

God's Gracious Covenant With Israel: The Foundation For Worldwide National Covenanting #6

Romans 11:29
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As we have worked our way through Romans 11, we have focused our attention on the spiritual/Gospel blessings that God shall graciously and abundantly pour out upon "ALL ISRAEL" in repentance, forgiveness, and admission into the Visible Church of Jesus Christ. Without controversy, these spiritual/Gospel blessings are the most important and significant blessings that "ALL ISRAEL" shall receive in the glorious time of unparalleled worldwide reformation that God's Spirit will bring to pass in the future (and near future we pray). There are no greater blessings that our God mercifully bestows upon sinners in this world than repentance, forgiveness, the Gospel faithfully preached, and all the Gospel ordinances and sacraments faithfully administered within the Visible Church of Jesus Christ. But today we shall elaborate further upon Israel's restoration as we consider whether these spiritual/Gospel blessings (as the chief of all blessings) exhaust all that God shall graciously bestow upon Israel in the future.

The questions we now shall consider in our study of God's gracious Covenant with Israel are questions like these. Will Israel's restoration not only manifest these glorious spiritual/Gospel blessings, but also manifest certain national, temporal and geographical blessings as well? Will Israel not simply live in the land as a Nation (as presently is the case), but live in the land as a faithful covenanted Christian Nation with a faithful covenanted Christian Church as will be the case with the other covenanted Christian Nations and Churches of the world at that time of millennial blessing?

Although the calling and conversion of the Jews in the future is included as a theological truth in the **Westminster Larger Catechism** (Question 191) and as a certain event in which to hope and for which to pray in the **Westminster Directory For The Public Worship Of God** (both of these were noted in the first sermon in this series), it should be noted that nothing in these two documents is either explicitly affirmed or denied as to the matter of Israel's restoration to the land promised to them in God's Covenant with them in the Old Testament. In fact, there is no unified consensus among the Reformed Churches and Teachers on these particular questions. Some divines simply acknowledged the spiritual conversion and calling of Israel, while others in addition to that also acknowledged the geo-political restoration of Israel (as a covenanted Nation) to the land promised to them by God in the Old Testament. Thus, I do not believe that the specific response one gives to the geo-political restoration of Israel as a covenanted Christian Nation determines in and of itself one's orthodoxy. However, it does seem to me that the weight of biblical evidence lies with those Reformed divines who have promoted both the spiritual/Gospel restoration of Israel to Jesus Christ, but also the geo-political restoration of Israel as a covenanted Christian Nation to the land promised to them by God in His covenant with Israel. This I will seek to demonstrate in the sermons that follow.

Before looking specifically at the question before us today, I would briefly like to make it clear in a few statements what I deny and what I affirm about Israel and her future restoration.

1. **I deny** that the future restoration of Israel means a return to a rebuilt Temple or any of the Old Testament Ceremonies or Judicial Laws that were peculiar to Israel as a Church or as a Nation in the Old

Testament. To the contrary, **I affirm** (according to the New Testament revelation) that the Temple is realized in the Church of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5), that the Old Testament Ceremonies were shadows and are realized in the sacrificial work of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1), and that the Judicial Laws served to distinguish Israel from the heathen nations and are realized in our sanctification from sin unto Christ (2 Corinthians 6:17; Hebrews 6:18).

2. **I deny** that the future restoration of Israel means that Israel as a Nation or as a National Church will be exalted above or have a more favored status above any other Nation or National Church. To the contrary, **I affirm** according to the New Testament revelation that (both now and in the future millennium) “in Christ” there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11); that there is only one “new man” comprised of both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:12-17); that there is one “household” of God composed of both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:18); that there is “one body” of Christ into which all are baptized, whether Jew or Gentile (1 Corinthians 12:13); that Israel at the time of her future restoration will be grafted into the same olive tree (i.e. Visible Church of Jesus Christ) as are all Gentile and Jews now and as all Gentile Nations shall be in the future when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in (Romans 11:16-26); that there is only one Covenant of Grace in the Old and New Testaments (Galatians 3:15-18) and only one “New Covenant” sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ which encompasses all who come to Christ by faith, whether Jew or Gentile (Matthew 26:28; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:14; Hebrews 8:8; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24); and that there is only one gospel, one salvation, and one Savior offered to both Jew and Gentile, and that any other gospel or salvation offered than the one Paul offered is accursed (Galatians 1:6-10; Acts 4:12; Romans 1:16).

