

Dear Darryl,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked if the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:19-20 was teaching that the nation of Israel would have to repent and be converted before Christ could return. You also asked why in the NKJV Peter used the words "so that times of refreshing may come" and "that he may send Jesus Christ" implying these things were contingent upon the men of Israel's conversion.

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) (NKJV)

We believe that Jesus is already present and that his presence is not contingent on Israel's conversion. However, since Jesus has returned, He has done much to restore Israel.

We believe that our Lord returned and began to rule in 1874, which was the end of the 1,335 "days" (1,335 years beginning from A.D. 539 when the Papal system set up the doctrine of the mass, substituting Christ's once-for-all redemption) mentioned in Daniel 12:12, "Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days." Our Lord's invisible, or secret presence (Greek, *parousia*) is the first phase of his reign. "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) In this first phase, we, who recognize the signs of our Lord's presence, have been privileged to sit down and sup with him and feast on great spiritual truths (the ransom for all, the earthly and heavenly salvations, and the truth about hell, the soul and the trinity) that had previously been lost for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Probably one of the most momentous signs we have that our Lord is present and reigning is the restoration of the nation of Israel. The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:32-34 to restore the fig tree (Israel) began with the establishment of the first agricultural settlement-Petah Tikvah (Door of Hope) in 1878 that allowed Jews to return to their homeland and culminated with Israel's independence in 1948.

Yet another sign that Jesus is present and reigning is the increase of knowledge spoken of by the prophet Daniel. "At that time shall Michael stand up, . . . many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:1, 4) Unfortunately, with the increase of knowledge comes the progressive disintegration of the political, economic, moral and social order of this world. Eventually total anarchy will ensue and Armageddon will result. We believe these events and others must all happen prior to the second part of our Lord's reign, which is the restoration of all things lost due to the fall, mentioned in Acts 3:21.

Acts 3:19 in the King James is poorly rendered and can be a cause for confusion. A better translation is, "Repent ye therefore, and turn around, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the *face* (Strong's #4383, not *parousia* [presence]) of the Lord." (Revised Version Improved and Corrected) The expression "blotted out" as it appears in Acts 3:19 applies to the forgiveness of sins and their removal through the redemption in Christ. Peter closes his speech to the men of Israel in verse 26 with the same thought. "Unto you first God, having raised up his son Jesus [in the resurrection], sent him to bless you [now, if you receive him], in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Peter's sermon was on repentance and forgiveness. The coming of "seasons of refreshing" is contingent upon their repentance—whereas the presence of Christ at his second advent is not.

Verse 21 is a parenthetical thought for the future, explaining why Jesus is not to be seen among the Jews as he had so recently been seen for three plus years. The verse says that heaven must retain Jesus until the times of restoration. As we said earlier, we believe that Jesus is present and is, therefore, in the process of tearing down our present system. Before something new can be built, the old must be torn down. Teardown is a part of the restitution process. The restitution of Israel is already proceeding. It began in 1878 and could even be pushed back to 1874, as that was the year the first and only Jewish Prime Minister of England took office, through whose influence Jews regained their rights to purchase land in Palestine. The "top of the mountain" appeared in 1948 when Israel was granted statehood. However, Israel has not yet recognized Jesus as her Messiah. What needs to happen for this recognition to take place?

"Jacob's trouble" still awaits Israel and the world. At that time God will "fight" for Israel as in the days of old. The Ancient faithful ones, many of whom are listed in Hebrews 11, will come forth from their graves to lead and instruct the nation.

Thence the hearts of the Jewish people will be turned to their God and Jesus. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for an unborn son.” (Zechariah 12:10) Christ will hear their cries and bind up their broken hearts. Then the nation of Israel will be used as a tool for blessing all mankind in Christ’s Kingdom on earth. This will be the time of restoration spoken of in Acts 3:21. “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zechariah 8:23)

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Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio