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Ed Nichols

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CONTENT

ISRAEL IN GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN

GENTILES IN PROPHECY

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
AND MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION

THE RESURRECTIONS

LITERAL MILLENNIUM

JUDGMENTS

FINAL STATE

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE NATION ISRAEL IN GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN

God's prophetic plan for the nation Israel did not begin in the garden as is often assumed. The time period between Adam and Abraham is a time when all people were Gentile. It is only after the call of Abraham that insight into Israel's special relationship is revealed.

The Abrahamic Covenant God provides a view of how God will deal with Israel as history unfolds. These prophecies or promises are in force as long as the Nation Israel is true to God. When Israel is in sin God chastises Israel and the blessings of the covenant are set aside. The Abrahamic Covenant begins the promise of Israel having a land which God provides especially for them.

There is prophecy concerning the dispersion of Israel and their return to the land. There has at this time been three of these dispersions and two returns. Israel now is in a waiting state until the second coming of Christ when they will be delivered as promised.

The present period of grace is also available to Israel and they can obtain salvation with the Gentiles. When Christ returns Israel will have a prominent position in the new land with Christ as their King.

There are four more covenants concerning Israel and prophecy which are the Mosaic covenant; the Palestinian covenant; the Davidic covenant and the New covenant. These covenant each delineate a relationship between Israel and God. All of the dispensations and covenant are significant in the life of Israel, however, the final dispersion and gathering is being fulfilled as God makes provisions for Christ return to this world. When Christ returns He will gather Israel to Him and place His people in the land which He had promised them.

According to end time prophecy concerning Israel, they will go through several stages of preparation prior to the return of Christ. These stages are the reconstitution into a political state; an agreement with a Gentile ruler; the breaking of this agreement with persecution; and the restoration of Israel during Christ thousand year reign on earth.

The distinction between Israel and the church in these events are found in "end time" prophecy. The church age which began at the first coming of Christ will have several transitional period prior to the second coming of Christ.

Many of the prophecies predicted in the scriptures have been fulfilled and evidence of the end time is clearly at hand. At present it is noted that apostasy within the present church is growing. This final prophecy is noted in new age movements which are denying the deity of Christ and His work on the cross. Moral decay is running rampant and the rapture of the church is at hand. This rapture will result in the Church being removed from this earth and will start the Second Coming.

THE GENTILES IN PROPHECY

The Gentiles in prophecy according to Chafer is "the outline of world history, which explains many events of the past and casts a shadow on the future."¹ An outline of world history starts with Gentiles in the Garden of Eden. Early prophecy indicates that God destroyed the human race except for Noah and his family and later brought judgment upon the Gentiles at the Tower of Babel.

According to scripture the Gentile nation was divided when God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation. Some of the great Gentile nations of history were Egypt, Assyria, and the Babylonian empire.

Daniel prophesied concerning the Gentiles and their dominance over Israel as God revealed to him that four great empires would be over Israel. These Gentile empires which were prophesied were Babylon; the Medes and the Persians; Greece; and Rome. Daniel's prophecy concerning these nations has for the most part been fulfilled. Some scholars believe that a resurgence of the Roman empire will take place after the Church is raptured and will fulfill the prophecy that relates to the "end time". After the rapture Gentiles which were saved during the age of the Gentiles and the Church age will enjoy their reward with God. Those Gentiles remaining during the millennial kingdom will also be blessed by God.

Gentile prophecy concerning this present age is right on target with that which was predicted as end time events. Gentile prophecy did not seem to be a major emphasis of the Old Testament as did that of the prophecies concerning Israel. Much of what is known concerning Gentile prophecies is part of the overall prophecy which God is working out to do His will in the lives of His people. Although Gentile prophecy is intertwined with that of Israel it is none the less an important part of God total plan of redemption for both Jews and Gentiles alike.

