The Church inherits God's Old Testament promises

© Evert van Voorthuizen, September 2026.
Email: preteristadvocate@gmail.com.

Bible Versions
Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®).
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license.
The ESV may not be translated into any other language.

(Note: All underlining of Scripture quotations for emphasis has been added by the author.)

Introduction

The Christian Church, from its inception, viewed itself as the inheritor of God's promises given to Israel.
However, starting in the 1820s, an entirely new approach to Old Testament (OT) prophecy arose.
I refer, of course, to dispensationalism.
In the dispensationalist scheme OT promises and prophecies must be interpreted according to their own context, and, crucially, the New Testament (NT) cannot reinterpret or change their meaning.[1]
Therefore, OT promises given to Israel were intended for Israel only, and because those promises haven't been fulfilled in the literal way that dispensationalists demand, the majority of such promises remain to be fulfilled in the Millennium.

The present writer regards such a view as rank heresy.
First, the whole notion of a Millennium is based on a few obscure verses from Revelation chapter 20.
To cram so much OT prophecy into one mention of a Millennium is exegetically irresponsible, to put it mildly.
But worse, dispensationalism contradicts the way the apostles themselves interpret OT prophecies.
They all viewed such prophecies as being (or having been) fulfilled in their day (e.g., Ac 3:24).
Dispensationalism denies the following:

- that God's kingdom has been properly inaugurated, and that Davidic kingship has been restored.
- Paul's teaching that believers are the true children of Abraham who inherit God's promises.
- that the blessings promised to Abraham come to the nations through the gospel.
- that Israel and the Promised Land were mere "types" that have now been fulfilled in their antitypes.

Moreover, the OT saints themselves looked beyond the earthly promises to their lasting heavenly inheritance.

We shall examine the fulfillment of OT prophecy as follows:

1. A brief overview.
2. How OT restoration promises are fulfilled in the Church; how "Jerusalem" has been transformed.
3. How Davidic kingship is restored in Christ; how God's kingdom has come.
4. The New Covenant promises of Jeremiah 31.
5. The promises of God's Spirit in Joel and Ezekiel.
6. How the temple has been superseded through Jesus and his people.

[1] See the summary of dispensational belief provided by Peter Goeman: https://petergoeman.com/what-is-dispensationalism-a-concise-explanation/.

Dispensationalism's focus on the "type" or "shadow" — that is, on Israel after the flesh — rather than on the realities that have come in Christ really constitutes a modern form of the Judaizing error.[2]
Some dispensationalists even claim that premillennialism was the original view from the time of the apostles. Yes, belief in the Millennium was common, but was by no means universal in the early Church.
Moreover, the historic premillennialism of the early centuries viewed the Christian Church as the fulfillment of God's purposes. It correctly understood that all the promises made to Israel now belong to the Church.

An Overview

1. The apostles and NT writers viewed OT prophecy as anticipating the NT era.
   Peter explicitly affirms this in Acts 3:24 and 2 Peter 1:10-12.
   The numerous citations of OT prophecy (or promises) in the Gospels, Acts, Romans, Hebrews, and 1 Peter also imply their first-century fulfillment.[3]
2. God's kingdom has clearly come:
   It was imminent with John and Jesus (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28).
   It would come "with power" in that generation (Mk 9:1; cf. Mt 16:27-28; Lk 21:31).
   With the Jewish rejection of Jesus the kingdom was NOT postponed, so that God moved to Plan B.[4]
3. Davidic kingship was restored when Jesus rose again and ascended to the Father's right hand.
   See Acts 2:30-36; 15:15-18 (cf. Psalms 2 and 110; Daniel 7:13-14; Am 9:11-12).
4. Christ is the unique Seed of Abraham to whom all the promises belong (Gal 3:16).
   He was true Israelite who perfectly obeyed God's law (Mt 2:15; 4:4-10).
   He is the Son and heir who inherits the whole world (Ps 2:7-9; Mt 28:18-20; Rom 4:13).
5. Christians, through union with Christ, are Abraham's children and heirs of God's promises.
   See Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 4:11-12, 16-17.
   The Church inherits all the promises given to Israel (e.g., 2Cor 6:16-18; 1Pet 2:9-10; Rev 1:6).
   Indeed, the Church, comprising believing Jews and Gentiles, constitutes the true "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16).
6. The Promised Land was a "type" and pointer to eternal, spiritual realities.
   Joshua and David failed to bring true rest for God's people, but Jesus has brought lasting salvation-rest.
   See Hebrews 4:1-11.
   Abraham and other OT saints looked beyond the promise of earthly real estate to a heavenly inheritance — one to be entered into through final resurrection (Heb 11:10, 16, 35).
7. The covenant sign of circumcision, from the beginning, pointed to the need for true, spiritual circumcision — that of the heart (Dt 10:16; Jer 4:4; cf. Lev 26:41).
   God promises this circumcision that he alone can impart (Dt 30:6; Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:39; Eze 36:26-27).
   Christians receive such circumcision when the Holy Spirit regenerates them (Col 2:11; Tit 3:5; Jn 3:3, 5).
   They are the true children of Abraham (Rom 2:28-29; Php 3:3; Gal 3:29).

