

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #8

Zechariah 2:10-12

July 12, 2009

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In the past two sermons, we have considered whether we should anticipate not only the spiritual conversion of Israel as a **NATION** to Christ, but also whether we should anticipate the restoration of her **LAND** as a promise likewise made to Israel.

In summary, Paul calls Israel as a **NATION** "holy" in Romans 11:16 (i.e. externally and covenantally holy) and states that the promises made to her as a **NATION** are irrevocable because God elected her as a **NATION** and entered into an "everlasting covenant" with her as a **NATION** through the covenant made with her fathers (Romans 11:27-29; Genesis 17:7). Thus, if Israel as a **NATION** is "holy" due to the "everlasting covenant" made with her through her fathers (Genesis 17:7), then ought we not likewise to understand that the **LAND** promised to Israel as an "everlasting possession" in the same "everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:8) is likewise "holy" (externally and covenantally)? How is it that Israel as a **NATION** can still be called "holy" (Romans 11:16) and "elect" (Romans 11:28) on the basis of the "everlasting covenant" made with her fathers (Romans 11:27-29; Genesis 17:7-8), and yet the promise of the **LAND** included in the same "everlasting covenant" be stripped away from the "holy" and "elect" **NATION** of Israel?

Dear ones, I submit that the **NATION** and the **LAND** stand together or fall together. Let it then be proven from Romans 11 that it is not the **NATION** of Israel that shall be restored and converted when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come into the Visible Church, and then and only then shall we likewise reject the restoration of the **LAND** to Israel as well. If,

however, the exposition of Romans 11 presented in this series thus far establishes the promise of the future conversion of Israel as a Christian **NATION**, then I submit that the promise of the **LAND** is as certainly to be realized as the conversion of the **NATION**, for both are inseparably linked together by way of the promise of God in that “everlasting covenant” made with the fathers (Genesis 17:7-8).

This Lord’s Day, I would like to further establish the promise of the **LAND** to Israel as a Christian **NATION** from three Old Testament passages (as representative of many) in which it seems clear that the ultimate time of fulfillment is not immediately after the return from Assyrian and Babylonian exile, but the time in which the **LAND** shall be restored to Israel as a **NATION** (in these passages) is the age of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Let us then consider the question to be answered in today’s sermon.

I. Does the restoration of the LAND to Israel as a Christian NATION have warrant from the Old Testament Scriptures?

A. Please turn with me first to our primary text as found in **Zechariah 2:10-12**.

1. The prophet Zechariah delivered this prophecy after a representative portion of the entire nation of Israel returned to their **LAND** from captivity (by means of the decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1:1-4). God’s people made a great start in laying the foundation of the Temple under the leadership of Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Joshua the High Priest, but soon found their hearts pulled away from the primary work of rebuilding the House of God to the secondary work of enlarging their own houses (as they increasingly used their time and resources to focus primarily on building bigger and more comfortable homes). The House of God lay in ruins, the ordinances of the Church were incomplete, and the people of

God fell into apathy and indifference. Through the faithful preaching and prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1) and through the faithful service of the magistrate (Zerubbabel) and through the faithful ministry of the High Priest (Joshua), the Lord caused His people to cast aside all of their vain excuses for why they could not devote themselves to rebuilding His Temple and caused them rather to renew their National Covenant with the Lord on two different occasions (Ezra 10:3; Nehemiah 9:38). As a result the Temple was rebuilt and completed with great rejoicing and praise to God for His faithfulness to them in remembering His Covenant (Ezra 6:14-15,20-21).

2. One means the Spirit of God used to encourage Israel not to cease rebuilding the Temple despite their small beginnings was to give this small remnant the hope of a more glorious and blessed time in the future in which the Lord would fulfill His covenant promises to them. Dear ones, how we ever need the promises of God imprinted upon our minds and in our understanding when we feel like giving up because we think the road we are on in our Christian life is just too difficult and bitter to take another step. Beloved, it is the love of God manifested in His promises and God's faithfulness and power to keep His word that lifts us up and carries us through one trial and then through another trial until we finally face death and reflect back upon our lives and see how the Lord Jesus carried us in His loving arms each step of the way by means of His loving promises. So likewise, the Spirit of God encourages the remnant of Israel to "sing" and "rejoice" by means of looking up from their present hardships to a glorious time of future worldwide salvation that shall be enjoyed by the Gentile nations and by Israel as a **NATION** (in Zechariah 2:10-12).