3. **I deny** that Christ shall bodily return to this earth in order to establish and exalt Israel as a Nation above other Nations and in order to reign upon the throne of David from the earthly city of Jerusalem. To the contrary, **I affirm** according to the New Testament revelation that Christ is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16), as the Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5), and as the Prince of Israel (Acts 5:31); and that the resurrected Christ was seated upon the throne of David when He ascended to heaven and was seated at God's right hand (Acts 2:29-36) from where He shall reign until every single enemy (without exception) has been subdued under His feet, the very last enemy that shall be forever subdued being death (1 Corinthians 15:22-26,50-54), which shall be swallowed up AFTER the millennium at the time of Christ's bodily Second Coming.

4. **I am not** a Christian Zionist or Dispensationalist erroneously promoting the present Nation of Israel's existence in Palestine as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. To the contrary, **I affirm** that the Old Testament prophecies that address the restoration of Israel to her land as a covenant blessing require first Israel's national repentance and Israel's national salvation through faith in Christ (Leviticus 26:40-42; Zechariah 12:10-14). It must be remembered that until Israel's repentance and salvation, she is an enemy to Christ and to the Gospel of Christ (according to Romans 11:28).

Let us now turn to our question to be answered in this sermon.

I. Does the restoration of Israel prophesied by Paul in Romans 11 speak only of a spiritual/gospel restoration or does it likewise include a geo/political restoration as well?

A. As indicated earlier in this sermon, I do believe the weight of biblical testimony supports the position that Israel's restoration will not only bring about her repentance, forgiveness, admission into the Visible Church of Christ (along with many other National Churches throughout the world at that future time), and all Gospel blessings, but Christ will also cause "all Israel" that is saved to live in her own land in peace and prosperity.

B. There are basically two types of biblical evidence that I will use over the next couple sermons to demonstrate this truth. **First**, there are passages of Scripture that either implicitly or explicitly state that what will be restored is Israel as a **NATION**, rather than merely Israel as a race or ethnic people. And **second**, there are passages of Scripture that teach that the "land" promises made by God to Abraham and Israel as a covenanted People and Nation in their Covenants are not merely typological, but are also free expressions of God's mercy to an undeserving People and Nation that shall yet be fulfilled (along with her repentance and forgiveness). We will have more to say in a future sermon about types in the Old Testament and their fulfillment. But let me presently note that just as our earthly Sabbath rest can be a type of our heavenly Sabbath rest and yet there remains an earthly, weekly Sabbath rest to the people of God (according to Hebrews 4:9), so likewise the earthly land of Israel can be a type of the heavenly land and yet there remains an earthly land of Israel to be restored to the **NATION** of Israel.

C. First, let us consider those passages of Scripture that implicitly or explicitly state that it is Israel as a **NATION** that will be restored to Christ in the future. Now you may ask, what does Israel as a **NATION** have to do with Israel living in her own land in repentance, faith in Christ, and

forgiveness? The point being made here is simply that the restoration of Israel as a **NATION** implies a restored land and government. For ordinarily an ethnic group that wanders the earth without actual possession of a land (like the Gypsies), or at least virtual possession of a promised land by God (like Israel) may be said to be a **PEOPLE** because of their common ethnic/racial background, but we usually reserve the word **NATION** for those who you unite in a common government and have a common territory over which the government of that Nation exercises dominion. Although Israel did not have an actual land (*de facto*) that they possessed at the time they became a **NATION** at Mt. Sinai, they did have a government, they did have laws, and they did have a promised land (*de jure*), promised to them by God. It should also be noted that a **NATION** may not necessarily be composed of all who are ethnically/racially related, for foreigners and strangers may be united with those who have a common ethnicity and yet be within the same **NATION** (as the mixed multitude that left Egypt included not only descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but included Egyptians as well according to Exodus 12:38, and those Egyptians who covenanted with God and were circumcised were united to the **NATION** of Israel). This is the common and ordinary conception of the word **NATION** as we find it used in the Scripture (for example, Genesis 18:18; Isaiah 2:4; Acts 2:5; Acts 26:24 etc.). One exception may seem to be found in 1 Peter 2:9 where the Church of Christ is called “a holy **NATION**”, even though the Church has no earthly land. Though the Church here upon the earth may not presently possess a land (*de facto*), it does have a King (Christ), a government, and laws, but it should also be noted that the Church does have a heavenly land promised to her (*de jure*) as we are taught in Philippians 3:20 and Hebrews 11:16. So even in the case of the Church, as a “holy **NATION**”, a land is associated with it, if not presently possessed upon earth, then a heavenly land promised in the future. Thus, the first

