

The Redemption of Israel

Scripture: Zechariah 10:1–12

Code: 2166

INTRODUCTION

Romans 11:1 asks a question that theologians and students of the Bible still discuss today: "Hath God cast away his people?" Paul answered it succinctly in the next verse: "God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew." Romans 11 deals with the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and declares His faithfulness in not setting them aside. After explaining God's plan for Israel, Paul ends the chapter by saying, "All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.... For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance" (vv. 26-29; cf., Isa. 59:20-21). Has God forgotten about His promises to Israel? No. Chapter 11 emphatically states He will save them.

One of the most wonderful things we can tell Jewish people is that there's a great future ahead for Israel--God is going to redeem the nation. One of the reasons America has been such a great friend of Israel is because of its Christian heritage. The Israelis know many of us believe in the restoration of Israel, especially evangelical Christians.

Isaiah 59:20-21, which Paul quoted in Romans 11, says, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto those who turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." God says there is a forever planned for Israel that culminates when the Redeemer returns to Israel. He will turn them away from their ungodliness and forgive their sins. But what is involved in their redemption, and what are the benefits of that salvation? The answer to those questions form the theme of Zechariah 10.

LESSON

I. A DIVINE REDEEMER (v. 4)

"Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together."

A. His Identity Implied

Zechariah reminds the people that the Messiah is coming, and he identifies Him in this verse. This

verse is one of the richest Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Zechariah, a post- exilic (latter) prophet picks up three illustrations from pre- exilic (former) prophets regarding the Messiah. He refers to Him as a cornerstone, a nail, and a battle bow. Those three terms give us tremendous insight into the Messiah.

The phrase "out of him" refers back to the house of Judah in verse 3. The Deliverer who came from the house of Judah is the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture not only identifies Him as the lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5; cf., Gen. 49:10), but also records His being born at the Messianic birthplace of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1). Micah 5:2 says, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

B. His Impact Illustrated

1. As a cornerstone

Zechariah states that "out of him came forth the corner," which refers to a cornerstone. That messianic title was used by the former prophets and the New Testament authors several times.

a) Isaiah 28:16--"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." The apostle Peter identifies that stone as Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5-7).

b) Romans 9:32-33--Paul here repeats what Isaiah said: "[Israel] stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offense; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Paul was referring to the rejection of Jesus Christ by Israel, which was seeking righteousness by works.

c) 1 Corinthians 1:23--Paul said, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block."

d) Ephesians 2:20--The church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." So sometimes He's referred to as a stone of stumbling and sometimes as a cornerstone.

e) 1 Peter 2:6-8--Here Peter combined both metaphors of a cornerstone and stumbling stone and applied them to Christ.

f) Daniel 2:34--Daniel referred to the Messiah as a stone "cut out without hands" coming in judgment to destroy the Gentile world powers. Jesus alluded to that crushing aspect of the messianic stone in Matthew 21:44.

Although the Messiah is pictured as a stone of judgment, that is not the emphasis in Zechariah. As a cornerstone gives stability to its adjoining walls and is the principal foundation of a building, so Christ is the foundation upon which His Kingdom rests. He is the One who will come and give stability to Israel.

Commentator David Baron said, "The great God, the Divine Architect of the universe, has purposed within Himself from all eternity to raise out of frail, imperfect, human materials a glorious Temple for His own eternal habitation through the Spirit, which, when completed, shall show forth, even more than the material temple of the universe, to principalities and powers the infinite power and manifold wisdom of God; and in order to insure its eternal safety He has bestowed great care, on the foundation. He Himself has laid it And the 'tried' and 'precious' corner-stone which He laid as the basis of this mystical structure is His own Son, who is 'perfected for evermore,' against whom even the gates of hell shall not prevail" (The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah [Grand Rapids: Kregel,

1972], p. 348). When God sets Christ as the cornerstone, the foundation stands sure. History has shown that His church has weathered the storms of satanic and human opposition.

Just as a cornerstone supports two walls, so Christ holds up the two walls that constitute His redeemed people--the church and Israel. Although there used to be a wall between Jew and Gentile, there is now a common cornerstone. Some day when Israel enters its earthly Kingdom, the Gentiles who are saved will enter it with them. By the time we enter the Eternal State, there probably won't be any way to tell us apart. So all those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ and who are of Jewish descent will fit into either wall.

