

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #10

Zechariah 13:7-9
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What events according to Scripture will precede the restoration of Israel, and what events will follow the restoration of Israel as a Christian NATION? As we seek to put the restoration of Israel as a Christian NATION into some chronological sequence, let us compare Romans 11 with some other passages of Scripture that hopefully will make clearer a general overview of what we might expect to occur both before and after that time when "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). This brief biblical overview is certainly not intended to be exhaustive, but rather representative of what God lays out in particular passages of Scripture.

I. First, let us consider the chronology given in Romans 11:25-26.

A. As we have noted in previous sermons, the restoration of Israel as a Christian NATION is stated in Romans 11:26: "And so all Israel shall be saved." The word "so" indicates that God will save Israel as a NATION in the manner and way presented here in Romans 11: namely, that due to her rejection of Christ and the Gospel, Israel as a NATION has been partially and temporarily cast out of the Visible Church of Christ during which time God is calling an elect remnant out of Israel unto Himself and an elect remnant out of the Gentile NATIONS unto Himself. In so doing, the Lord has united into one olive tree (which signifies the Visible Church) both Jews and Gentiles who are being saved at the present time.

B. But there is coming a time in the near future when the Lord will call unto Himself and bring into the Visible Church "the fullness of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:25). This fullness of the Gentiles may also be

translated “the fullness of the NATIONS” when the Lord will pour out His Spirit in abundance upon the NATIONS so that the vast majority of the NATIONS of the world will turn to Christ and come into His Church in fulfillment of the Covenant of Redemption established in the counsel of the Trinity before the world was made (“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [or NATIONS from the Hebrew גוֹיִם] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” Psalm 2:8), and in fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham (“In thy seed shall ALL THE NATIONS of the earth be blessed” Genesis 22:18), and in fulfillment of many prophecies in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Psalm 72:11; Isaiah 2:2; Daniel 9:27; Zechariah 2:10-11; Matthew 28:19-20; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 15:4 etc.).

C. And from the order and sequence of events laid out by Paul in Romans 11, the hardening and casting out of Israel as a NATION will only continue UNTIL that time when the “fullness of the NATIONS” comes to Christ and into the Visible Church (Romans 11:25). And once “the fullness of the NATIONS” is begun and evidenced in earnest, we then read in the immediately following verse, “And so all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26). I would submit that we are here taught not only the manner in which “all Israel shall be saved”, but also the sequence in which “all Israel shall be saved”: first, the fullness of the NATIONS, and then the fullness of Israel as a Christian NATION (see also Romans 11:12, where we first see “the fall” of Israel as a NATION; then second, we see “the riches of the Gentiles” or NATIONS; then third, we see “the fullness” of Israel as a Christian NATION brought into the Visible Church of Jesus Christ).

D. But we should not conclude that “the fullness” of the NATIONS and “the fullness” of Israel as a Christian NATION is the end of God’s grace to this sinful, undeserving world, for when the NATIONS and Israel as a Christian NATION come to Christ, there will then be such a

worldwide reformation in the Nations and Kingdoms of this world (and in every corner of the world) that Paul says it will be “life from the dead” (Romans 11:15). The Lord Jesus Christ will reign victoriously from the throne of David in heaven subduing His enemies until at the end of the millennium when Christ appears at His Second Coming the last enemy (death) will be forever vanquished (1 Corinthians 15:23-26,50-55). Beloved, this is the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel of salvation for the whole world, and not for just a few. Christ is victorious in history and these events are certain to occur as prophesied by Paul (and other prophets). Beloved, we must keep the eye of faith and the eye of hope ever upon these promises that we not become weary in well-doing, that we not become slothful and indifferent about the Gospel and Commandments of Christ, that we not become seduced by the pleasures, or preoccupied by the business of this world, or that we not become fearful of what we might have to suffer in this life. The sun and the moon shall sooner fail than His promises.