piece of evidence that we shall seek, looks for the connection and association between a restored **NATION** which then either implies a restored Land or explicitly states a restored Land.

1. Let us first consider Romans 11, and even though the actual word “NATION” is not used in this chapter, we still have to interpret the word “Israel” to mean something (as it is used 4 different times in Romans 11, verses 2,7,25,26). Thus, when we consider the thrust of Paul’s argument in Romans 11 concerning the future restoration of Israel, does Paul refer **ONLY** to the restoration of Israel as an ethnic **PEOPLE**, as the actual blood-line descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (I do not deny that these actual blood-line descendants are included in the Israel that shall be restored, but does that exhaust the meaning of the word “Israel” as used in Romans 11)? Or does the word “Israel” primarily refer to Israel as a **NATION** (which would then most likely include a restoration of her land over which to govern as well)? It seems to me that those who only see a restoration of ethnic/racial Israel (which does not include a restoration of Israel as a **NATION**) will have some difficulties in their interpretation of various passages in the Scripture (and particularly in Romans 11, as we shall see). Also, you may want to listen to (or read) the first two sermons as to why I do not believe Paul is either referring to the spiritual Israel (composed of both Jews and Gentiles) or to a remnant of the Nation of Israel who were and are presently being saved.

2. Our text for this Lord’s Day (Romans 11:29) states: “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” We considered this passage in the previous sermon and so I refer you to that sermon for a fuller discussion of that text. But let me briefly summarize what was previously said in order to establish from this verse (Romans 11:29) that what is in view here is the restoration of Israel as a **NATION**. Two blessings are promised to Israel and are said to be “without repentance”

a. First, the “calling” of God in Romans 11:29 and the “election” of God in Romans 11:28 both refer to God’s sovereign and gracious choice of Israel to be His covenanted **NATION**. Paul states in Romans 11:28 that Israel is an enemy because of her rejection of Christ and Gospel of salvation (Romans 11:28a), but that she is also “beloved” because God chose Israel as a covenanted **NATION** (Isaiah 45:4 [“Israel mine **ELECT**”]; Deuteronomy 7:7-8a [“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor **CHOOSE** you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers”]; Deuteronomy 10:15 [“Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he **CHOSE** their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.”]). According to Paul, the very same **NATION** of Israel that is presently God’s enemy shall be in the future saved and restored by the gracious and almighty power of the Holy Spirit because she is presently “beloved” due to God having elected and called her to be in covenant with Him. And one of the “gifts” promised to Israel by way of an “everlasting” covenant was the land (in Genesis 17:7-8). In Romans 11:29, Paul is by inference showing that this Covenant made with Israel is an everlasting Covenant and that God shall yet in the future restore Israel as a **NATION** to Himself (on the basis of the Covenant stated in Genesis 17:7; note that the Covenant with Abraham is the same Covenant that was established with the **NATION** of Israel in Exodus 32:11-14; Leviticus 26:40-45; 1 Chronicles 16:17), but Paul also includes “the gifts” as being irrevocable in Romans 11:29 which I would suggest also includes among other blessings the Land which is mentioned as “an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8) within that same “everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:7). We’ll look at this passage in greater detail in a future sermon, but for the present time this will suffice to demonstrate to what Paul refers in Romans 11:28-29 when he speaks of Israel’s “gifts”

and “calling” (or “election”) being without repentance. It is the “called” and “elect” NATION of Israel that I would submit Paul has in mind.

