

National Church Establishments.

(The Gospel and the Nations 3—New Testament)

And the Gentiles (גוֹיִם) shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. (Isa. 62:2)

Question.—How does the New Testament reflect the relationship of the Gospel to the nations?

Answer.—There are numerous passages in the New Testament which indicate that there has been no change in the divine plan for the nations:

First, In the various passages at the ends of the Gospels we find confirmation of the national intent of the Gospel message: 1.) The so-called “Great Commission,” given to the apostles, expresses and confirms this intent by seeking the discipleship through sacramental discipline of the nations, *cf.* Matt. 28:19, 20 *with* Isa. 52:15. 2.) This same commission, in Mark, is to be addressed to every “creature” (κτίσει), Mark 16:15; a term which is used of every creation, whether the individual man, the family, or the nation, *cf.* 1 Pet. 2:13 (κτίσει is translated “ordinance”). Clearly in the Bible national *creatures* are subject to the wrath of God, Ezek. 21:28-31. This is confirmed by the words of Christ, Matt. 25:32, 33. 3.) The national intent of the Gospel is reiterated in the commission as it stands in Luke’s Gospel, with the added reflection on its beginning at the Jewish capital, Luke 24:47. After all, a prophet cannot perish out of Jerusalem, Luke 13:33; because the message being addressed to national authorities, it is either received or rejected, and the prophet believed or condemned nationally, in and through her ruling authorities, John 18:35.

Second, In the Book of Acts, Peter makes his appeal first to the Jews as a nation, Acts 4:8-11. Thus, the story of Saul, or Paul, begins with reference to Jerusalem because the Gospel message began there and its spread to the nations would be accomplished through that apostle to the Gentiles (ἔθνος), Acts 8:1; Rom. 11:13; Eph. 3:1. Acts begins with the story of the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit which hints at the national dimension of the intention of the Gospel, Acts 2:5-11. It recounts the calling of Paul who was to take this Gospel to nations and kings, Acts 9:15; a message he faithfully relates in his preaching, Acts 17:26, 27. Then, it presents the case of Cornelius, an Italian (*i.e.*, a Roman citizen and officer), Acts 10:1; and the revelation to Peter that demonstrates to him that God has no respect of persons and, therefore, of nations, Acts 10:34, 35. Next, it proceeds to the synod of Jerusalem which expounds on this international Gospel intent, Acts 15:14-17. It continues with a chronicling of Paul’s missionary journeys to other nations, Acts 16:6-12; 17:1, 22; 18:1, 18, 19; *etc.* So, Acts begins in Jerusalem, the national capital of the Jews, Acts 1:4; and ends in Rome, the capital of the Gentilic powers, Acts 23:11; 28:16, 17, 28-31.

Third, In Paul’s epistles we find the same awareness of the apostolic commission and task as a national burden, Rom. 1:5. Paul accounts the Gospel a

message intended for national repentance and reformation, Rom. 15:8-12, 16-18; which he equates with the great mystery he was to make known to the nations, Rom. 16:25, 26. This national burden is evidenced in his rebuke of the Judaizers, Gal. 2:2; 3:14; and in his affirmation of his office and epitome of the Gospel, 1 Tim. 2:7; 3:16.

Fourth, The language employed of those bringing the message, that they are accounted ambassadors, connotes a messenger bringing a message from the King of kings to the kings of the people, 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20. Thus, Paul appeals to Cæsar, to bring the Gospel to the king, Acts 25:11, 12; and all in the hope of the Gospel being heard and received by the nations, 2 Tim. 4:17.

Fifth, When Paul wishes to call attention to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he proves it by the example of Abraham who, by believing, was to be accounted the father of many nations not simply an aggregate of disjoined or divided individuals or even churches, Gen. 15:5, 6; Rom. 4:3, 13-17.

Sixth, When Paul speaks to the matter of individual election, he grounds his teaching in the established verity of national election, Gen. 25:23; Rom. 9:11, 12; Jer. 31:3, 4; Mal. 1:2, 3.

Seventh, Though the apostles sought the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, Acts 1:6; yet, the time of Jerusalem's down treading was to end when the times of the Gentiles, or nations, is fulfilled, Luke 21:24. Paul calls this the casting away which would lead to the riches of the Gentiles, or nations, Rom. 11:11-15, 25. To Paul was committed a dispensation of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9:17; to lay a foundation, the preparation of the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. 12:9-14; even a testimony, for the future conversion of the nations, Matt. 24:14; Isa. 49:7; Rom. 11:32. Which shall be accomplished when the seventh trump sounds, Rev. 11:15. Then shall be accomplished the glorious things spoken of Zion, Ps. 87:4, 6.

Eighth, The Book of Revelation promises national power to those who overcome and keep the works of Christ unto the end, Rev. 2:26. Christ, through his "two witnesses," prophesies during the times of the Gentiles unto the nations, Rev. 10:11; 11:1, 3-9. As God concludes all the nations in unbelief, they become angrier and angrier against his witnesses and their testimony, Rev. 11:18. Zion is travailing to bring forth Christ mystical to rule amongst the nations in the persons of godly magistrates, Rev. 12:5; 19:15. Yet, during the apostasy, the first beast, of the sea, is given power over the nations, Rev. 13:7. The faithful witnessing church proclaims, during this period, the Gospel to every nation, and triumphs over the demise of mystic Babylon when she loses her national hegemony, Rev. 14:6-8. The assured triumph of the Gospel in a national capacity is affirmed, Rev. 15:4. It is the character of the millennium, as a separate and recognizable period, that Satan would no longer deceive the nations, Rev. 20:3; after which, he shall be allowed one last grand deception of the nations, Rev. 20:8. It is the nature of the leaves of the tree of life to heal the nations, Rev. 22:2.