In the following sections we will discuss in more detail how OT promises and prophecies — including those pertaining to Israel's restoration — are fulfilled in the Church.

---

[2] One can only but marvel, as Jesus did with Nicodemus, how prominent Christian leaders can fail to understand the message of the prophets. As the Lord himself said: "You are a teacher of Israel but don't understand these things?" (John 3:10, paraphrase.)
Like modern dispensationalists, first-century Jewish leaders interpreted OT prophecies far too literally. Their wooden, literalistic hermeneutic also prevented them from recognizing the second coming of Elijah (Mt 17:10-13; cf. Mal 4:5-6).
[3] From the book of Acts only, see 1:20; 2:16-36; 3:18-26; 4:25-28; 8:30-35; 13:32-41, 47; 15:15-18.
[4] Such a notion is really quite blasphemous, for God's purposes cannot be thwarted.

The Transformation of Israel

The point of this section to show how the promises pertaining to Israel's restoration involve that nation's transformation. And how the Christian Church constitutes Israel (or Jerusalem) restored and transformed.

In the OT prophets, Israel's salvation comes through judgment and transformation.
Israel will be judged, and ultimately so also will her enemies and oppressors.
Israel (or Jerusalem) will be purged of evildoers, and a godly remnant will survive or return to inhabit the land.

When the OT prophets foretell the people's deliverance — their return from exile and the nation's restoration — they usually look beyond their immediate historical context.
They anticipate the definitive return and restoration under the Messiah.

The last two chapters of the book of Revelation shows the New Jerusalem descending from heaven.
The New Jerusalem is Christ's bride (21:2, 9-10). It's the people of God, the Church (cf. Eph 5:25ff.).
The entire prophecy of Revelation is bookended with imminence statements (1:1, 3; 22: 6, 10).
There is good reason to believe that the fall of the harlot city of chapter 18 depicts the 70 AD judgment on Jerusalem. That city was judged for its long history of persecution (Rev 17:7; 18:20, 24; cf. Mt 23:34-37).
Accordingly, what Revelation depicts is the old Judean city destroyed and replaced by a new Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is transformed from a wicked city to a righteous city. Exactly as the prophets foretold!

All of this sounds a lot like replacement theology — the notion that the Church has replaced Israel as the people of God. But, drawing on Paul's olive tree metaphor in Romans 11, one should view the Christian Church as Israel transformed. The Church, comprising both believing Jews and Gentiles, inherits God's ancient promises made to Abraham and to Israel — promises of belonging to God, of a lasting inheritance, and of deliverance and salvation from enemies.
The aspect of Israel's transformation is perhaps best seen in the prophecies of Isaiah. Let's examine these!

Isaiah 1:1 – 2:4
Isaiah here indicts Jerusalem and calls her "Sodom" and a "harlot" (Isa 1:10, 21, ASV).
But God will purge her of evildoers; she will again be called "the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isa 1:26).
In the "latter days", restored Jerusalem will become a worship center for the nations (Isa 2:1-4).[5]

This pattern is replicated in the book of Revelation:
Jerusalem is called "Sodom" (11:8) and a "harlot" (17:1, 5, 15-16; 19:2, ASV).[6]
The city is judged (chap. 18).
The New Jerusalem that takes her place is a "holy city", a faithful bride (21:2, 9-10).
Evildoers are excluded (21:27; 22:15).
Only those washed clean through Christ are admitted (22:14).