2. As a nail

The Hebrew word translated "nail" refers to two kinds of nails. One is a tent stake. The other is a nail or peg that was driven into the center pole of the tent or built into the wall of a dwelling. Utensils and valuables were hung on it. Often the wealth of a family would be hung on that peg for the admiration of all who came in. I believe Zechariah had in mind this latter idea, implying that God is going to make Christ the nail in the midst of His Kingdom, for all the glory of the Kingdom will hang on Him. Zechariah 6:13 says that the Messiah "shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory." Christ will bear the glory of His millennial Kingdom's splendor within the Temple He builds.

Isaiah 22 supports the idea of a such a peg referring to Christ. The close historical fulfillment of Isaiah's messianic prophecy was Eliakim, the master of King Hezekiah's household. Speaking of him as a prototype of the Messiah, God says, "I will fasten him like a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to the vessels of flagons" (vv. 23- 24).

3. As a battle bow

Zechariah also refers to the messianic Redeemer as "the battle bow." Zechariah 9:13 says, "I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee like the sword of a mighty man." There God is pictured as if He were an archer using His people as a bow and arrow against the Greek invader, Antiochus Epiphanes. In chapter 10 the Messiah is portrayed as the battle bow itself. He is a conqueror without equal who will come and destroy the enemy. That's the picture we have of Christ in Revelation 19:11-16. Zechariah 9:13 tells us that the Messiah will put out every oppressor of Israel.

II. A DIVINE RAIN (v. 1)

"Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

Zechariah has just said in the previous verse that God is going to bring great harvests of grain and grapes in the millennial Kingdom. In this verse he encourages the Jewish people to request the Lord's blessings of His Kingdom.

A. Literal Rain

"Showers of rain" doesn't refer to a violent, destructive rain but an ample productive rain. I believe Zechariah is referring in part to literal rain. In the millennial Kingdom God is going to cause rain to allow the crops of that dry part of the world to flourish. I've been out on the desert outside of Jerusalem to the east and there's nothing significant growing out there now.

Isaiah 35 gives us a picture of how the Lord will shower His earthly Kingdom: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes" (vv. 1-2, 6-7). In the Millennium the inland desert is going to look like the lush green coastal areas of Israel. But for that to happen, there is going to have to be some divine rain.

B. Spiritual Blessing

While the Bible promises a literal Kingdom with literal rain and literal fields and crops, it also speaks of spiritual blessing outpoured on the people of God. The blossoming desert is an illustration of how God will bless the Millennial Kingdom.

Hosea declared, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (6:1-3). God's outpoured blessing is likened to the rain. That promise refers not only to the spring rain that comes in March and April that's so indispensable to the crops, but also the rain of God's blessing.

III. A DIVINE RECOMPENSE (vv. 2-3)

A. The Problem (v. 2)

"The idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain; therefore, they went their way like a flock; they were troubled, because there was no shepherd."

This verse is a sad picture of Israel's spiritual life before the Babylonian captivity. Although the captivity cured the nation of its idolatry, it was the result of their idolatry in the first place. The people of Israel worshiped idols and followed diviners (occultic fortune tellers) who led them into error. The Hebrew word translated "idols" (teraphim) refers primarily to household idols. Pagan worshipers did not confine their worship to temples but used household idols of their gods, which often became channels of demonism.

Idolatry was not unusual in Israel. Genesis 31:19, 1 Samuel 15:23, and 2 Kings 23:24 record it as an ever-increasing problem in Israel's history, even though it was absolutely forbidden by God. The wicked and useless guidance of demon-inspired idolatry, along with the deception and false comfort of the diviners, left Israel like sheep without a shepherd.

1. The indictment of the false shepherds

Ezekiel prophesied about that tragedy: "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely, because my flock became a prey, and my flock became food to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock, Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be food for them" (Ezek. 34:6-10). God condemns the religious leaders of Israel for having selfishly used His people to benefit themselves. Although the people provided food for them through their offerings, the religious leaders had failed to spiritually nourish the flock. God was angered because they had left His people to wander about by themselves without a shepherd.

2. The identity of the future Shepherd

In Ezekiel 34 God says, "Therefore will I save my flock I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant, David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God ... I, the Lord, have spoken it" (vv. 22-24). God will give His people a faithful Shepherd, the Messiah, who was symbolized by David because of God's promise to him (2 Sam. 7:4-17).

B. The Punishment (v. 3)

"Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats; for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his majestic horse in the battle."

The Hebrew term translated "goats" (lit., "he-goats") is used in the Old Testament to refer to leaders or chiefs. Just as in the past false leaders will draw God's people into occultic practices and idolatry.