3. **What is the time indicated as to the fulfillment of the promise?** I would submit the time of ultimate fulfillment is in the days of the New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ. For we read in Zechariah 2:10: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I COME, AND I WILL DWELL

IN THE MIDST OF THEE, SAITH THE LORD.” It is “the LORD” who is said to make this utterance. But “the LORD” who makes this utterance is further identified in the following verse: “And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: AND I WILL DWELL IN THE MIDST OF THEE, AND THOU SHALT KNOW THAT THE LORD OF HOSTS HATH SENT ME UNTO THEE” (Zechariah 2:11). Here the Divine Speaker is sent by “the LORD of hosts.” The Lord Jesus is the Divine Messenger of the Covenant (Malachi 3:1) and is the Divine Word of God sent by the Father to dwell in our midst (John 1:14). Thus, the time in which we anticipate the full realization of this promise is “IN THAT DAY” (Zechariah 2:11) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel is here projected forward to a future “DAY” in which the Lord Jesus Christ will accomplish some amazing promises for the whole world.

4. To whom did the Lord Jesus Christ make this promise?

Actually, there are two recipients: Israel as a **NATION** and many Gentile nations.

a. Israel is identified in verse 10 as the “daughter of Zion” and likewise we find references to “Judah” and “Jerusalem” in verse 12. Is the Lord Jesus speaking here of Israel as a **NATION**, or is He using mere typological language to address the future Israel of God (composed of both Jews and Gentiles as in Galatians 6:16)? I submit the Lord Jesus has in view Israel as a **NATION** because Israel is distinguished from the Gentile nations in Zechariah 2:11, “And MANY NATIONS [i.e. many Gentile nations of the world—GLP] shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of THEE [Israel as a **NATION**—GLP], and THOU [Israel as a **NATION**—GLP] shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto THEE [Israel as a **NATION**—GLP].” What the Lord Jesus prophesies by means of His prophet Zechariah is precisely what Paul had prophesied by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Romans 11:25-26 concerning “the fullness of the Gentiles” wherein the Gentile nations come into the Visible Church to be

followed by the salvation of “all Israel” as a **NATION**, which is also brought into the same Visible Christian Church (or olive tree).

b. Not only is Israel as a **NATION** given Christ’s promise, but also “MANY NATIONS” (i.e. Gentile nations) are given Christ’s promise as well (as we have seen in Zechariah 2:11). The world has never yet seen in the age of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ “many” Gentile nations” of the world covenant with Christ to be His people to be followed by “Israel” as a **NATION** renewing her covenant with Christ to be His people. We must therefore see this promise as yet unfulfilled and as yet future to us. Just as the fullness of the Gentile nations and the fullness of Israel as a **NATION** was future to Paul, so it is yet future to us.

5. What is the stated promise that Christ will accomplish in that future day to MANY NATIONS and to Israel as a NATION? The promise consists of several parts.

a. Christ promises that “many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people” (Zechariah 2:11). How is an entire Nation (including its national representatives) joined to the Lord? A Gentile Nation is joined to the Lord in the same way that Israel is joined to the Lord, namely, by way of a National Covenant with the Lord (Jeremiah 50:5—where we find the same Hebrew word for “join” [לָּוַה] that is used in Zechariah 2:11 in reference to the Gentile Nations that are joined to the Lord). If for Israel and Judah to be joined to the Lord is to be joined in a perpetual and everlasting National Covenant to the God of their salvation, then likewise the same is true for the many Nations here mentioned (in Zechariah 2:11). Dear ones, this is simply the fulfillment of the covenant promise made to Abraham (in Genesis 17:4, “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of MANY NATIONS.” Carefully note also in Zechariah 2:11 that the many Gentile nations “shall be my people” which indicates that these many nations will become God’s covenant people by way of national covenants as was true of Israel (Leviticus 26:9-12). Likewise, when Egypt as a **NATION** shall

covenant with God in that glorious future day, the Lord shall say of Egypt, “Blessed be Egypt MY PEOPLE” (Isaiah 19:25).

b. Christ also promises to Israel as a **NATION** that (1) He will come and dwell in her midst (Zechariah 2:10), and that (2) He will renew His covenant with Israel in the “HOLY LAND” (Zechariah 2:12).