[5] "Latter days" is a reference to messianic times (cf. Hos 3:5). The reign of God and/or his Messiah will be characterized by justice and by peaceful co-existence between former enemies (Isa 2:4; 9:7; 11:6-9; 19:23-25; 65:25; cf. Eph 2:14-15).
[6] In Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem ("where their Lord was crucified") is called "Sodom and Egypt" and "the great city". Later we see that the great city and Babylon are one and the same (Rev 18:10, 21). Then the Harlot herself is identified as Babylon and as the great city (Rev 17:5, 18). Therefore, Jerusalem = Sodom = Egypt = Babylon = the Harlot. The point being this: Jerusalem has become the sworn enemy of God's people — their chief persecutor (Rev 17:6; 18:20, 24; cf. Mt 23:34-37).

Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-16

The background to both prophecies are the devasting Assyrian invasions and conquest (733-722 BC).
Isaiah anticipates the time when God's people will dwell securely in the land under the Davidic king.
Similar prophecies are found in Jeremiah (23:5-6; 30:3, 8-9; 33:14-17) and Ezekiel (34:23-24; 37:15-28).

Isaiah 40 – 66

In this, Isaiah's final section, the prophetic focus shifts to the distant future — to Judah's eventual return from exile in Babylon. Isaiah here prophesies of events that would transpire 140+ years after his own death.[7]
Cyrus, whom Isaiah twice mentions by name, will be God's agent to deliver the people and rebuild Jerusalem (Isa 41:2, 25; 44:28; 45:1-5, 13; 46:11; 48:14-15).[8]
Yet this final section looks beyond Cyrus.
Isaiah's prophecies are punctuated with several "Servant Songs" that foretell the coming of One who will definitively save and restore. These Songs are found in Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53:12.[9]
Yahweh's Servant will save by dealing with the root cause of exile — the people's sin (Isaiah 53; cf. 50:1):

- Restoration to God's presence will necessitate their forgiveness (40:2; 43:25; 44:22; 55:7).
- He will bring Jubilee release for the captives (61:1-2).
- The Servant's saving work will extend to the Gentiles (42:1, 4, 6; 49:6; 52:15; 55:4-5; 56:6-8).
- Great blessing will attend restored Zion and her inhabitants (54:1-3, 11-17; 60:1-22; 65:17-25).
  Yahweh himself will return to dwell there (52:8).
  Gentile nations will be attracted to her splendor; everyone will be invited to partake of her blessings — even the wicked upon their repentance (55:1-7).
- Instead of the gloom and sorrow of exile there will be great joy (51:3; 55:12; 65:19; cf. 35:10).
- Jerusalem's circumstances will be so altered that it will be as if new heavens and a new earth have come about — a whole new order (65:17; 66:22).

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

Isaiah's fourth Servant Song shows the Servant's death to be the means by which the nation's guilt will be removed. It goes without saying that these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus' substitutionary death for sinners and his resurrection on the third day. (See Acts 8:32-35; 1 Peter 2:21-25.)

Isaiah 49:19-21; 54:1-3

Zion was bereft of her children during the exile (54:1).
But soon, those gathered would be so numerous that the nation (and city) will need to be enlarged to accommodate them all (cf. 9:3; 26:15). For Gentiles, too, will be gathered (Isa 56:6-8).
Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 in Galatians 4:27: Christians belong to the true, heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb 12:22).

Isaiah 54:11-12

Further details about Zion's restoration after exile:
God himself will rebuild the city with precious stones — its foundations, battlements, gates and walls.
This is echoed in the New Jerusalem's structure (Rev 21:18-21).

---

[7] Isaiah in this section anticipates Judah's future exile in Babylon even though Assyria (not Babylon) was the dominant world power of his day. According to tradition, Isaiah died by being sawn in two during the reign of King Manasseh (cf. Heb 11:37).
[8] The unity of Isaiah, often denied by liberal scholars, is clearly demonstrated by the theme of Jerusalem's restoration that pervades the entire book — from chapter 1 on.
[9] To which we might add Isaiah 61:1-3 and 63:1-6, since these, too, relate to the work of Yahweh's Servant.

Isaiah 60

Isaiah's description of the glory of restored Zion (cf. 60:14) is repeatedly echoed in Revelation 21:

Isaiah		*Revelation*	
60:1	→	21:11	The city shines with God's glory.
60:3	→	21:24	Nations walk by its light.
60:11	→	21:25-26	Its gates are never shut; nations bring their treasures into it.
60:20	→	21:23	God is the city's light.
60:21	→	21:27	Its citizens are holy.