E. Thus, the order of the two prophesied events in Romans 11 related to the restoration of Israel is first, “the fullness” of the Gentiles or NATIONS, and second, “the fullness” of Israel as a Christian NATION. These are clearly presented by Paul, but does the Scripture also tell us what leads up to “the fullness” of the NATIONS and “the fullness” of Israel as a Christian NATION?

II. Second, let us consider what is taught by the Spirit of the Lord in Zechariah 13:7-9.

A. Here in these verses is encapsulated more information leading up to the conversion of Israel as a Christian NATION. In Zechariah 13:7, we are clearly cast into the New Covenant age of Jesus Christ as we see

that this verse is fulfilled in the ministry of Christ (Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27).

1. For Christ uttered this prophecy after He had instituted and served the Lord's Supper of the New Covenant to His disciples and before He was falsely accused by the Jews and crucified by the Romans on behalf of all His people. Using the text from Zechariah's prophecy, God commands the sword of execution (which simply represents the stroke of death administered by a magistrate whether death comes by hanging, crucifixion, or beheading—in Zechariah 12:10 Christ is said to be crucified and pierced) to awaken against His Shepherd (Christ) who is said to be "my fellow" (i.e. "my equal" who is the same in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit). Here the Good Shepherd of the sheep is prophesied to be slain by His own sheep from the house of Israel as a false prophet (this connection follows from what is said in the previous verses in regard to false prophets).

2. What does the LORD of hosts say will be the result of the Shepherd being smitten by the sword? "The sheep shall be scattered." Now certainly this scattering of the sheep occurred when Christ was taken by the Jewish leaders and the disciples fled in fear. But I submit that this prophecy had another more distant fulfillment when God brought the Roman armies upon Jerusalem and destroyed it in 70 a.d. and dispersed the lost sheep of the house of Israel for their rejection of their Shepherd and for their complicity in His death (Luke 21:24).

3. But this prophecy does not end with the scattering and dispersion of Israel as a NATION, for the LORD of hosts also promises at the end of Zechariah 13:7, "and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (i.e. turn my hand in covenant grace and mercy to restore the little ones as this phrase is also used in Isaiah 1:25). And in Zechariah 13:8-9, the Lord gives us the occasion surrounding the time in which He will fulfill the promise of covenant love and restoration to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (who concerning the gospel are the enemies of God, but

who concerning their election as a covenanted nation are beloved of God for the father's sake, Romans 11:28). Was this prophecy fully realized in and around 70 a.d. or did it await a more distant fulfillment? Let us see as we continue to Zechariah 13:8-9.

B. Now as we come to Zechariah 13:8, we seem to be cast into another time period as to when the very same NATION of Israel that was scattered will also be restored when the Lord turns His hand of mercy upon the Nation of Israel that was scattered. This observation alone should make it evident that the full realization of this prophecy could not have been fulfilled in and around 70 a.d., for though Israel as a NATION was then scattered or dispersed, Israel as a NATION was not then restored.

1. The time of her restoration was yet in the future as God says in Zechariah 13:8: "And it shall come to pass." In these words ("and it shall come to pass") is the fulfillment of the restoration of Israel highlighted.

2. Now the Lord brings before us some events that will occur before the conversion of Israel as a Christian NATION. A majority of Israel will either be cut off by captivity or death from the land and a smaller group of Israel will be left within the land by their enemies. As I think will become clear shortly, the full realization of this prophecy did not occur in 70 a.d. with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and their dispersion at that time, for what is stated in the following verse was not fully realized as we shall see.

C. As we come to Zechariah 13: 9, this smaller group of Israel that is not cut off by death or captivity but is left in the Land is apparently subdued for a time by their enemies as they pass through the figurative fire of affliction by means of their enemies (but ultimately from the hand of God for their good to turn them to Christ). But as we come to the end

of that verse, we read that this fire of affliction upon Israel brought against her by her enemies for a time becomes the very occasion in God's providence that He uses to turn Israel as a NATION to Christ in faith and repentance crying out to the Savior ("they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" Zechariah 13:9). Now as I have noted before, what is stated herein about this smaller group of Israel turning to Christ as a people after being overcome by their enemies and after the majority being slain or led into captivity does not comport with any known turning to Christ by all those who were left in the land of Israel after the destruction of Jerusalem and after they were led into captivity. For that reason, this prophecy looks for its fulfillment in the future (as will hopefully be made even more clear by what is said in Zechariah 12 and Zechariah 14).

