

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #4

Romans 11:26
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We have considered briefly in past sermons how some expositors tend to look at all of the prophecies related to Israel in the Old Testament as being presently fulfilled either in the New Israel (consisting of both Jews and Gentiles) or in the elect remnant of Jews who are being presently brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Those who understand all the Old Testament prophecies pointing to the conversion of Israel as being presently fulfilled do not believe there is a future redemptive plan for Israel as a Nation—in other words, God's redemptive plan is finished for Israel as a Nation. However, the Apostle Paul had a different interpretive principle of Old Testament prophecies related to Israel than that of those expositors I have just described. For the Apostle Paul goes back to Old Testament prophecies related to Israel in order to prove his thesis that "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

Paul's argument in Romans 11 may be summarized as follows: (1) Though God had stretched out His hand all day long to the disobedient and covenant-breaking Nation of Israel (Romans 10:21), the Lord has not totally and permanently cast away His people, the covenanted Nation of Israel (Romans 11:1). (2) Though Israel as a Nation was hardened, not all of Israel was hardened, for God is presently saving an elect remnant (Romans 11:1-11). (3) Though Israel as a Nation is presently a covenant-breaking Nation that has been removed from the Visible Church of Christ, Israel as a Nation shall in the future be brought back into the Visible Church of Christ by the power and faithfulness of her covenant-keeping God (Romans 11:12-26). (4) The Nation of Israel will be saved when the

Gentile Nations of the world are brought by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel to embrace Jesus Christ, who in Haggai 2:7 is called “the Desire of all Nations” (Romans 11:25-26). And (5) The conversion and restoration of the Nation of Israel is not simply asserted by the Apostle Paul (though as an inspired Apostle he could have done so), but is proven to be the case from Old Testament prophecies which we shall briefly consider in the next couple sermons as stated by Paul in Romans 11:26-27.

Thus, if you have followed Paul’s line of argument in regard to the future redemptive plan for Israel as a Nation up to this point, I would have you also observe that Paul did not spiritualize those Old Testament prophecies related to the salvation of Israel as a Nation. Paul, in fact, takes Old Testament prophecies of Israel’s conversion and brings them before us to prove that God will yet restore the covenanted Nation of Israel (and not just a remnant of Israel) to Himself. Dear ones, there are typical (that is, typological) matters related to the Israel of the Old Testament that are presently being fulfilled in the New Israel (consisting of both Jews and Gentiles), such as, the Temple and the sacrificial worship being fulfilled in the death of Christ, the Church of Christ and her New Covenant worship (according to 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:14-22; Hebrews 8-10). However, according to the Apostle Paul, there were also promises made to Israel as a covenanted Nation that were of a moral nature which God shall fulfill to that same covenanted Nation to whom the promises were originally made. Thus, dear ones, the Apostle Paul provides us with a key to unlock prophecies in the Old Testament if we will but use it. Let us consider our question for this Lord’s Day.

I. In the Old Testament prophecy cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:26, what is the meaning of the phrase “out of Zion”? Does it refer to

the Second Coming of Christ or does it refer to a spiritual coming of Christ to save Israel?

A. As we consider the significance of these questions, let us read our text as found in Romans 11:26, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come OUT OF ZION the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” The Apostle Paul appeals to the Old Testament (Isaiah 59:20) as confirming the truth that God shall save all Israel (i.e. the covenanted Nation of Israel).

1. As we have noted in an earlier sermon, the Israel that was “blinded in part” i.e. hardened in part in Romans 11:25 (i.e. the greater part of Israel or Israel as a Nation) is the same Israel that shall be saved in Romans 11:26. It cannot be held with any consistent interpretive principles that Paul has been addressing Israel as a Nation throughout Romans 11 when speaking of Israel being cast away, blinded or hardened, fallen, broken off as olive branches from the Church of Christ, and disobedient and unbelieving, and then as we come to Romans 11:25 where Paul prophesies that this same Israel as a Nation will continue in this “blinded” or hardened condition only “UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN”, but that Paul then immediately changes the meaning of Israel that he has been using throughout the entire chapter from Israel as a Nation to the New Israel (composed of both Jews and Gentiles) or all of the elect remnant of Israel when he comes to his conclusion in Romans 11:26: “And so ALL ISRAEL shall be saved.

2. And so as Paul (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) continues to confirm this conclusion (that ALL ISRAEL shall be saved), he uses a familiar refrain, “as it is written.” The English phrase, “It is written”, is actually one Greek verb, γέγραπται, and the noun from which this verb is derived is γραφή, which is the word translated into English as “Scripture”—as in “all SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God” in 2

Timothy 3:16. My point is simply this, that when we find the phrase, “it is written”, the sense of that phrase is not simply that the words used are found recorded in some book somewhere, but rather the sense of the phrase, “it is written”, is that the words used are inscripturated in another place in the inspired Scripture.