Isaiah 65 – 66

This section describes God's creation of new heavens and a new earth (65:17).
Jerusalem's restoration is a part of this (65:18-19).
Of course, John's description of the new order in Revelation 21 – 22 is based on this Isaianic prophecy.[10]
There are two people groups within Israel mentioned by Isaiah: Covenant apostates, and the faithful remnant.
The former trust in their heritage, and in the temple ministry and rituals (66:3; cf. 1:11-14).
The latter are called God's "servants" (65:8-9).
God servants will be blessed, but the wicked in Israel will be judged (65:13-15; 66:14).
The blessings belonging to God's people in the new order / new Jerusalem are detailed in 65:20-25.[11]
Conversely, God will descend and bring fiery judgment upon the wicked (66:15-16; cf. 65:11-12; 66:6, 24).
Note how the Israelite apostates mock and persecute those who are truly God's people:
Isaiah 66:5-6:

> [5] *Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word:*
> *"Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake*
> *have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy';*
> *but it is they who shall be put to shame.*
>
> [6] *"The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple!*
> *The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!"*

It would seem that Isaiah is here anticipating the first-century persecution of Christian Jews.
Their unbelieving brothers mocked and ostracized them, even excluding them from the synagogue.
Isaiah further anticipates the judgment of the Jewish War — judgment that would proceed from the very temple in which they trusted (66:6).

Isaiah 66:7-8 speaks of the rapid birth of the new, transformed nation and city (Jerusalem).
Isaiah had earlier employed the metaphor of Zion as the mother of her citizens (49:19-21; 54:1-3).
We should think here of the birth of the Church at Pentecost — 3,000 souls were added the first day (Ac 2:41).

[10] Peter's new heavens and new earth (in 2 Peter 3:13) is similarly based on God's promise in Isaiah 65:17-19.
[11] That these promises concern life in the messianic kingdom is evident from Isaiah 65:25, which restates what was foretold earlier in Isaiah 11:6-9.

Looking more generally at Old Testament restoration prophecies, we see the following:

1. Promises involving the nation's restoration under Davidic kingship.
   (Examined in the following section.)
2. Threats of expulsion and judgment of the wicked within Israel — of covenant apostates.[12]
   Certainly fulfilled in the 1st century AD:
   See Matthew 3:7-12; 8:10-12; 13:40-42, 48-50; 21:43-45; 22:7; 23:35-38; Acts 3:23; Romans 11:7-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16; Hebrews 10:25-39; Revelation 14:17-20; 18:1ff.
3. Promises concerning a saved but chastened remnant of the nation.[13]
   First-century believing Jews viewed themselves as that faithful remnant.
   See Romans 11:1-6.
4. Promises concerning the ultimate reunion of Israel and Judah.[14]
   Fulfilled in the first-century believing Jews, who came from all 12 tribes:
   James addresses his epistle to "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion" (Jas 1:1).
   See also Luke 2:36; Acts 4:36; 6:7; Revelation 7:1-8.[15]
5. Promises that anticipate Gentile inclusion; the Gentiles as beneficiaries of God's saving action.[16]
   Certainly fulfilled in the New Testament era.
6. Promises where those gathered are so numerous that the nation (or Jerusalem itself) will have to be enlarged to accommodate them all.[17]
   Certainly so with the Gentiles being brought in!
7. Promises where the Lord (or the messianic king) and his people (the restored remnant) rule over and possess the land of their former enemies.[18]
   Fulfilled via the gospel as the Gentiles are brought under the rule of Christ. See Acts 15:14-18.

We can conclude this section as follows:
The book of Revelation, chaps. 21 – 22, shows us <u>Jerusalem transformed</u>.
The old Judean city has been unfaithful — a harlot — and has been divorced and judged (Revelation 18).
The New Jerusalem is Christ's new bride, the Church, the true people of God (Rev 21:2, 9-10; cf. Eph 5:25ff.).
Revelation shows us Jerusalem transformed <u>in fulfillment of OT prophecy</u>.