The Bible indicates that the Church Age suspends the Gentile period. This period is from Pentecost to the Rapture and will begin again in the seven years after the second coming of Christ when the Gentile nation will no longer exist. Even though Gentile prophecy indicates a judgment of the Gentile world, those which have been born again will be part of the millennial kingdom. The role of the Gentile and prophecy does not end with the Gentile world's destruction because prophecy indicates that those Gentiles which are saved during the Great Tribulation will be blessed and preserved as a people of God along with Israel, God's chosen people.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

The rapture of the church is an end-time event as prophesied in

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Major Bible Themes Revised by John F. Walvoord. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 299.

the Bible. Several views of the rapture are interpreted incorrectly and are shared below.

Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.

One view of the return of Christ is the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost. Several scriptures are used to interpret this event as Christ return. Matthew 16.29 and John 16.16 are two such scriptures.

Conversion experience.

Some view the promise of the Holy Spirit as Christ filling the believer and consequently returning to earth. This interpretation is from passages of scriptures which identify Christ as Spirit. Acts 16.7 and Romans 8.9.

Jerusalem.

A view concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is confusing since many of the writers of the second coming wrote of the occurrence after it had already occurred. This view of a future destruction which already had occurred would be erroneous.

Death.

There are those who interpret death as Christ's coming by using Matthew 24.42. Most Bible scholars do not attribute Christ return as death but as life and therefore this does not seem to be the appropriate interpretation of Matthew 24.42.

The whole world will be saved.

The view which state that as individuals are saved Christ comes is one of the views which uses Matthew 6.10 as a reference. This view of "Thy kingdom come" is not in keeping with the terrible occurrences prophesied in the Scripture concerning the wicked last days. The Bible is clear on this point, that in the last days there will be a falling away.

When looking at Christ second coming two views which have some credibility are the pre-tribulational view and the post-tribulational view. Only one can be correct however.

Post-tribulational view.

The post-tribulational view indicates that Christ comes for His saints and with His saints is one event. This view leaves no room for those predicted events between Christ coming for His saints and coming with His saints. One of these events is the Marriage Supper.

Pre-tribulational view.

The Bible has predicted many events and these events have been fulfilled. The events which have been fulfilled have been fulfilled literally as prophesied in the Bible. The rapture being a prophecy which is unfulfilled at this time should also be consider as literally interpreted. This end-time event when literally

interpreted will occur as follows: Christ will come in the air to receive His own; the dead in Christ shall be raised; the living saints will be caught up into the air and changed; all those in Christ will be taken heaven for the marriage of the Lamb; there will be a believer's judgment and rewards; during this time period Satan will run wild; then Jesus will come to the earth again.

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST AND MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Marriage of the Lamb.

The coming for the saints of God by Jesus Christ is described in the receiving the saints unto Himself as a groom would receive his bride. After the rapture of the church, both the living and dead in Christ the marriage of the Lamb takes place. According to Revelation 19.6-8 the marriage of the Lamb will occur when Christ takes the church to be His bride. The bride will have been changed and Christ will "present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5.27). The bride will be dressed in "fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19.6b).

Judgment Seat of Christ.

The judgment seat of Christ has two parts. These parts are the judgment of the believers and the believers rewards.

The judgment of the believers.

The Bible says that when Christ comes again that he will come to judge the works of the believers and to give them their rewards for the deeds which they have done as Christians. This of course has nothing to do with earning one's salvation since you can not become a Christian by works.

The believer will not be judged for their sins according to John 5.24, since the judgment of sin occurred on the cross. The judgment of Christians will be to determine what the Christian has done with the gifts of God to them who believe. They will be judged on the use of their talents, time, energy and all that has been given to them as children of God. The passage which seems to fit this circumstance best comes from Matthew 6.20 where Christians are admonished to "lay up treasures in heaven".

The reward.

There will be rewards in the form of crowns for several reasons. There is the crown of life which is rewarded for faithfulness. The incorruptible crown for living set apart lives for Jesus. A crown of rejoicing for the soul winner. The crown of Glory for pastors. the crown of righteousness for who love Christ second coming.

THE SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION

The seven-year tribulation period is that period of time between the rapture and the revelation. The rapture is the return of Christ in the air to receive His bride and the revelation is when Christ returns in glory. This tribulation is known as "great tribulation", "that day", hour of testing", and even as a "time of Jacob's distress".