(1) **How does Christ come and dwell in the midst of Israel?** Remember that Christ was enthroned as messianic King upon David’s throne in heaven when He ascended and was seated on God’s right hand, and He evidenced His enthronement by way of the blessings He poured out upon God’s people (Acts 2:29-36; Ephesians 4:7-11). Dear ones, Christ is not waiting to be crowned as Israel’s messianic Prince so that He might reign upon David’s throne in the earthly city of Jerusalem, for Christ already reigns as such from David’s throne in heaven (Acts 5:30-31). And from the throne of David in heaven, He spiritually comes with all royal authority and power (Matthew 28:18) to bring blessing (John 14:23; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 1:13; Revelation 3:20) and also spiritually comes to bring judgment (Matthew 16:28; Revelation 3:3). Clearly, Peter in addressing “the men of Israel” in Acts 3:26 declares to them that God having raised Christ from the grave SENT Christ to bless them (compare this with the words of the Lord in Zechariah 2:11, “and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath SENT ME [i.e. has sent Christ—GLP] unto THEE”). But when was Christ bodily “SENT” to bless Israel after His resurrection and before Peter’s sermon in Acts 3? Christ was certainly not “SENT” bodily to bless Israel, but He was “SENT” spiritually to bless Israel on the Day of Pentecost and in the healing of this lame man (Acts 3). Here unmistakably we see that Christ as messianic King comes and is “SENT” spiritually to bless His Church while bodily enthroned in heaven. The Scripture is clear that Christ will not return bodily to earth until He has first forever vanquished His last enemy, death (1 Corinthians 15:23-26,51-55). And since there will be death in the millennium (according to Isaiah 65:20),

the bodily return of the Lord at His Second Coming and the final resurrection at which time death shall be no more must occur AFTER the millennium (i.e. a postmillennial coming of the Lord) and NOT BEFORE the millennium (i.e. NOT a premillennial coming of the Lord). Thus, the coming of Christ in Zechariah 2:11 is a spiritual coming to Israel as a **NATION** (like that spiritual coming of Christ in Acts 3:26) and to the **MANY NATIONS** of the world to bring Israel and the nations of this world into the same Visible Church of Jesus Christ by way of national covenanting.

(2) But as we turn back to Zechariah 2:12, we also note that the Lord Jesus promises that in that messianic day when “many nations shall be joined to the LORD” that the “LORD shall inherit Judah his portion IN THE HOLY LAND, and shall choose Jerusalem AGAIN.” As noted earlier, there is a clear distinction made here between the Gentile Christian nations that shall covenant with Christ and the Christian nation of Israel (called here Judah/Jerusalem) that shall renew her covenant with Christ. The Lord Jesus describes what blessings He will “AGAIN” bring to Israel as a **NATION** in choosing to bless her. The word “AGAIN” (in Zechariah 2:12) likewise identifies the Judah/Jerusalem as the same **NATION** and chief city that was in covenant with the Lord in the Old Testament. Because the Lord had previously chosen Israel as a covenanted **NATION** to be His people and had promised and given to her the **LAND OF CANAAN** as a sign of that national calling and election, when the covenanted **NATION** shall be restored to Christ (in fulfillment of the promise made in the “everlasting covenant” in Genesis 17:7), the promise of the **LAND** shall also be restored as the sign of God’s election of Israel as a **NATION** (in fulfillment of the promise made in the everlasting covenant in Genesis 17:8). Just as Israel as a **NATION** is externally and covenantally “holy” by virtue of the promises made to the fathers (Romans 11:16,27-29), so likewise the **LAND** of Israel is externally

and covenantally “holy” (Zechariah 2:12) by virtue of the promises made to the fathers.