[12] See, for example, Isaiah 1:24-25, 28; 65:11-15; 66:3-6, 14b-17, 24; Malachi 3:2-5, 18; 4:1, 3, 5-6.
[13] See: Isa 1:27; 4:2-3; 6:13; 10:20-23; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:31-32; 46:3; 49:6; 57:13; 59:20; 65:8-10, 13-15; 66:2, 5; Jer 3:14; 23:3; 31:7-9; 50:20; Dan 12:1; Joel 2:32; Am 9:8; Ob 1:17; Mic 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18; Zeph 2:7, 9; 3:12-13; Zec 8:6; 13:8-9; Mal 4:2.
[14] See: Isa 11:12-13; Jer 3:18; 23:5-6; 30:3; 31:1-14, 27, 31; 50:4-5; Eze 37:15-25; Hos 1:11; 3:5. Implied in Ob 1:18; Mic 5:3b.
[15] These Jewish believers were the "firstfruits" of a great harvest of souls for God (Rev 14:4; cf. Jas 1:18).
[16] See: Isa 2:1-4; 11:10; 14:1; 19:23-25; 25:6-8; 42:1-7; 49:6; 52:15; 55:4-5; 56:6-8; Jer 3:17; Am 9:12; Mic 4:1-4; Zec 2:11; 8:22.
[17] See: Isa 9:3; 26:15; 49:19-21; 54:1-3; Zec 2:4; 10:8-10.
[18] Isa 11:14; 14:2; Am 9:12; Ob 1:21; Mic 5:5-9.

Davidic kingship is restored in Christ; God's kingdom has come

The ascension, coronation, and heavenly rule of Christ are anticipated in Psalms 2 and 110 and Daniel 7:13-14.
It's not for nothing that Psalm 110 is the OT passage most cited in the NT: Jesus' ascension fulfills that prophecy.
Peter explicitly declares, in Acts 2:30-36, that it was in Jesus' resurrection and ascension that the promises given to David were fulfilled:

1. The promise of lasting kingship for one of his descendants (Ac 2:30; cf. 2Sam 7:11-16).
2. The promise of his descendant's resurrection to lasting life (Ac 2:31-32; cf. Ps 16:8-11).
3. The promise that his descendant would rule from God's right hand (Ac 2:33; cf. Ps 110:1).

David's royal heir was always to rule from God's right hand in heaven.
Daniel 7:13-14 shows the Son of Man ascending on the clouds into heaven to receive universal authority.
He is granted dominion over all nations, and his rule will endure forever (Dan 7:14, 27).
And that's correct:
Jesus reigns from Zion — from the heavenly city (Ps 2:6; 110:2). He rules over the earth but not upon the earth.
All nations are his reward and inheritance (Ps 2:8; Isa 49:4-7).
He wins the nations through the gospel (Mt 28:18-20; cf. Isa 2:3).
In time, all nations will be converted (Rev 15:4; cf. Ps 86:9).

We may note from the deliberations of the Jerusalem Council that the influx of Gentiles into the Church serves to prove that Davidic kingship has been restored.
See Acts 15:13-18; cf. Amos 9:11-12.
The "fallen tent" of David (in Acts 15:16) refers to the dilapidated state of Davidic kingship following the Babylonian conquest, with no heir of David ruling in Jerusalem after Zedekiah.
The reestablishment of Davidic kingship is therefore seen with Jesus' rule over the Gentiles via the gospel.
All this was foreshadowed by David's military conquests of (and rule over) tributary nations as far as the River Euphrates.[19]

And so, OT promises anticipating Davidic rule over God's restored people have been (and are being) fulfilled.[20]
Israel has been restored. The true Israel now includes Gentiles (Gal 3:29; 6:16).
The promises made to Mary in the Anunciation has been, and is being, fulfilled (Luke 1:32-33):

> 32 *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him <u>the throne of his father David</u>,* 33 *and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

In Jesus, David's throne has been restored, and he forever rules over the "house of Jacob".
Not over ethnic Israel for merely 1000 years, but over the true "Israel of God" forever.
"Forever" means throughout endless generations — there is no end to the growth and progress of Christ's kingdom (Isa 9:7).

[19] The territorial extent of David's victories and of Solomon's reign are related in 2 Samuel 8:1-14 and 1 Kings 4:21, 24.
[20] See: Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-12; 16:5; 32:1; 33:17; Jer 23:5-6; 30:3, 8-9; 33:14-17; Eze 34:23-24; 37:15-28; Hos 3:4-5; Am 9:11-12; Zec 3:8; 6:12-13.

So, concerning the apostles' question in Acts 1:6 relating to Israel's restoration, the answer is a resounding YES — but not in the way you apostles anticipate!
Not in a socio-political sense as under David and Solomon.