D. In summary before moving on to briefly consider how Zechariah 12 and Zechariah 14 further confirm what is said in Zechariah 13:7-10, let me make the following observations as to what is said to precede the restoration of Israel as a NATION.

1. Israel is in the Land when she is attacked and the majority are cut off by death or captivity. As I have noted in previous sermons, I do not believe the present state and government of Israel is under the covenant blessing of God for as Paul states, Israel as a NATION is presently the enemy of God due to her rejection and hatred of Christ and the Gospel (Romans 11:28). However, in God's providence Israel does presently exist as a state and occupies much of the Land. And this prophecy in Zechariah 13:8-9 also predicts that Israel will be in the Land when she is attacked and subdued by her enemies.

2. Israel is in the Land (at least a portion of Israel) when she is restored to Jesus Christ and embraces the Gospel of Christ by faith alone. That is not to say that all that are in the Land of Israel at the time of her conversion will be all that will return to the Land, for it would appear

from many places in Scripture that after the conversion of Israel within the Land, many more who are converted to Christ will also return to the Land of Israel (as was noted in a previous sermon when we considered texts like Jeremiah 23:5-8 and Ezekiel 37:21-28). Thus, here are two events prophesied to occur before the restoration of Israel as a NATION.

III. Third, let us note how Zechariah 12 (the entire chapter) confirms what we have just noted in Zechariah 13:7-9.

A. I do not have time to expound this chapter verse by verse, but I will seek to give a brief overview of the key events covered in Zechariah 12.

1. Note that in Zechariah 12:2-3 we find Judah and Jerusalem under attack by enemies, but it is prophesied that Jerusalem will become like a huge stone that will crush her enemies even though all the people of the earth be gathered against her.

2. What will be the source and cause of victory in this battle against the nations of the world? According to Zechariah 12:8, "In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

3. And when the Lord delivers Israel from her enemies in such a marvelous way, the Lord will pour out upon Israel as a NATION that is in the Land the graces of faith and repentance in looking to Christ whom she pierced (Zechariah 12:10-14). This will be the conversion of that smaller part of Israel that is dwelling in the Land at that time.

B. Let me summarize what events leading up to the conversion of Israel as a Christian NATION that we find in this prophecy.

1. Israel is in the Land (in accordance with God's providence not God's covenanted blessing) when she is attacked by her enemies (Zechariah 12:2-3).

2. Israel is in the Land when she is converted to Christ (Zechariah 12:12).

3. This prophecy must be fulfilled in the New Covenant age of Jesus Christ, for they shall look in faith upon Christ whom they have pierced and shall mourn over their treatment and rejection of Him their Messiah and Savior (Zechariah 12:10). Since it is clear that Jerusalem was destroyed and not saved in 70 a.d., the fulfillment of this prophecy awaits a future time for its full realization. The extent to which repentance extends in this prophecy to every family throughout the Land was likewise not realized in 70 a.d., but shall be realized when Israel as a NATION is converted in the near future.

IV. We now turn to Zechariah 14:1-11 as we consider the events stated there that precede the conversion of Israel as a NATION.

A. Again, the same theme is presented by the Lord in regard to the nations of the world coming against Jerusalem.

1. This time is called “the day of the LORD” in which the Lord will judge His enemies and will gloriously save Israel as a NATION (Zechariah 14:1).

