

John Owen was perhaps the greatest of all the Puritan theologians. He lived from 1616 to 1683 and had a long and fruitful career as pastor, reformer, scholar at Oxford, parliamentarian, and author. Owen wrote the preface for the Savoy Declaration in 1658. He was also well known to be a friend of the Jewish people. His commentary on Hebrews is still in wide use today. The first volume interacts extensively with the opinions of the Rabbis concerning Messiah. It shows the depths of Owen's knowledge of Judaism. We think it helpful to make these statements of one of the greatest Covenant theologians of all times available for consideration.

"...there shall be a time during the continuance of the kingdom of the Messiah in this world, when the generality of the Jews all the world over, shall be called and effectually brought to the knowledge of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ: with which mercy they shall also receive deliverance from their captivity, restoration to their own land, with a blessed, flourishing and happy condition therein. -- I shall not here enter into a confirmation of this concession, or assertion. The work would be long and great, because of the difference about the time, season, manner of their call, and their following condition, and so it is unmeet for us to undertake it, in the winding up of these discourses. I only assert the thing itself, and have no cause, as to the end aimed at, to inquire into the time and manner of its accomplishment. Besides, the event will be the only infallible expositor of these things, and in matters of such importance as those before us, I shall not trouble the reader with conjectures. The thing itself is acknowledged, as far as I can understand, by all who have any acquaintance with these things. Christians generally do assert it, look for it, pray for it, and have done so in all ages from the days of the apostles....

As to the Jews themselves in their false notion

of it, it is the life of their hopes and religion. What is it then that the Jews plead? What do they expect? What promises are given unto them? **They say that they shall be delivered out of their captivity, restored to their own land, and enjoy peace and quietness, glory and honour there. We also say the same concerning them;** but by whom shall these things be wrought for them? By their Messiah they say at his coming. But shall he do all these things for them, whether they believe in him or no; whether they obey him or reject him; whether they love him or curse him? Is there no more required to this deliverance, but that he shall come to them? Is it not also that they shall come to him? **Here then lies the only difference between us; we acknowledge that the promises mentioned, are not yet all of them actually fulfilled towards them; this they also plead. The reason hereof they say, is because the Messiah is not yet come, so casting the blame on God, who has not made good his word according to the time limited expressly by himself. We say that the reason of it is, because they come not by faith and obedience to the Messiah, who long since came to them, and so cast the blame, where sure it is more likely to lie, even on them and their unbelief.**

They are in expectation that the Messiah will come to them; we, that they will come to the Messiah; and it may be this difference may ere long be reconciled, by his appearance to them, and so calling them to faith and obedience....

Whatever is foretold and promised concerning the Jews themselves, in the days of the Messiah, doubtless they have no reason to expect the accomplishment of it, until they receive him, own him, and submit to him, which to this day they have not done. When of old Moses went forth to visit them in

their distress, and slew the Egyptian that smote one of them, and endeavored to betray him to death; and because of this their bondage was continued forty years longer, and yet at length by the same Moses were they delivered. And although they have refused and rejected him who was promised to be their Savior, and so continue to this day in their captivity, spiritual and temporal, yet it is he, by whom in the time appointed, they shall be delivered from the one and the other. But they shall not be done until they own and receive him; and when God shall incline their hearts to receive him, they will quickly find the blessed consequences of it....

We grant that there are many promises on record in the Scripture concerning their gathering together, their return to God by the Messiah, and the great peace and glory that they shall then enjoy. If we except their opinion concerning the perpetuity of the ceremonial law, and their return in the observance of it to their carnal ordinances, (which opinion is founded on an apprehension, which the rest of the world has long ago renounced, namely, that God is pleased with the blood of bulls and goats for its own sake, and not for its signification of that which was infinitely more excellent and glorious). And the literal accomplishment of evident allegories, which the wisest among themselves begin to be ashamed of: with these exceptions, there is nothing in their own expectations which we do not acknowledge that they shall be made partakers of.

They shall return to their own land; they shall enjoy it for a quiet and everlasting possession, their adversaries being destroyed; they shall also be filled with the light and knowledge of the will and worship of God, so as to be a guide and blessing to the residue of the Gentiles who seek after the

Lord, and perhaps, shall be entrusted with great empire and rule in the world. The most of these are foretold concerning them, not only in their own prophetic writings, but also by the divine writers of sundry books of the New Testament. But all this we say must come to pass, when the veil shall be taken from their eyes, and when they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and when they joyfully receive him whom they have sinfully rejected for so many generations.

Until this be done, they may wrestle as they can with their perplexities, and comfort themselves as well as they are able in their miseries; they may get money in their dispersions by all unlawful arts and ways imaginable; and may expose themselves to the delusions of impostors, false prophets and pretended deliverers, which to their unspeakable misery and reproach they have now done ten times; yet deliverance, peace, tranquility, acceptance with God and man, they shall not obtain. Here lies the crisis of their condition.

When they shall receive, acknowledge, and believe in that Messiah who came to them so long time since, whom their fathers wickedly slew, and hanged on a tree, and whom they have since no less wickedly rejected; and when by his Spirit and grace they shall be turned from ungodliness, and shall have their eyes opened to see the mystery of the grace, wisdom and love of God in the blood of his Son; **then shall they obtain mercy from the God of their forefathers, and returning again to their land, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, even in Jerusalem."**

(An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Second Edition, Volume 1, published in Edinburgh in 1812. Quotes are from pages 443-444 and 454-455.)

You may or may not agree with Owen at every point, but his clear conviction was that Jewish people need the gospel of their own Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAIM stands in the theological tradition of men like John Owen. We seek to rebuild the Reformed witness to the Jewish people in the USA. **We are based on the Westminster Standards and work under the recommendation of the 20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America.**

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"Christians Announcing Israel's Messiah

JOHN OWEN ON THE JEWISH PEOPLE

COMPILED BY
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