b. Furthermore, I would submit that it is likewise Israel as a **NATION** that Paul has primarily in mind when he states in Romans 11:2: “God hath not cast away his people which he **FOREKNEW.**” Though Paul uses the expression “his people” to refer to Israel at this point rather than “his nation”, it should be noted that when Israel became a covenanted NATION at Mt. Sinai, that **NATION** of Israel was referred to thereafter as “my people” (Exodus 19:5-6; Leviticus 26:9-13). Furthermore, Paul states later on in Romans 11:2 in what sense he means “his people” when he declares how Elijah made intercession to God against Israel (against Israel as only an ethnic people or against Israel as a covenant-breaking NATION? See 1 Kings 19:14.). Dear ones, it was not mere ethnic descendants of Abraham that were cast off from God (for multitudes believed in Christ and were baptized as we see throughout the book of Acts), but rather it was Israel as a **NATION** whom God foreknew that was cast away from God (John 11:47-52—carefully note the use of the word “NATION” in this passage). You see, Romans 11:2 refers to God’s foreknowing and foreloving Israel as a **NATION** whom He elected and chose and with whom He covenanted through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Israel at Mt. Sinai. To “foreknow” is again equivalent to “elect” and “call” which we considered in Romans 11:28-29. The same covenanted **NATION** of Israel that Paul had in view in Romans 10:21 is the same covenanted and elect **NATION** of Israel that God had not permanently cast away in Romans 11:2. So the concept of Israel as **NATION** is what is in view when we see the word “Israel” in Romans 9-11 (especially Romans 10:21; Romans 11:2,7,25,26).

c. So as not to unnecessarily extend this discussion of how Israel is used in Romans 11 (whether as mere backslidden ethnic descendants of Abraham or as primarily a backslidden, covenant-

breaking **NATION** that shall be saved in the future), it appears to me that when Paul states that the Lord shall save “ALL ISRAEL” in Romans 11:26 that he has in view again Israel as a **NATION** (I refer you back to my discussion of that phrase in the first two sermons in this series where it was noted from the use of that phrase, “ALL ISRAEL”, in the Old Testament that it was a way of speaking of the **NATION** as a whole often by way of the **NATION’S** representatives). For observe in Romans 11:26-27 that the Lord shall turn ungodliness from “Jacob” (as a **NATION**) in accordance with His covenant with that **NATION** as cited by Paul from Isaiah 59:20-21 (where Jacob or Israel as a **NATION** is delivered from the enemy that comes against her just before her restoration and salvation as a **NATION**). Compare also Isaiah 27:9-13 where the restoration of Israel and Judah as a **NATION** from Babylonian captivity (a picture of their ultimate restoration in the future) likewise parallels the language used by Paul in Romans 11:26. Thus, from a brief survey of Romans 11, I would submit that it is not merely Israel as an ethnic people that shall all be saved, but primarily Israel as a **NATION** that shall all be saved in accordance with God’s covenant to Israel as An foreknown, elect, called and covenanted **NATION**. And as stated earlier in the sermon, a restoration of Israel as a **NATION** then implies a territorial restoration to her land as a Christian **NATION** (like the many other Christians nations in that time of millennial blessing), governed by Christian magistrates, and joined with other National Churches as a Christian Church. We shall consider in the next sermon other passages in the Scripture that seem to give evidence to Israel’s territorial restoration.

Dear ones, If the gifts and calling of God are without repentance to Israel (Rom.11:29) in regard to her being called as a **NATION** and being graciously and freely granted the gift of a piece of real estate in Palestine, how much more the heavenly gifts and eternal calling of God that are

reserved for us in heaven are without repentance to God's dear children (1 Peter 1:3-5). And if God will grant to Israel a restored **NATION** and land in this life as an inheritance in His covenant with her, will He not provide for us, His bride, our daily bread and every other material need we have in this life as an inheritance in His covenant with us (Matthew 6:11,31-33; Philippians 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:17; James 5:16)?

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