

The Future Salvation of Israel

By PAUL J. SCHARF

In the wake of events unfolding in the Middle East, many are wondering what the Bible says regarding the final, future salvation of Israel—and how the exigencies that we are all witnessing on our television screens right now relate to that future.

It is also common for evangelicals to raise this concern: Why should we be distressed for the nation of Israel today—when they are a people in unbelief?

To answer these questions, let's simply consider the bookends of the coming seven-year tribulation, the 70th week of the prophet Daniel (see Dan. 9:24-27).

At the beginning of the tribulation, Israel must be constituted as an unbelieving nation—in such a condition, both politically and spiritually, where they will agree to a covenant with the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27). They certainly must have come back to their land in unbelief prior to this time, for it is that land that must necessarily be the location where God will bring them to faith and give them spiritual life (see Isa. 4:4; Ezek. 36:24-37:14).

These things have, of course, been taught for many decades in our premillennial, pretribulational, dispensational circles but, unfortunately, many have not made the connection to present realities. Allow me to state this clearly: Israel (now returned to her promised homeland) is, and will continue to be—at least through the rapture of the church and the beginning of the tribulation—a nation in utter unbelief.

We praise the Lord for the glorious exceptions to that rule. The Apostle Paul explains how Israel's national "blindness" is only "in part" (Rom. 11:25). Regarding the future, he also gives us this extraordinary word of hope: Israel's "blindness" will last only "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25). In other words, their loss of spiritual sight will not continue forever, but will expire at the time when Gentiles (who predominantly compose the church during this age) cease to be the nucleus of God's activity in the world. Israel and the Jewish people will once again become the center of His attention throughout the approaching tribulation.

Therefore, we can be confident that "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26) by the conclusion of the 70th week of Daniel—the seven years of tribulation. Isaiah the prophet exclaimed likewise:

And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. (Isa. 4:3)

I take this to mean that the entire nation, as it exists when Christ returns to establish His kingdom, will believe on their Messiah and be saved. Zech. 12:10 describes the very last moment of opportunity for the Jewish people when it proclaims:

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

But, you might ask, how can this be? How is it possible that the entire nation of Israel could come to repent and trust in Christ so quickly—within a span of seven years?

I believe that the explanation may relate to the spiritual state of numerous Jewish people at the present time. While many surely exercise incredible devotion to their history and heritage, and to the teachings and traditions handed down by honored rabbis, they have often neglected the very Hebrew Scriptures which the Lord God provided to the world through their own nation (see Ps. 147:19-20; Eph. 2:11-12; Rom. 3:1-2; 9:3-5). This reminds us of the words of their Messiah in Matt. 22:29 when, in speaking to the Sadducees, he stated:

You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. (See also Matt. 21:42; Luke 24:25-27.)

Thus, it is not hard for me to imagine how—following the removal of the church—the Jewish people will look first to their Scriptures ... and then to their Savior. Their exercise of repentance and faith could begin to take place almost instantaneously after the rapture!

When we “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6) today, when we seek to “bless” (Gen. 12:3) the Jewish people, or when we witness to them—in a loving and meaningful way—of the gospel of their own Messiah (see Matt. 15:24; John 4:22), we participate in a ministry that is unlike any other. How is this the case? It is because God will use our meager efforts toward His magnificent purpose, which He has ordained and determined, of endowing the people of Israel with their final, future salvation, and establishing His kingdom on Earth—in Israel, in Jerusalem, in the Temple, through their Messiah (see Zech. 6:12-13).

And, so we pray until then:

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven. (Matt. 6:10)

L'Shalom!

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