Described in Daniel.

The seven year tribulation is described in the book of Daniel and is interpreted to be the period between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week in Daniel's chronology of events. Bible scholars believe that the "week" as reported in Daniel is the seven years of tribulation.

The period.

The seven year period is divided into two three and a half year periods. The first three and a half years are filled with political confrontations which the ten kingdoms of the Old Roman Empire will rule. There will be a time for the "antichrist" and the false religions which he will establish. Israel will return to Palestine as God will take up Israel as a people according to Romans 11.29. The one ruler will control all buying and selling. Commercial and economic welfare will be based on worship presented to him. This is a capsule account of the great tribulation period and in no way describes the period of time in which people will be crying for death. Satan will be at work in his fullest and will provide the "antichrist with all the power necessary to amass an army from all the kings of the earth against Christ. This period ends as Christ comes in glory.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Knowing that one will live forever should place a different light on one's view concerning a resurrection of the dead. Of the several resurrections mentioned in the Bible some have already occurred which will point to the fact that there are resurrections. Some individuals believe in only one resurrection but the Bible is clear in its prophecy that there is not a general resurrection of all mankind.

The specific resurrections mentioned in the Bible are the resurrection of Christ; the saints after Christ resurrection; the church; the Old Testament saints; the tribulation saints; the millennial saints; and the resurrection of the unrighteous.

The resurrection of Christ.

Biblical prophecy of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of

the resurrection of Christ in the New Testament is clear to the Christian that the resurrection of Christ has occurred. Christ's resurrection provides according to Paul a clear and certain hope of the resurrection of those who are in Christ Jesus.

The resurrection of the saints after Christ resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was emphasized by the resurrection of a number of saints from the dead. Matthew 27.52-53 reports that graves were opened and bodies came out of the grave and went into Jerusalem and appeared to many in the city.

The resurrection of the church.

This resurrection is the rapture of the church. The dead in Christ will be resurrected and those Christians who remain will be caught up into the air to all receive a resurrection body like that of Jesus after His resurrection.

The resurrection of the Old Testament saints.

Old testament prophecy such as is found in Job and in Daniel puts the time of the resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the time of the second coming of Christ to earth.

The resurrection of the tribulation saints.

Martyrs in the tribulation will have their resurrection at the establishment of Christ kingdom in the second coming. John in Revelation 20.4-5 describes the martyrs of the tribulation in detail, even to the completion of the first resurrection which is for those in Christ Jesus.

The resurrection of the millennial saints.

This resurrection is not based on prophecy but on conjecture that people will not live a thousand years and consequently will need to be resurrected to determine their fate.

The resurrection of the unrighteous.

The Bible states in Daniel 12.2 that all men will be raised from the dead. Daniel indicates that some will be raised "to shame and everlasting contempt". This resurrection of the unrighteous is the raising of men which will stand judgment at the great white throne. These will be resurrected to condemnation and cast with the devil and his angels into the lake of fire.

THE LITERAL MILLENNIUM

Millennialism today has three major views. These views are pre-millennial, amillennial, and post-millennial. Each of these views differ in the interpretation of a literal millennium.

Post-millennial view.

The post-millennial view believes that the world will eventually here and believe the gospel and become so good that the millennial kingdom will have occurred. The culmination of this millennial kingdom will be the second coming of Christ.

Amillennial view.

The amillennial view holds that there is no literal millennium and Christ second coming occurs with the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth.

Pre-millennial view.

The pre-millennial view finds scriptural support that after Christ second coming there is a literal thousand year reign of Christ on this earth. This literal millennium is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. The literal millennium will have Jesus Christ as the head of its government and ruling with a force which will bring disobedience into obedience. Interpretations of passages of scriptures from Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel lend themselves to a kingdom that is real, right here on the earth after the second coming of Christ.

The literal millennium will have Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Revelation points out that the steps to Christ second coming includes coming to earth to reign. Support of a literal millennium on earth is supported in the declaration that David will be resurrected to rule with Christ as a prince. This hierarchical structure of a literal kingdom will certainly be part of a literal millennium.

