

“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 24 – Sola Gratia – “The Holy Spirit and Eschatology”, prepared for the Adult Sunday School class on January 11th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.

Read Isaiah 44: 1-5

The regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and glorification of all of God’s elect people is accomplished by the working of the Spirit of God imparting the precious grace of Christ to them which accomplishes all His eternal purposes towards them in regard to their salvation. This is all done in accordance with His divine predestination and foreknowledge. We are saved at the time of His appointment, and His good Providence ordains all the circumstances. Known unto God are all of His works from the foundation of the world. We have been studying the doctrine of election, and describing it as God’s having chosen of a great number of people, from all eternity, in the Covenant of Redemption made between the Father and the Son, made before time began; a certain number whom God would save, and give unto them, eternal life and blessing. We have seen that God saves His elect people one at a time, but that He is not constrained to save them one at a time. He can save whole families at a time. And He can even save whole nations at the time of His choosing, according to His eternal purposes. This is something that the Scriptures clearly tell us will take place in the time of the Latter-Day glory of the Church, or what is called in the book of Revelation, “the Thousand Years”. I am speaking now of the Millennium, that glorious time of blessing which God has purposed will occur before Christ’s Second Coming, and not after it. I am well aware that most Christians of our own day are either Premillennial or Amillennial in their views of eschatology, but for all are serious students of the Bible I would ask you to look plainly at the Bible and reconsider.

How can these great things of God’s saving work of nations come to pass, we might ask ourselves? The answer is found in the verses which we just read, and others that we will be reading this morning. The pouring out of God’s Spirit, will give greater success to the preaching of the gospel. The pouring out of the Spirit will someday result in the conversion of nations to Christ. Even though many Christians do not presently believe this, I believe that they should carefully study the following passages and ask themselves whether any of these great things have yet come to pass in the history of the Church.

Ezekiel 37: 1- 14 Ezekiel 39: 21-29 Isaiah 19: 18-25 Zechariah 2: 10-13

Zechariah 8: 20-23 Isaiah 27: 1-6 Psalm 72: 8-11 Isaiah 2: 1-4

Jeremiah Burroughs in his Commentary on Hosea 1: 10 says this:

“God has a time to bring in abundance of people to the profession of the faith; multitudes, even as the sand of the sea shore. He will do it, and he has ways enough to accomplish it. Though for the present men cast this reproach upon the people of God, that they are but few, a company of poor mean people, a handful, that are nothing in comparison of the rest.” “But this reproach will be wiped away, and we may yet expect, that before the world comes to an end, the greatest part of its inhabitants shall embrace the faith of Christ and become godly too. Isaiah 49: 19-21, “Thy waste and desolate places, and the land of Thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants. This yet has not been fulfilled. Thy children shall say, ‘The place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell.’” “Then shall thou say in thine heart, who hath begotten me these?” When was this fulfilled? The stone, in Daniel 2: 34, that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. God’s people shall fill the whole earth. Now take all Christians to be God’s people that only acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, they are computed to be not above the sixth part of the world; and yet this must be fulfilled,

that the church shall be as the stone that smote the image, become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.”

In Christ’s time the people of God were a little flock; ‘Fear not, little flock’. The Greek has two diminutives, little, little flock, and so it may be translated, “Fear not, little, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” Luke 12: 32 It was a little flock then, but it shall be a great flock when the Father shall come to give them the kingdom. Christ is promised to have the “heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession,” Psalm 2: 8; He shall possess them. A king does not possess a kingdom who only possesses some town, or one shire of it: Christ shall possess the uttermost parts of the earth. Yea, it shall be said, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His Christ,” Revelation 11: 15 They are the Lord’s indeed in some sense always; but he speaks in a special sense, wherein it shall be said not only a few congregations are the Lord’s, and His Christ’s, but the whole kingdoms of the earth, which, with their great kings, shall come and bring their glory into the church.”

Listen to this from Johnathan Edward’s History of Redemption:

Jewish infidelity shall then be overthrown.