Jeremiah 31: the New Covenant

The prophecies of Jeremiah chaps. 30 – 33 (called the "Book of Consolation") were probably given while the Babylonian army was besieging Jerusalem, some months prior to the city's walls being breached, the temple destroyed, and the people deported.
These prophecies anticipate the ultimate return and restoration of both kingdoms (Israel and Judah) under a Davidic king (30:4, 9; 33:14-16).

The promise of the New Covenant also concerns both kingdoms (31:31).
In view of Israel's failure to keep the Sinaitic covenant, God promises a new arrangement (31:32).
His law will be written on their hearts (31:33).
Sins will be fully forgiven, and each person will truly know him (31:34).
He will give them singleness of heart to obey him (32:39-40).

How is this fulfilled?
Jesus has inaugurated the New Covenant through the shedding of his blood (Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20; 1Cor 11:25).
The author of Hebrews affirms this New Covenant to be a present reality (Heb 8:8-13; 10:15-18).
In Christ, sins are fully forgiven. We are justified (acquitted and declared righteous) in him.
Each regenerated person truly knows and loves the Lord.[21]

In view of all this, there is no need to postulate fulfillment in some future millennial kingdom.
The New Covenant is a present reality for the true Israel of God (Gal 6:16).
Israel has been restored spiritually. It includes ethnic Israelites (from all tribes) and Gentile believers as well.

Note that Ezekiel similarly anticipates this New Covenant.
Israel's restoration and gathering from exile is foretold in Ezekiel chaps. 34, 36 – 37.
Both nations (Israel and Judah) will be gathered (Eze 37:15-22).
They will be united under Davidic leadership (34:23-24; 37:22, 24-25).
God will cleanse them from sin; he will grant them a new and responsive heart and impart to them his Spirit to enable them to obey him (36:25-27; 37:23).
And he will establish a lasting "covenant of peace" with them (34:25; 37:26).
Clearly, this "covenant of peace" is the New Covenant that reconciles God and sinners.

Summarizing this section:
The New Testament affirms that the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31 has been fulfilled in Christ.
And logically, if this is so, then "Israel" has also been restored.
God's promises pertain to the true Israel — the Church, comprising believing Jews and Gentiles.

[21] The apostle John seems to allude to part of this promise of Jeremiah: True believers (he notes) have an "anointing" from God and thus have no need for anyone to teach them spiritual truths (1 John 2:20, 27; cf. Jeremiah 31:33-34).

The promises of God's Spirit in Joel and Ezekiel

The apostle Peter famously quotes from Joel 2:28-32 in his Pentecost sermon — see Acts 2:16-21.
The outpouring of God's Spirit upon the Church that day fulfilled Joel's prophecy.

In context, the prophet is anticipating Israel's final restoration (Joel 2:28 — 3:21):

- "Afterward" — in the messianic era — God's Spirit will be poured out on all of his people (2:28-29).
- The Day of the Lord will transpire then too, which Joel describes using cosmic imagery (2:30-31).
- At that time (notes Joel) those who call on God's name will be delivered:
  On Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem there will be "those who escape", "survivors" — a chosen remnant (2:32).
  Note how Peter goes on (in Acts 2:38-40) to urge his Jewish listeners to repent and be baptized in order to be delivered from the judgment to befall that wicked generation (in the War of 66-70 AD).
  Forgiveness and the gift of God's Spirit are for them and for all whom God calls to himself (Ac 2:39; cf. 2:21).

Peter in his Pentecost sermon is addressing his fellow Jews (Ac 2:14, 22, 29, 36).
He notes how the OT promises of salvation were first and foremost for them (Ac 2:39; cf. 3:25-26).
Those 3,000 who repented and believed constituted part of the Jewish remnant that the prophets anticipated and that Paul and James and the book of Revelation speak about (Rom 11:5; Jas 1:18; Rev 7:1-8).
In Peter's theology, the prophets anticipated the first-century coming of Messiah, of God's kingdom, of salvation, the outpouring of God's Spirit, and so forth (cf. 1Pet 1:10-12).
The prophets all spoke about "these days" (Ac 3:24). They spoke about the birth of the Christian Church.
In other words, Israel's restoration is really about the Church.
Emphatically, the prophets did NOT speak about some future millennial kingdom.