2. It is prophesied that the enemies that God brings against Israel at that future time will consist of a confederation of “all nations” (Zechariah 14:2). I would submit that this confederation of “all nations” is joined with the popish antichrist as it comes against Israel (Revelation 17:12-15). What event/events might occur so that “all nations” join together to war against Israel? I speculate at this point, but perhaps an attack on Iran, or the refusal to part with certain territory in accordance with a peace plan required by the United Nations, or the attempt to rebuild the Temple. Who knows? Nevertheless, though God does not state what precipitates the confederation of “all nations” against Israel in the future, such a confederation attacks Israel.

3. This attack by “all nations” is apparently successful at the outset for Jerusalem is taken and many in Jerusalem are taken captive and exiled while a number are yet left in the city after it is taken (Zechariah 14:2). This comports with what was prophesied in Zechariah 13:8-9. It would seem that this clearly indicates that this prophecy was not fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem because the city was completely destroyed by Titus and none were left in it, whereas we read here that “the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city” (Zechariah 14:2). Furthermore, it would appear that this battle and captivity occur over some period of time (whether days, weeks or months). For it takes some time to fight such a battle, to take Jerusalem, and to remove many from the city and deport them to other parts of the world.

4. However, once again we see that the Lord miraculously intervenes on behalf of those who yet remain in Jerusalem to deliver them (Zechariah 14:3-4). Very graphic language is used of Christ’s deliverance of Israel, and yet it is not necessary that we understand this to be the bodily Second Coming of Christ to the earth. For this type of language is used many times in Scripture to refer to God’s coming in judgment (Judges 5:4; Psalm 18:9; Isaiah 31:4; Micah 1:3-4 etc.). Since Christ must remain seated on the throne of David in heaven until He destroys all His enemies (and the last enemy to be forever destroyed is death and sin [the cause of death] according to 1 Corinthians 15: 24-26, 51-54 which will not occur until AFTER the millennium, for there is both sin and death in the millennium according to Isaiah 65:20).

5. Finally, note what occurs after the Lord delivers Israel: “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem” (Zechariah 14:8). Thus, the conversion of Israel will have its effect in blessing upon the whole world as the “living waters” of the Gospel proceed from her to all nations. Then it shall be fully realized that

“the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

B. I would simply note that this prophecy was not fully realized at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, for the Lord did not leave any in Jerusalem in 70 a.d. as is stated in this prophecy, the Lord did not subsequently come after the destruction and captivity of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. and rescue those who yet remained in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem and the Land of Israel were not thereafter safely inhabited in 70 a.d. by all those who were saved by the Lord (as we see in Zechariah 14:11).

C. Thus, from these three texts in Zechariah (which I would submit speak of the same events), we can summarize certain events that will occur before and after the conversion of Israel as a NATION.

1. The nations will conspire with the papal antichrist to subdue and crush an apostate Israel that is dwelling in the Land and that has taken a course or step contrary to the will of this one world confederation.

2. The attack against Israel in her unconverted state will issue in a victory for the worldwide confederation.

3. Many in Israel will be deported and led captive to other nations, while a smaller group will yet remain in the Land. God delights to work His deliverance when the odds seem impossible (Gideon, David, 12 apostles etc.).

4. God miraculously intervenes and delivers Israel from her enemies and through this event grants grace to Israel to turn in faith and repentance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Israel as a Nation will then dwell safely in the Land from that point forward and will disseminate the Gospel and “living waters” throughout the whole world (Romans 11:15).

6. The Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King over all the kingdoms of the earth and all the kingdoms of the earth will engage in covenant with Him in one faith, doctrine, worship, church government (Zechariah 14:9).

I must stop here for now, but there are questions yet to be answered, like these: How does “the fullness of the Gentiles” fit into the events just considered from Zechariah? If “the fullness of the Gentile” precedes “the fullness of Israel” when do the Gentile nations come to Christ since they are the very ones who are attacking Israel when the Lord defends Israel and Israel is converted? What happens to this confederation between the popish antichrist and the nations of this world so that all nations come to Christ? We will bring these events to a close (God willing) in the next sermon as we consider some further prophecies in the Book of Revelation.

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