However obstinate the Jews have been now for above seventeen hundred years in their rejection of Christ, however rare have been the instances of individual conversions ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, and however they have, against the plain teachings of their own prophets, continued to approve of the cruelty of their forefathers in crucifying Christ—yet, when this day comes, the thick veil that blinds their eyes shall be removed, 2 Cor. 3 : 16, divine grace shall melt and renew their hard hearts, "and they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Zachariah 12 : 10, &c. And then shall the house of Israel be saved : the Jews in all their dispersions shall cast away their old infidelity, and shall have their hearts wonderfully changed, and abhor themselves for their past unbelief and obstinacy. They shall flow together to the blessed Jesus, penitently, humbly, and joyfully owning him as their glorious King and only Savior, and shall with all their hearts, as with one heart and voice, declare his praises unto other nations. Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews, in Rom. 11. There are also many passages of the Old Testament which cannot be interpreted in any other sense. Besides the prophecies of the calling of the Jews, we have a remarkable providential seal of the fulfillment of this great event, by a kind of continual miracle, in their being preserved a distinct nation in such a dispersed condition till the present time. The world affords nothing- else like it. There is undoubtedly a remarkable hand of Providence in it. When they shall be called, that ancient people, who alone were God's people for so long a time, shall be his people again, never to be rejected more. They shall then be gathered into one fold together with the Gentiles; and so also shall the remains of the ten tribes, wherever they be, and though they have been rejected much longer than the Jews, be brought in with their brethren. The prophecies of Hosea especially intimate, that in the future glorious times of the church, both Judah and Ephraim, or Judah and the ten tribes, shall be brought in together, and shall be united as one people, as they formerly were under David and Solomon. Hos. 1:11, &c. Though we do not know the time in which this conversion of Israel will come to pass; yet thus much we may determine by Scripture, that it will be before the glory of the Gentile part of the church shall be fully accomplished; because it is said that their coming in shall be life from the dead to the Gentiles. Rom.11 : 12-15

Jonathan Edwards – From his treatise on The History of Redemption.

On the Kingdom of God – He says:

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is chiefly accomplished by four successive great events, each of which is in Scripture called Christ's coming in his kingdom. The first is Christ's appearing in those wonderful dispensations of providence in the apostle's days, in setting up his kingdom and destroying its enemies, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is called Christ's coming in his kingdom. Matt. 16 : 28. " Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." And Matt. 24. The second was accomplished in Constantine's time, in the destruction of the Heathen Roman empire. This is represented as Christ's coming, and is compared to his coming to judgment. Rev. 6: 13-17. The third is to be accomplished at the destruction of Antichrist, which is represented as Christ's coming in his kingdom. Dan. 7 : &c. The fourth is his coming to the last judgment, which is the event principally signified in Scripture by Christ's coming in his kingdom." 2. Each of the three former of these is a lively image, or type, of the fourth and last—Christ's coming to the final judgment ; as the principal dispensations of providence before, were types of his first coming. As Christ's last coming to judgment is accompanied with the resurrection of the dead, so is each of the three foregoing with a spiritual resurrection. That coming of Christ which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, was preceded by a glorious spiritual resurrection of souls in the calling of the Gentiles through the preaching of the Gospel. Christ's coming in Constantine's time, was accompanied with a glorious spiritual resurrection of the greater part of the known world, in a restoration of it to a visible church state, from a state of Heathenism. Christ's coming at the destruction of Antichrist, will be attended with a spiritual resurrection of the church after it shall have been long as it were dead, in the times of Antichrist. This is called the first resurrection." Rev. 20: 5