3. The Scripture that Paul cites as proof comes primarily from Isaiah 59:20, but it also seems Paul has added something significant from Psalm 14:7 as we shall soon see. Such a combination of more than one Old Testament passage into one New Testament citation is not uncommon in the New Testament. For example, Paul begins Romans 9:33 with that same familiar refrain, “As it is written” and then proceeds to combine two Old Testament passages: Isaiah 28:16 and Isaiah 8:14. We shall return to Romans 9:33 in a moment because it is the only other time that Paul uses the word “Zion” in the book of Romans.

4. What Paul states in effect in Romans 11:26b is that the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus, will come “out of Zion” and will bring salvation to Jacob (i.e. to the Nation of Israel). This Old Testament citation thus proves that “ALL ISRAEL shall be saved.” It would seem from the text that Paul here distinguishes “Zion” and “Jacob”, for Christ comes “out of Zion” and “shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” or from Israel. In other words, that from which Christ comes “out of” (namely, Zion) is not that which Christ shall save (namely, Jacob or the Nation of Israel). Although it is certainly true that Christ came out of Israel to save Israel (Romans 9:5), I hope to demonstrate in a few minutes that Paul’s use of the word “Zion” in Romans 9:33 does not likely make the use of the word “Zion” here in Romans 11:26 equivalent to “Israel”.

B. Turning now to Isaiah 59:20, we read, “And the Redeemer shall come TO ZION, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.”

1. Notice that in Isaiah 59:20 the Redeemer does not come “OUT OF ZION”, but rather comes “TO ZION”. Paul has by inspiration of the Holy Spirit altered the preposition from “TO” to “OUT OF” Zion. But I would submit he altered it using words from another text of Scripture: namely, Psalm 14:7 (where we read, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.”). Remember our text in Romans 11:26 states, “as it is written”. Thus, Paul did not simply alter the words “to Zion” to “out of Zion” by an immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit, but rather he did so using the Scripture itself. It would seem that Paul (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) has taken the words and meaning of Zion as found in Psalm 14:7 and combined them with the words found in Isaiah 59:20. Certainly in Psalm 14:7, the clear theme is of the salvation and restoration of Jacob (also called Israel) as is the clear theme in Romans 11:26 when Paul states, “ALL ISRAEL shall be saved.” I would submit that Paul has made this alteration in combining the inspired words (“OUT OF ZION”) and the inspired meaning of those words from Psalm 14:7 with the inspired words found in Isaiah 59:20 because Paul sought to make the point that the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, would bring His salvation to Jacob from “OUT OF ZION” as stated in Psalm 14:7 rather than “TO ZION” as stated in Isaiah 59:20.

2. What is the meaning of “Zion” in Psalm 14:7 from “OUT OF” which the Psalmist prays salvation will come to Israel? Perhaps someone might reason that “Zion” refers to heaven, that is, that God will restore and bring salvation “OUT OF HEAVEN” to the Nation of Israel. Ultimately, that is true. Salvation does come from the Lord out of heaven which is the dwelling place of God. But how did the Holy Spirit refer to His special dwelling place here upon the earth in the Old Testament? Where was it said that God made His special abode with His people here upon the earth? Was God’s presence not in the Temple (in the Holy of

Holies above the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat)? Where was the Temple or the special presence of the Lord located? In Zion, the highest location in Jerusalem. Thus, when the Psalmist prays like Paul with such passion, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come OUT OF ZION”, he does not mean out of heaven, but out of the Temple in Zion (as he does in other places as well, Psalm 20:1-3; Psalm 135:19-21). Dear ones, Zion became equivalent to the earthly dwelling place of God. The Lord taught His people OUT OF ZION as they gathered to worship Him. The Lord sent blessing and salvation OUT OF ZION by means of His ordinances administered in the Temple of God.

3. Thus, I submit that the reason Paul alters the words the Deliverer shall come “TO ZION” to the Deliverer shall come “OUT OF ZION” to save and deliver Jacob (i.e. the Nation of Israel) is at least for the following two reasons: (1) Paul wanted to distinguish the Zion “OUT OF” which Christ would come from the Nation of Israel whom He would come to save. (2) Paul wanted to distinguish the earthly Zion from the heavenly Zion, for it is the earthly Zion that the Psalmist has in view in Psalm 14:7.

