28-31, Paul applies the contrast between the bondwoman and the freewoman, and between law and grace (promise) to Christians. Like Isaac, Christians are also children of promise, but not of law and they totally depend on the covenant of grace, but never on natural descent. Accordingly, as Sarah rightfully did, we Christians should get rid of any tendency to legalism. Jews who remain in taking pride in their natural descent from Abraham correspond to no other than Ishmael while the sons of grace are the true heirs of Abraham and they correspond to those Christians who know the true freedom in Christ. As examined above, in this passage of Galatians, it is apparent that Paul never intended to encourage Christians to go out to mission by quoting the Hebrew Scripture.

There are indeed many restoration prophecies of a glorious Zion in the Hebrew Bible, some of which I have quoted at the beginning. They anticipate the mountain of the Lord to be raised higher than the other surrounding mountains, both topographically and spiritually. They draw a kingdom with small beginnings to become a huge mountain that fills the whole earth. Those who advocate Dominion theology believe that what is written there will be achieved through the church. However, the majority of them plainly illustrate the eternal kingdom of God that is to be built on the ruins of the sinful kingdoms of man’s hands. Only after man’s vain attempts have been finished by God’s intervention, His authority will extend over the whole earth and ultimately turn to a new heaven and a new earth, i.e., the Father’s eternal kingdom.