6. **What is the ground or basis of the promise made to the Gentile nations and to Israel as a NATION?** Although not explicitly stated, I would submit the ground is the “everlasting covenant” God made with the fathers. For as we noted in the previous sermon, “the everlasting covenant” God made with Abraham (as found in Genesis 7:4-8) mentions 3 promises: (1) Blessings to “**MANY NATIONS**” (Genesis 17:4-6); (2) Blessings to the natural seed of Abraham in their generations which later became the **NATION** of Israel (Genesis 17:7); and (3) Blessings of the **LAND OF CANAAN** as an “everlasting possession” to Israel as a **NATION** (Genesis 17:8). Now it is no mere coincidence that all three of these blessings are likewise prophesied and will be realized in that day of Christ Jesus (Zechariah 2:10-12). Thus, the implicit ground of these three promises in Zechariah 2:10-12 is the free and gracious covenant of the Lord with the fathers (as found in Genesis 17:4-8). How can we allow one promise or even two promises from “the everlasting covenant” to be realized in the prophecy of Zechariah 2:10-12, but exclude the promise of the **LAND** from the same “everlasting covenant” (especially when the **LAND** is said to be “an everlasting possession” in Genesis 17:8 and is said to be externally “holy” in Zechariah 2:12) just as the **NATION** of Israel is declared by Paul to be externally “holy” by virtue of God’s covenant, which is “without repentance” (Romans 11:16,27-29)?

B. Let us next turn to **Jeremiah 23:5-8** and consider very briefly what is said in that passage about the future conversion of Israel as a **NATION** and the restoration of Israel to her **LAND**.

1. **What is the time indicated as to the fulfillment of the promise?** The time of ultimate fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy moves us once again into the age of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, for according to this prophecy Christ (“the righteous branch”) will reign as

messianic King (Jeremiah 23:5), and “in his days” [i.e. in the days of Christ’s reign which began at His ascension and session at the right hand of God according to Acts 2:29-36 and Acts 5:31) Judah and Israel as a **NATION** will be saved by the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (a reference to the imputed righteousness of Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Without any hesitation, we can say that this prophecy shall be fulfilled to a united Israel in the days of Christ’s messianic rule from the throne of David in heaven. But we have not yet seen Israel as a **NATION** converted to Christ, the messianic King; thus, the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet in the future.

2. **To whom was this promise made?** It is made unto Judah and Israel (Jeremiah 23:5). I would submit that it is a restored Israel as a **NATION** (rather than the Israel of God consisting of Jews and Gentiles as in Galatians 6:16) that is in view in this prophecy. Why?

a. First, because the **NATION** of Israel that was dispersed by the Lord (Jeremiah 23:2-3,8) is the same **NATION** of Israel that will be restored by the Lord to her own **LAND** (Jeremiah 23:3,8) in the days when the Lord Jesus Christ shall save Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 11:26). Dear ones, no legitimate hermeneutical principle will allow for a different Israel saved and restored to her **LAND** than the very same **NATION** of Israel that was dispersed from her **LAND** when both the dispersion and the restoration are referred to in the very same verse (Jeremiah 23:8).

b. Second, because the Lord likens the prophesied restoration of Israel and Judah from all the countries to which they were dispersed to a past event in which “the children of Israel” (as a **NATION**) were brought out of the land of Egypt by Moses (Jeremiah 23:7). Thus, the same Israel as a **NATION** that was brought of Egypt shall be saved and restored to her **LAND** (Jeremiah 23:8) in the days of Christ Jesus (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

c. Third, because the Israel that shall be saved and restored to her “own LAND” in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 23:5-6) is called “the seed of the house of Israel” (Jeremiah 23:8) which in context refers to the natural seed of Israel as a **NATION**.

d. Dear ones, the Lord does in various Old Testament passages allude to both Israel as a **NATION** and Gentile **NATIONS** as being converted to Christ (as, for example in Isaiah 19:25 and in Zechariah 2:10-12). And because that is true, when the Lord speaks of both Judah and Israel being converted, we should not immediately leap to some typological union of Jews and Gentiles in the New Covenant Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). Rather we should first seek to interpret the conversion of Judah and Israel in light of what Paul prophesies (in Romans 11:26) when “all Israel” as a **NATION** shall be saved.