Note that Ezekiel similarly anticipates the gift of God's Spirit — and that in the context of Israel's restoration.
We saw this in the previous section:
Both nations (Israel and Judah) will be gathered and united under Davidic leadership (Eze 34:23-24; 37:15-25).
And God will cleanse them from sin; he will grant them a new and responsive heart and impart to them his Spirit to enable them to obey him (36:25-27; cf. 37:14, 23; 39:29).
Jesus alludes to the promise of Ezekiel 36:25-27 in John 3:5-8:
To Nicodemus he declares that to enter God's kingdom one must be born of water and of the Holy Spirit.
And indeed, God's Spirit indwells all believers (Rom 8:9).
The Spirit effects spiritual cleansing and imparts new birth and a heart to obey (Tit 3:5; Rom 8:5ff.).

Summarizing this section:
The NT affirms that the Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost fulfilled Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17-18 = Joel 2:28-29).
Similarly, the promise of Ezekiel 36:27 has been fulfilled.
The Spirit's indwelling of every believer fulfills both promises (Rom 8:9).
And logically, given the OT context of these promises, it absolutely follows that "Israel" itself has been restored.
This again shows that God's promises pertain to the true Israel, the Christian Church.

The New Temple

At the very heart of the covenants God made with Abraham and Israel was his promise of a relationship of love and intimacy. God would be their God and they his special people.
This centrality is seen in the promise's repetition throughout redemptive history.
Notably, this specific promise is a prominent feature of the restoration promises as well.[22]
Related to this is God's promise to "walk" with his people, as he did in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8; Lev 26:12).
God would dwell with them, or place his dwelling place or sanctuary in their midst.
See Exodus 29:44-46; Leviticus 26:11; Ezekiel 37:26-27; Zechariah 2:10.
The tabernacle, and later the temple, signified God's presence with his people and his dwelling in their midst.
Exodus 25:8-9:

> [8] *And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.*
> [9] *Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.*

Leviticus 26:11 (my translation):

> *"Moreover, I will set my tabernacle among you, and my soul will not abhor you."*

Ezekiel 37:26-27 (my translation):

> [26] *"I will make a covenant of peace with them. …*
> *And I will establish them …, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forever.*
> [27] *My tabernacle will be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

Moses, in Deuteronomy, envisions a place in Canaan that God himself will choose and where his "name" will reside. It is to that (unique) place that the Israelites must go in order to worship him and enter his presence (Dt 12:5-7, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 11; 26:2). Not that God will actually dwell there, but his "name" will stand in for him since it represents all that he is.

The people would appear before God to offer sacrifices for atonement and thanksgiving.
The priests in the temple mediated between God and sinful men.
On the Day of Atonement the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place to make atonement for the nation.
Though dwelling with his people, God nevertheless remained inaccessible, sequestered away in the cube-shaped Most Holy Place. It was there that God (symbolically) sat enthroned on the Ark.[23]

[22] See: Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Eze 11:20; 14:11; 37:23, 27; Zec 8:8; 13:9; 2Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3, 7.
[23] Unauthorized entry into God's presence in the Most Holy Place would prove lethal (Lev 16:1-2; cf. 10:1-2).

But in the New Testament we see the whole concept of "temple" radically transformed:

1. The temple in Jerusalem is no longer the place where we encounter God.
   God is omnipresent and we can approach him anywhere and anytime though Christ.
   John 4:19-21, 23-24:

   > [19] *The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.*
   > [20] *Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."*
   > [21] *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*
   >
   > [23] *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*
   > [24] *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

2. Jesus in his incarnation "dwelt" among us (Jn 1:14).
   The Greek verb *skēnoō* (Strong's G4637) means "to pitch and have one's tent".
   John intends to show that, just as the tabernacle symbolized Yahweh's presence among his people (Ex 25:8; 29:44-46), so also Jesus was truly God while he was present with us on earth.
   Moreover, Jesus displayed the glory and majesty of God (Jn 1:14) — the reference being to the Shekinah glory that previously resided in the tabernacle and temple.

3. Jesus declared himself to be God's new temple (Jn 2:19-21), for it is through him alone that people can have access to God. (Cf. John 14:6: "I am the way, …. No one comes to the Father except through me.")
   Additionally, his body was the place where sin would be finally dealt with.

4. Each individual Christian is a temple of God, indwelt by his Spirit (1Cor 6:19).
   God's Spirit can indwell us only because he views us as perfectly holy and righteous in Christ.