4. Now if the earthly Zion, the special place of God’s presence and dwelling place, was the Temple in Zion in the Old Testament, where is the earthly Zion, the special place of God’s presence and dwelling place, in the New Testament? Is it not the Church of Christ (the Temple of the New Testament) as we read in 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5. Clearly, the Holy Spirit teaches that the Church of Jesus Christ is His holy and living Temple where His presence is and where He dwells here upon the earth. This holy and living Temple is where He is worshipped and out of which the Lord sends His salvation through faithful ministers to the ends of the earth.

C. Turn now with me to the only other place that Paul uses the word “ZION” in the book of Romans: Romans 9:33. There we read, “As it

is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

1. What does Paul mean by “ZION”? Is the Zion of which Paul speaks in heaven or is it a Zion that has in view the earth? This Zion of which Paul speaks in which Christ, as a foundation stone is laid, is a stone over which earthly men stumble in unbelief, but is also a stone upon which those who believe here upon the earth are built into a holy Temple.

2. Let us compare what Paul (in Romans 11:33) states about Christ being laid in Zion with what Peter (in 1 Peter 2:4-8) states about Christ being laid in Zion. Christ is a stone laid in Zion in which all those who trust in Christ alone for their eternal salvation (while living here upon the earth) become living stones used to build the Church of Jesus Christ here upon the earth (1 Peter 2:4-8). The Apostle Peter clearly uses the language of Christ as being a stone laid in Zion as a reference to Christ building His Church here upon the earth by adding living stones (believers) to the holy Temple and God’s dwelling place where He is worshipped. The earthly Church of Christ and Kingdom of Christ upon earth is Zion according to Paul and Peter.

3. Furthermore, this language of Christ being a stone (though without specific mention of the word “Zion”) is highlighted in several places in the New Testament and in each place, it refers to the Church and Kingdom which Christ is building here upon the earth (Ephesians 2:17-22; Matthew 21:42-44; Acts 4:10-12). Thus, as we compare what Paul says about Zion in Romans 9:33 with what Peter says about Zion in 1 Peter 2:4-8 (and other New Testament passages), we must conclude that the words “OUT OF ZION” as used by Paul in Romans 11:26 mean that Christ shall come “OUT OF” His special dwelling place here upon earth (that is His holy Temple, the Church of Christ), and Christ will come out of His Church in such a mighty and glorious way that all Israel shall be

saved. This is really the fulfillment for that which the Psalmist prayed in Psalm 14:7: “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come OUT OF ZION: when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.” Dear ones, what an amazing success the Lord will grant to the preaching of the Gospel by faithful Ministers in His Church at that time of Israel’s restoration. There will be nothing like it. What occurred in the early chapters of Acts will pale in comparison to the Spirit-blessed preaching that Christ will use to save ALL ISRAEL in that blessed day.

D. But an objection can be heard to what has been said about Christ coming out of Zion, His Church. When we read in Romans 11:26, “There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer”, does this coming not mean a future bodily coming of Christ, the Deliverer?

1. The Scripture speaks of God or Christ coming to earth in either judgment or blessing when it is clear that a bodily coming from heaven is not in view.

2. Coming in judgment (Babylon in Isaiah 13:6-13; Egypt in Isaiah 19:1; Assyria in Isaiah 30:27-31; Jerusalem in Micah 1:3-5; Jerusalem in Matthew 16:28; Mark 12:9; a Church in Revelation 3:3).

3. Coming in salvation (David in Psalm 18:6-10; Jerusalem in Isaiah 31:4; Believers in John 14:23; 2 Corinthians 6:17; Revelation 3:20).

Dear ones, dear ones, Christ comes to us when the Word of God is preached. Do you view the faithful preaching of Christ’s Word as just the words of a man or do you truly believe that Christ comes to you to judge or to save. If you want the stone laid in Zion to make you a living stone in His holy Temple rather than to be a stone that crushes you, prepare your hearts each Lord’s Day to hear Christ’s Word as He comes to you. Do not be like the Laodecean Church, thinking and believing that you are ok, that

you are clothed, housed, fed, and rich and that you do not desperately need Christ today and right now (Revelation 3:17). Perhaps a lukewarmness has settled over your soul so that you have become indifferent to the doctrine, worship and government of Christ. You would rather not be bothered by such things because they only produce division. Dear ones, Christ would rather have you hot or cold rather than lukewarm and indifferent to Him and His truth. What a blessed expectation Paul gives us as he excites our souls to look forward to a time when Christ will come spiritually out of His Church in great power to subdue the sinful hearts of Israel through the faithful testimony and preaching of His Church. O Lord, hasten the day. And may we not be forgetful hearers but effectual doers of the Word of Christ as He comes to you and me today.

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