3. **What is the promise stated in this prophecy by the Lord to Israel as a NATION?** The united Israel and Judah shall be saved and shall dwell safely in that future day of Christ, and the converted **NATION** “shall dwell in their own **LAND**” (Jeremiah 23:8). It is “their own **LAND**” because God promised and gave it to them as “an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8) as found in the “everlasting covenant” He made with Israel through their fathers (Genesis 17:7). The conversion of Israel as a **NATION** and the promise of the **LAND** are inseparable by way of the “everlasting covenant” made with the fathers (Genesis 17:7-8).

D. Finally, let us consider **Ezekiel 37:21-28**.

1. **What is the time indicated as to the fulfillment of the promise?** The time of ultimate fulfillment (in Ezekiel 37:24 and the latter part of verse 25) looks to the messianic reign of Christ (who is the greater David to whom David as a type pointed). It would seem then that we are once again projected into the future (from the time of Ezekiel) to the time in which Christ is seated at the right of God to reign upon the throne of David from heaven (Acts 2:29-36 and Acts 5:31).

2. **To whom was this promise made?** The promise is made to a united Judah and Israel as “one **NATION**” (Ezekiel 37:22; see also Ezekiel 37:15-20). The same **NATION** that was dispersed for their idolatry (Ezekiel 37:21,23a) will be converted during the days of Christ the messianic King (Ezekiel 37:23b-24). This is the same **NATION** that Paul has in mind when he prophesies that “all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26).

3. **What is the promise stated in this prophecy by the Lord to Israel as a NATION?** The promise of salvation from sin (Ezekiel 37:23) is made to Israel as a **NATION**, along with the promise of the **LAND** once again (Ezekiel 37:21,25). The **NATION** that was dispersed for their idolatry and detestable things (Ezekiel 37:23) is the same **NATION** that shall dwell “in their own **LAND**” (Ezekiel 37:21,25). If it is not the same **NATION** that was dispersed that shall be converted and shall dwell in their own **LAND** in the days of Christ the messianic King, then it seems to me that we can make words mean whatever we want them to mean, independent of the construction and their relationship to one another in a sentence. And this conversion of Israel as a **NATION** and the dwelling in her own **LAND** are once again attributed to the everlasting covenant made with Israel as a **NATION** through her fathers (Ezekiel 37:25-26).

In closing, I want to make clear that the **LAND** that the present state of unbelieving Israel possesses is not the fulfillment of the promises we have briefly considered this Lord’s Day. For the promise of the **LAND** is united to the conversion and repentance of Israel as a **NATION** (Leviticus 26:40-45). When we speak of repentance and godly sorrow that will be manifested by Israel as a **NATION** in that future day of her national conversion, let it be remembered that included in the evangelical grace of repentance is the grace of being ashamed of one’s sin and transgression against the Lord. Dear ones, this will be true not only of Israel’s future repentance, but of our present repentance if it is sincere (Ezra 9:6).

Hypocrites may have some kind of emotional response that appears to be similar in some respects to the evangelical grace of shame, but only those who are regenerate can actually possess that saving grace of a godly shame. Let us not only learn what Israel's shame shall be when she is converted, but may the same shame be ours due to our sin against the Lord.

1. The Christian is ashamed of the very inward defilement and corruption of his own heart that pollutes his thoughts, his words, and his deeds. In other words, the Christian is ashamed of the very source of sin that no one else can see and that is hidden from the view of all men (Psalm 51:4-5). Whereas the hypocrite may be ashamed of the mere outward consequences of sin that issue forth in words and deeds and lead to some type of public humiliation. King Saul was not ashamed of his sin because of it being an offense against God, but that Samuel rebuked him before the elders of the people (1 Samuel 15:30). A hypocrite is merely embarrassed when his sin is made public, but not ashamed before God whether the sin is ever made public or not.

2. The Christian is ashamed of his sin because it is an offense against not only a just and holy God, but against a most loving, merciful and gracious God. The Christian is ashamed over how thankless and ungrateful his sin manifests his/her heart to be in response to such amazing love. The hypocrite may manifest a slavish fear of God, but his own unthankful heart does not bring him to a godly shame and sorrow.

Dear ones, we can get very excited about the future repentance of national Israel, but forget that that same repentance, godly sorrow and shame belong to us daily for our sin if we would know the blessed forgiveness and joyful communion with Jesus Christ. Godly shame is an

evangelical grace. Is it being manifested in your life? If not humble yourself before the Lord and cry out to God for the grace of godly shame.

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