5. The Church comprises God's temple in which he dwells by his Spirit (1Cor 3:16-17; 2Cor 6:16).
   Paul writes that believers comprise God's "household" which is:

   > [20] *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,* [21] *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.*
   > [22] *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*
   > (Ephesians 2:20-22)

   Peter similarly declares:

   > *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
   > (1 Peter 2:5)

   Clearly, Paul and Peter both viewed the Church as God's new temple.
   This temple is indwelt by God's Spirit just as the Shekinah glory resided in the tabernacle and temple of old.
   And Jesus himself is the cornerstone that holds it all together (1Pet 2:7; Eph 2:20).
   In this way, the Church fulfills OT prophecy (2Cor 6:16; 1Pet 2:9; cf. Ex 19:6; Lev 26:11-12; Eze 37:27).

Thus we can say that, just as God indwelt the temple of old, so now he dwells in believers — both as individuals and collectively as the Christian Church.

6. We earlier discussed (on pages 3-6) how the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 – 22 is Christ's bride, the people of God, the Church. We showed that John's vision depicts the fulfillment of OT prophecies that foretell Jerusalem's transformation and restoration.[24]
   Revelation is "bookended" by immanence statements (1:1, 3; 22:6, 10), so that what John describes in his visions represents what was then about to transpire. We should therefore view his final vision of the new heaven and earth and city as depicting the new post-70 AD world order that Jesus has established.
   We earlier focused on the prophecies of Isaiah that John alludes to, but he draws heavily on Ezekiel as well. Ezekiel concludes with an elaborate vision of a new temple and its ministry (chaps. 40 – 48).
   So, too, John's final vision portrays the Church as the glorious new temple of God.
   Here is what the New Jerusalem depicts:
   - With the city's descent God himself has come down to dwell with his people (Rev 21:3), as he originally intended for Israel and in fulfillment of his promises of restoration (Lev 26:11-12; Eze 37:27; Zec 2:10).
   - The city's cube shape (Rev 21:16) recalls the temple's cube-shaped Most Holy Place where God sat enthroned (1Kgs 6:20).[25] The city is the new and final Most Holy Place; its citizens live in God's very presence, serving before him as priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 7:15; 22:3; cf. 1Pet 2:5, 9).
     They enjoy unrestricted access to him; what the high priest could do but once a year, believers can now enjoy continually (Heb 10:19-22).
   - The Garden of Eden was God's original temple or mountain-sanctuary (Eze 28:13-14).
     Accordingly, within the New Jerusalem we see Eden restored: the "river of the water of life" with the tree of life on its banks, along with the absence of any "curse" (Rev 22:1-3).
   - Those in the city see God's face (Rev 22:4).
     Adam was banished from God's presence, but here, the saints are fully restored.
   - Those in the city — who have been washed from sin — may eat from the tree of life (Rev 22:14).
   - There is no defilement of sin or sinners in the new temple-city (Rev 21:27; 22:15; cf. Isa 4:3; 35:8; 52:1; 60:21; Eze 44:9; Zec 14:21).

   John's point is obvious: Christ — the definitive deliverer — has ended our banishment and exile by dealing with sin. His death has fully restored us to God's presence in the inner sanctuary (Mt 27:51; Heb 10:19-20). The long exile that began with Adam is finally over.

Summarizing this section:
Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John radically reinterpret the entire concept of the temple and its ministry.
No longer are we to look for a physical building to be God's temple. The Church as a whole functions as God's new temple. And believers individually are temples indwelt by God's Spirit.
The NT presents a far more "spiritual" concept than that found either in the OT or in any pagan religion.
Therefore, for dispensational premillennialists to long for a new temple in Jerusalem — replete with a new priesthood and animal sacrifices — is really nothing but rank heresy.
It's akin to the Judaizing error that was the bane of Paul's ministry.

[24] In another sense the New Jerusalem is where Christians "live" under the New Covenant. Already, this side of eternity, we are citizens of this heavenly city (Gal 4:26; Php 3:20; Heb 12:22-23).
[25] The Most Holy Place of the tabernacle was a cube with sides of 4.6 meters (10 cubits); that of Solomon's temple was a cube with sides of 9.1 meters (20 cubits; see 1 Kings 6:20); that of Ezekiel's idealized temple was also a cube with sides of 9.1 meters (20 cubits; see Ezekiel 41:4). The New Jerusalem is a cube with sides of 2200 km (= 12,000 stadia, a symbolic number).