

National Church Establishments.

(The Gospel and the Nations 2—Old Testament Part 2)

Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession. (Ps. 2:8)

Question.—*How should we read the promises of national salvation in Scripture?*

Answer.—There are numerous verses, many containing promises, by which the national character of the Gospel clearly appears in the Old Testament:

First, In the Decalogue, which is itself a summary of the whole Word of God, Ps. 119:17, 18; is the Fourth commandment, which, if we place Christ risen in it, it places the Gospel before our eyes, by making Him the Lord of the Sabbath, Mark 2:28. This command is addressed primarily to superiors, national rulers, calling upon them to act on behalf of their nation, Ex. 20:10. It is in terms of this law that God dealt with the children of Israel, their kings being reckoned good or bad and the nation being blessed or cursed, just in proportion to the conduct of their kings in relation to the Decalogue, Jer. 17:19-27.

Second, Although many texts are favorites for preaching and teaching concerning the Gospel to individuals, the context shows them to hold forth the national aspect of the Gospel: 1.) That place in Hosea, while applicable to individuals, is clearly proclaiming a national Gospel, Hos. 13:9; 14:1. 2.) Similarly, those places in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, from which many comforts may be drawn for individuals, are to this same point in holding forth a national Gospel, Jer. 31:3; Ezek. 36:25-32. 3.) Likewise, Isaiah holds forth doctrine excellent for the applying the Gospel to individual sinners, which remains God's Gospel for the nations, Isa. 1:18. It is addressed to the rulers of the people, Isa. 1:10; and it follows upon a rejection of their vain worship together with a demand for national purity, Isa. 1:16, 17; and, it is followed by an encouragement directed to penitent and believing rulers *and* people, Isa. 1:19, 20. 4.) Again, in Isaiah, Isa. 28:16; we find a Gospel passage referred to by Christ, Matt. 21:42; quoted by Paul and Peter, Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6; which in its context is referred primarily to the rulers of the nation, Isa. 28:14. It is the rulers who are accused of having made a covenant with death and built the nation upon false foundation, Isa. 28:15. When Peter makes application of this passage, he also addresses the rulers and elders of the people, Acts 4:8-11.

Third, In the book of Psalms, the Gospel, in its national capacity is often alluded to or assumed: 1.) In the promised blessing of universal knowledge and governance of the nations by the Lord, Ps. 67:1-4. 2.) In the promises that all nations will serve Him, Ps. 72:11. 3.) In the call for all nations to praise Him, Ps. 117:1. 4.) In the claim that all nations belong to His inheritance, Ps. 82:8.

Fourth, There are numerous passages in the Prophets which indicate that the Old Testament view of the Gospel is that it is a Gospel for nations and their kings, Isa. 60:1-3, 11; 62:2.

Fifth, In the book of Jonah, we have the case of God provoking His own people to jealousy, Rom. 11:11; by making transference of Israel's national ministry to Nineveh, Jon. 1:2. The fact that Jonah's ministry is not transferred until he spent three days and three nights in the belly of the whale is evidence of the coming New Testament transfer, Jon. 1:17; Matt. 12:40. It is the preaching of the Gospel to a nation in its capital and to its king, and its effect is a lesson to all nations, Jon. 3:5-10.

Sixth, the prophesied end for which the Messiah, or Christ, was to be sent forth was with a national Gospel in view, Isa. 49:6; 52:10. In fact, His ministry to the nations, and their kings, is joined to the prophecy that He would baptize nations, Isa. 52:15.

Seventh, God's dealings with Israel as a nation was designed to address the heathen nations, Mic. 7:16, 17. The purpose of these dealings is to lead all nations into the fear, or true knowledge of the Lord, Ezek. 28:23.

Eighth, Old Testament saints were aware that their national Gospel would be made to prevail over the nations of the earth, Ps. 149:5-9. This hope formed a great part of their comfort during the time of the Babylonian captivity, Dan. 7:27. At the apex of this hope was the belief that the Lord would sit as king amongst the very nations which had once persecuted the poor people of God, Zeph. 3:19, 20; Zech. 14:9.

The only question which remains is, "Did this faith carry over into the New Testament?"