

Were the Disciples Stupid or Will Jesus Restore Israel?

Replacement Theologian, Dr. Gary Burge, addressed Acts 1:6, which reads: "Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' "

Burge said: "[The Disciples] have it exactly wrong. Or as Calvin said, 'This question has as many problems as it has words.' "

Burge says that the disciples had it wrong, but that is not what Yeshua says. Yeshua was never afraid to rebuke his disciples when they "had it wrong." Who can forget, "Get behind me Satan"? Or when he came down from the mountain and his disciples were struggling to cast out a demon, He cried out, "You unbelieving and perverse generation ... how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (Matt. 17:17)

Now that is a rebuke!

So if indeed as Dr. Burge claims "they had it exactly wrong," surely the no-nonsense Messiah would have rebuked them.

Burge gives his interpretation without even reading the next verse! *But we will.*

"He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority' " (Acts 1:7).

He doesn't rebuke them for still not getting it. He doesn't say, "How long must I put up with you boneheads?" He merely says, "Not yet." He obviously says it will happen *when the time comes*. He states indirectly, but clearly, that the Father has set the time and date. That is far cry from saying, "It's

over boys. The church is the new Israel." (Of course, they would have asked, "Eh... What's the church?"

Dr. Michael Brown makes a great analogy:

"For example, if the disciples had said to Jesus, 'Lord, is this the time for us to take up swords and behead our enemies?' He would not have replied, 'It's not for you to know the time for beheading that the Father has determined. You just concentrate on preaching the gospel.'"

Hardly! Instead, He would have rebuked them in no uncertain terms.

But that's not what He did here, despite the fact that His words are constantly interpreted as if He had said, "You idiots! Don't you know that I'm through with Israel? Don't you know that the church has replaced Israel? Have I been with you so long and you still don't get it?"

Instead, He simply told them it was not for them to know exactly when the Father would restore the kingdom to Israel (something that Jesus and Peter and Paul affirmed; see Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 11:28-29; 15:8); their mission was to be His witnesses.

Yes, Yeshua implores them to focus on the task of taking the gospel to the nations (Acts 1:8), but in it there is no hint that God's promises to natural Israel are mysteriously transformed into promises to the church, *instead* of Israel. But Burge erroneously concludes emphatically that Yeshua will not rebuild Israel. (Of course, the fact that Israel was rebuilt and miraculously survived an attack that was meant to ethnically cleanse the Middle East of every Jew, from five Arab nations, presents a *very real* problem to his theory.)

Indeed if this mysterious transfer from Israel to the church had already taken place at the cross, why then did they go to Jerusalem for Shavuot? Why did God choose a Jewish feast day,

in the Jewish capital, to pour out His Spirit?

Moreover, after Shavuot (Pentecost), after the Jewish Revival had already begun, after Yeshua's *supposed rebuke* to the disciples regarding Israel in Acts 1:6, Peter declares in Acts 3:17-21:

"Now, fellow Israelites (*he is speaking to Jews!*), I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

I don't know if v. 21 could be clearer. And it lines up perfectly with Acts 1:7. There, Yeshua said that the Father has set the time for Israel's restoration and here Peter says that the time will come for God to restore everything. Speaking to a Jewish crowd in Jerusalem about *Tikkun HaOlam* (World Restoration, a phrase that comes directly from the prophets), leads us to conclude that he was reaffirming God's promises of Israel's restoration from the prophets.

Of course the mystery that is revealed in the New Covenant is that anyone, from any nation, regardless of race, gender or status, can come to the Messiah and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

In the Kingdom there is no second class, but that doesn't negate the fact that God will keep His promises to the people who brought His Messiah to the nations—Israel.

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