Again, as Christ in the last judgment will gloriously manifest himself, coming in the glory of his Father, so in each of the three foregoing events Christ gloriously manifests himself in sending judgments upon his enemies and in showing favor to his church. As the last coming of Christ will be attended with a literal gathering together of the elect from the four winds of heaven, so were each of the preceding attended with a spiritual ingathering. As this "gathering together of the elect will be effected by God's angels with a great sound of a trumpet; Matt. 24 : 31 ; so were each of the preceding spiritual ingatherings effected by the trumpet of the gospel, sounded by the ministers of Christ. As there shall precede the last appearance of Christ, a time of great degeneracy and wickedness, so this has been, or will be, the case with each of the other appearances. Before each of them is a time of great opposition to the church : before the first, by the Jews; before the second, in Constantine's time, by the Heathen just before the third, by Antichrist ; and before the last, by Gog and Magog, as described in the Revelation. By each of these comings of Christ, God works a glorious deliverance for his church. The first, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, was attended with bringing the church into the glorious state of the Gospel. The second, in Constantine's time, was accompanied with an advancement of the church into a state of liberty from persecution, the countenance of civil authority, and her triumph over Heathen persecutors. The third, which shall be at the downfall of Antichrist, will be accompanied with an advancement of the church into that state of the glorious prevalence of truth, liberty, peace, and joy, of which we so often read in the prophetic parts of Scripture. The last will be attended with the advancement of the church to consummate glory in heaven."

Commenting on Isaiah 19: 21, Joseph Benson says in his commentary – "But though this prophecy concerning Egypt might have its first accomplishment in the deliverance of the

Egyptians from the Persian yoke by Alexander the Great, and in that knowledge of the true God, and of his revealed will, which many of the Egyptians received under the government of the Ptolemies, through their intercourse with the Jews, and the translation of the Jewish Scriptures into the Greek language; yet, doubtless, this prediction has a further and higher aspect, as commentators in general have understood it, and refers to that spiritual redemption and salvation which the Egyptians, among many other ignorant and idolatrous Gentiles, were to receive, and actually did receive, by the coming of Christ, the great and only Saviour of lost mankind, and by the publication of his gospel to them. This appears still more evidently from the verses which follow. But the full and final accomplishment of this, as well as of many other important prophecies, shall not take place till Mohammedanism and idolatry shall be completely overthrown, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Joseph Sutcliffe says in his commentary on Isaiah 19: 21 – “Isaiah saw that Egypt would be a sanctuary for the Jews who should escape the sword of the Chaldees: and at one time the number of the refugees was so great that “five cities did literally speak the language of Canaan.” Alexander the great was a savior to them, and the Ptolemies were their patrons. God blesses the nation that receives his exiled people. This prophecy may however have a reference to the future conversion of Egypt to the Christian faith.”

Charles Spurgeon says on Isaiah 19: 21 – “This is a very remarkable prophecy. Attempts have been made to explain it, as if it were already fulfilled. I believe all such attempts to be utter failures. This promise stands on record, to be fulfilled at some future day. In those bright days for which some of us are looking, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, so the waters cover the sea, then shall this word to Egypt be verified; yea, and God shall be glorified both by Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the land of Israel. This ought to be an encouragement to carry on missionary operations with great vigor. Here is a distinct promise for Assyria and for Egypt. Let not the missionary be afraid, even if for thousands of years to come there should be little apparent success to the preaching of the gospel. If the Lord should tarry another six thousand years, ay, sixty thousand years—and he may—we are still to go on working, and still to go on laboring, looking for his coming, and expecting it, but not relaxing our efforts because he pleases to delay it, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall know his glory, and you may depend upon it, there is no spot of earth that shall be left to be Satan's dominion. It shall be conquered for Christ, and in truth he shall "see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied.”

The Savoy Confession of 1658 says this in its 26th Chapter, Paragraph 5 –

“As the Lord in his care and love towards his Church, hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love him, and his own glory; so according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged, and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.”