In the future, I believe Israel's going to return to worshipping idols and occultic practices, as verse 2 implies. Daniel 9:27 tell us that Israel will make a pact during the Tribulation with the Antichrist, who sets up an image to himself in the Jerusalem Temple and requires everyone to bow to it. When the doors of hell are open and the demons let loose, there will be demonic activity in the world like never before (Rev. 9:1-21). And Israel will become engulfed in occultic idolatry. But in the end, God will look with mercy on His people who have been victimized by false leaders.

God will allow His people to experience an incredible delusion. But after He lets the satanic forces of evil run their limit, He will destroy them. Isaiah 66:4 says, "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them, because when I called, none did answer; when I spoke, they did not

hear; but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not." Yet in His wonderful grace, the divine Redeemer will come in the midst of that delusion as a true shepherd, and use the nation of Israel to conquer His foes.

Zechariah 10:3 tells us essentially the same thing that we find later in 12:1-9 and 14:1-8, as will as the apocalyptic prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John--that Christ is going to come in judgment using the nation of Israel as His war horse. Zechariah 12:9 says, "It shall come to pass, in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

IV. A DIVINE RESTORATION (vv. 5-7a)

"They shall be like mighty men, who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle; and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph [Israel], and I will bring them again to place them [in their land]; for I have mercy upon them, and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord, their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man."

A tremendous restoration is going to come to the nation of Israel, which will be transformed into a powerful army by God. If you study Israel's history in Scripture, you will discover that the only time the nation ever won a battle was when the Lord was in it. Such will be the case in the end times. Because the Lord will be with them, they will confound their enemies ("the riders on horses"). In their confusion, the defeated nations will be ashamed of their inability to withstand Israel. They will be in a state of shock when the King of Kings joins with His mighty people from Israel to win the great and final battle before the earthly Kingdom is established.

"The house of Judah" refers to the southern kingdom of Israel and "the house of Joseph" to the northern. God is going to restore the whole nation by bringing them back to the land (cf., Jer. 32:37). That's a great message to the Jewish people, who have been wandering throughout the world far so many centuries.

The restoration of Israel will be as though God had never set them aside. This clear prophecy of Israel having a place in the Kingdom, given here in verses 5-7 and in so many other places, makes its difficult to see how people could believe that God will never restore Israel. It's God's plan to strengthen "they of Ephraim" (another name for Israel) and restore them to the place of blessing. They'll be given the position intended for them from the beginning.

You might wonder why God is going to do this. It is simply because He is "the Lord, their God." The Hebrew equivalent of the title translated "Lord" here identifies His covenant-keeping nature. He performs that which He promises. No longer will He consider them "Lo-ruhamah" (Hosea 1:6, "unpitied") or "Lo-ammi" (Hosea 1:9, "not my people"), names symbolic of the periods of Israel's history when they were separated from God. Israel will again become God's people who acknowledge Him as their God.

V. A DIVINE REJOICING (v. 7b)

"Their heart shall rejoice as through wine; yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord."

Naturally when the divine Redeemer comes and brings His judgment upon the wicked and His blessing upon His people, there will be great joy. The joy of the restored nation of Israel is likened to those who have had a little too much to drink. Everyone's going to be rejoicing in the Lord, including the children.

Isaiah predicted joy that would be a great contrast to the sorrow Israel has experienced over the centuries: "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her, that ye may nurse, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may drink deeply, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like a flowing stream; then shall ye be nursed, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants" (Isa. 66:10-14). Jerusalem is going to be like a nursing mother who comforts her children. The rest of the world will experience the joy of Jerusalem, as a child shares in the joy of his mother when she bounces him on her knee.

VI. A DIVINE REGATHERING (vv. 8-11)

A. The Call to the Redeemed (v. 8)

"I will hiss [whistle] for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them, and they shall increase as they have increased."

When the divine Redeemer returns, He will whistle for His people and regather them (cf., Isa. 5:26). And they will multiply as they did in Egypt (Exod. 1:8-22). Prior to their redemption before the millennial Kingdom, the people of Israel are going to continue to flourish into a mighty nation, in spite of any persecution they may encounter.

Those who become saved during the Tribulation and survive it will enter into the earthly millennial Kingdom in physical, non- glorified bodies. (All other believers will already have received physical, glorified bodies.) They will have children and will live a long time. In fact, if someone dies at a hundred, that will be considered a short life span (Isa. 65:20). The earth will be filled with children. Zechariah 2:4 says, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited like towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle in it."

B. The Collection of the Remnant (vv. 9-10)

"I will sow them among the peoples; and they shall remember me in far countries, and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, and place shall not be found for them."

Verse 9 backs up in history to when God sowed His people among the nations. That prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Jewish people were scattered all over the world. Egypt and Assyria are symbols of all the countries where they have been scattered. Even within the larger territory promised to Israel in the covenants (symbolized by Gilead and Lebanon), there will not be enough room because of the multitude of Jewish people.

1. Isaiah 54:1-2--"Sing, O barren, thou who didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou who didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare, not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." Here Isaiah also prophesied about Israel's population explosion in the end times. He pictured them having to increase the size of their tents, using longer ropes and stakes that are more securely anchored.

2. Isaiah 49:20-22--"The children whom thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too narrow for me; give a place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and moving to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the nations, and set up my standard to the peoples; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders." Israel will wonder where all her children came from, having assumed they were permanently lost in the dispersion. God will even use the Gentile nations to bring the people of Israel back to their land, but when they get there they'll find there won't be enough room because of the multitudes regathering.

C. The Clearing of Roadblocks (v. 11)

"He shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart."

To gather all these people when He whistles for them, God's going to have to remove some obstacles. Passing through the sea is an allusion to the dividing of the Red Sea. In the context of the verse, "the deeps of the river" refers to the Nile, which will dry up in the manner of the Jordan River when Israel marched across it to enter the Promised Land. God will remove not only geographical obstacles as He regathers His people, but also political ones. He will conquer the pride of a nation like Assyria and the dominance of a nation like Egypt to enable His people to return unhindered. Assyria and Egypt, the traditional enemies of Israel, symbolize any nation that would try to withhold God from fulfilling His will. God will overcome any obstacle to get His people back.

VII. A DIVINE RENOVATION (v. 12)

"I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."

God will bring about a total spiritual revival among His people. As those who "shall walk up and down in his name," the people of Israel will be the messengers of their Messiah in the millennial Kingdom. What a glorious future there will be for Israel!

It's great to know where history's going, but it's even greater to be a part of it. We who know Christ will witness the transformation of the earth and experience the blessings of His Kingdom.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What question does Paul answer in Romans 11?
2. What is one of the most wonderful things we can tell Jewish people about Israel?
3. Where was the Messiah to come from? Who specifically fulfilled that prophecy? Support your answer with Scripture (vv. 3-4).
4. What kind of stones was the Messiah pictured as? Describe the significance of both.
5. What do the analogies of a nail and a battle bow teach us about the Messiah?
6. Explain the nature of the rain that God will send in the Millennium.
7. What was the result of Israel's idolatry, and what did that result have upon their idolatry?
8. Why was Israel like sheep without a shepherd?
9. What did Israel's shepherds fail to do, according to Ezekiel 34:8? What will her future Shepherd do, according to verses 22-24?
10. What will false leaders do to God's people during the Tribulation? How will the Lord of hosts respond to that?
11. When were the only times Israel ever won its battles? What will enable the nation to win the final battle in the end times (vv. 5-6)?
12. Why will God restore the nation of Israel?
13. What will be the response of those who experience God's blessing and victory over their enemies (v. 7b)?

14. In spite of persecution, what will happen to the people of Israel (v. 8)?
15. When did God sow His children "among the peoples" (v. 9)? Why will a place not be found for them when God regathers them?
16. What kind of obstacles will God remove to get His people back into their land?
17. How will God's people be strengthened in the Millennium? How will they serve the Messiah (v. 12)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Scripture identifies Christ as a cornerstone, a stumbling stone, and a judgment stone. How a person perceives Christ determines the nature of the relationship a person will experience with Him. Have you acknowledged Christ as the cornerstone of the God's Kingdom and sure foundation of your faith? As the parable of the builder implies, it is on the solid foundation of Christ and obedient faith in His commands that we must build our lives if we hope to withstand the storms of judgment (Matt. 7:24-27). Search your heart and discern if you are truly trusting in Christ for your eternal life.
2. Pray for opportunities to reach out to Jewish people. Let them know that God is still in control and that He will be faithful in His promises to them. Review some of those promises covered in this chapter and be ready to draw their attention to them in the Old Testament. But point out that once a man dies, judgment is appointed and then it's too late to make a decision for or against Christ, who is their Messiah (Heb. 9:27). Ask God to use this study of Christ's return to give you a sense of urgency in proclaiming the gospel, and a renewed hope of heaven.

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