Rev. John Howe speaking on Ezekiel 39: 29 – “The Prosperous State of the Christian Interest, before the end of time, by a plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit; considered in Fifteen Sermons.” (1678)

He says in the 5th of these sermons: “We go on to speak —

[2.] Of its more immediate and direct influence upon the souls themselves to be wrought upon ; which was the second head propounded to be spoken to. And so we are to reckon that its greater influence, (when there shall be such an effusion of the Spirit, as we have been speaking of,) will shew itself in these two great and noble effects :—In numerous conversions : and,—In the high improvement and growth of those that sincerely embrace religion, their eminent holiness: which, when we consider, will make the matter we were last speaking of more apprehensible to us, what example may do to the speaking of it yet further and further, as things once growing, grow apace ; especially such things as are themselves of a very growing and diffusive nature. The Scripture speaks very much in many places to both these purposes. First. There are many scriptures, that respect the matter of the church's increase by numerous conversions. Which is an increase as to its extent, as the other will be as to its glory.* To instance in some few of the scriptures, that speak of the enlargement of the church by numerous conversions. We are told in Isaiah 2. 2, &c. what shall come to pass in the last days. You have these two forms of expression, the latter days, and the last days. The expression of the latter days doth more generally, according to the language of the Jews, intend the times of the Messiah. They divided time into these three great parts, the time or age before the law, the age under the law, and the age (as they called it) of the Messiah. The expression is here the last days, which seems rather to import the latter part of the latter time ; as there is still later and later, till it come to the very last. Now in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house" (which is spoken by way of allusion to Zion, and the temple that stood upon that mountain) "shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths ; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Such a time as that the world hath not yet known, so as that it should be said generally concerning it, that this great effusion of the Spirit, and such a cessation from hostilities and wars in the world, should be concomitant and conjunct with one another : we have not had hitherto opportunity to observe a coincidency of these two things. To the same purpose is that in the prophecy of Micah, which I mention as being of so near affinity with the very letter of this text, Mic. 4.1, 2. "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, etc." The same words as before, with very little variation. And that passage of a great prince's dream, Daniel 2. 34, 35 of "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that became a great mountain, and filled the earth " ; can, for my part, neither understand it in so carnal a sense as some do, nor in so limited a sense as others. Certainly it must signify some greater thing, than we have yet seen."

After quoting a number of other Scriptures, Howe says this:

That such scriptures have been fulfilling ever since the first dawns of Christianity, there is no doubt; but the magnificence of the expressions of many of these prophecies, seem yet to be very far from being answered by correspondent effects. The passage in Joel 2. 28. where it is said, that "the Spirit shall be poured forth upon all flesh," we are told, it is true, in Acts 2. 16. that it had its accomplishment : " This is that which was spoken by the prophet," saith Peter, when the people began to wonder at what they saw, upon that strange pouring forth of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But it is plain, that he did not intend, that the completion of that prophecy was confined to that point of time. For afterwards, in verse 37, he tells them that were now awakened, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do ?" that they must "repent and be

baptized, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." For, saith he, "the promise" (that promise most apparently, that he had reference to before,) "is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off', even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that all that was intended in that prophecy is not fulfilled, till God hath done calling. And many other scriptures seem to intimate,

that there shall be a time of far more general calling, than hath been hitherto; when the receiving and gathering in "of the Jews shall be as life from the dead," as a resurrection from the dead, Rom. 11. 15. And when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, ver. 25. The way of speaking implies, that that fullness or plenitude was yet behind, to succeed after the apostle's time ; and no such time hath succeeded yet."

"Secondly. There are many scriptures also, that speak of the great improvement and growth of Christians by the Immediate Work of the Spirit of God. When I say, immediate, I do not mean, as if it did work without means; but that by the means it doth itself immediately reach its subject; and therefore, that all the operations of the Spirit, whether in converting or in building up of souls, lie not in the instruments, but strike through all, so as to reach their subject. But that only on the by. Many scriptures speak of the great improvement of the church in point of holiness; so that it shall increase, not only in extent, but in glory, and in respect of the lustre, loveliness and splendour of religion in it ; that it shall become a much more beautiful and attractive thing, according to the representation which it shall have in the profession and conversation of them that sincerely embrace it. Which I suppose to be more especially pointed at in such passages as these. Isaiah 60: 1, 2, 3. " Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." This speaks that religion should be so glorious a thing in its own subject, as by that means to be inviting and attractive to those that were without the church; and so doth directly and immediately speak of such an effect, as should be wrought by the Spirit of God upon persons seriously religious themselves, to make them far to excel and out shine the glory of former times and ages."