The government will according to the Bible has Christ as sovereign ruler with absolute rule. Psalm 2.9 states that this rule will be "with a rod of iron". Opposition to this form of government will not be tolerated. The government under the Lordship of Jesus Christ will be according to Isaiah 11 and Psalm 72 as a millennium of righteousness and peace.

This millennial government will restore to favor Israel and provide for them the promises of God as extensively described in the Bible. The Gentiles have not been forgotten and will receive from God those blessings which have been prepared for them which will fulfill the prophecies concerning the gentile nation.

The literal millennium will of course be a theocracy and as such will be filled with all types of spiritual blessings and fellowships with God. Much of what is considered spiritual today may very well be as a grain of mustard seed when compared to the spiritual filling which will take place in the saints during the millennium.

Scriptural support for a literal millennium can be found in Zechariah 14.4 where the earth is physically changed by a great valley where the Mount of Olives is presently located.

A literal millennium can not be denied without denying a literal interpretation of the scriptures. The scriptures are clear as stated

above that a literal millennium will occur as predicted in the Bible. Any other interpretation of a non-literal nature does not appear to be the appropriate view of the Bible.

JUDGMENTS

According to Thiessen there are eight judgments.² One judgment has already taken place in Christ, the other seven are future judgments.

Present judgment.

The various judgments begin with the judgment for the sin of all mankind. Jesus Christ died for the believer that they might not come into condemnation or be judged for prior sins. The believer has been judged in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christ has paid the penalty for the sin of mankind and mankind has been set free.

Future judgments.

The seven future judgments are the believers; Israel; Babylon; beast, false prophet, and armies of beast and false prophet; nations; Satan and his angels; and the unsaved dead.

Believer's Judgment.

The believer's judgment will occur when Jesus returns to judge them for their works. They will all have to give account for what they have done with the gifts God has given them. With this judgment goes rewards or crowns for those who have been faithful with their works.

Israel's Judgment.

This judgment appears to occur when after the return of Christ. The Israelites returning to the holy land will be purged and will not be permitted to enter Israel.

Babylon's Judgment

This judgment occurs before Christ return to the earth. This is judgment of the kings which over throw the woman for the religious power of the world.

Beast, False Prophet and their Armies Judgment.

God will bring judgment on the false prophet, the beast and their armies by placing the beast and the false prophet alive in the lake of fire and destroying the armies with the sword from Christ mouth on his return to earth.

²Henry C. Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 389.

Nation's Judgment.

This judgment takes place after the judgment of the armies. The nations are judged for sending their armies against God. This is a separation time of the sheep and the goats. The sheep will go to eternal salvation while the goats will go to eternal condemnation and separation from God.

Satan and his angels Judgment.

After the millennium Satan will be loosed to deceive the nations of the earth. Satan will bring an army against God which will be destroyed by fire from heaven. Satan will be judged and cast into the lake of fire. Satan's angels will be judged at this time since Matthew 25.41 declares that the fire has been prepared for "the devil and his angels".

Unsaved Dead Judgment.

The judgment of the unsaved dead will occur after the millennium and will be the second resurrection. This judgment will be at the great white throne and all of those present will be judged guilty of rejecting God's plan of Salvation and His Son Jesus Christ.

THE FINAL STATE

The final states which are mentioned in the Bible are the final state of Satan, the final judgment, the final kingdom, and the final state of the new creation.

Satan's Final State.

Satan's final state will be his placement alive in the lake of fire with his angels to ever be in torment for the deed which he committed against God. This final place after his judgment shall be for all eternity.

Final Judgment.

The need for judgment ends here with the final judgment. The final judgment according to Scripture is the great white throne judgment of the second resurrection. These individuals are those which died as unbelievers and as unbelievers will be judged by determining that their names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. They will be casted into the lake of fire along with death and Hades. This will be their eternal punishment for rejecting Christ as Savior and Lord.

Final Kingdom.

When the kingdom comes to an end the Bible states that Christ will return it to the Father. 1 Corinthians 15.28 describes the state of the final kingdom like this: "And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all".

The Final State of the New Creation.

The creation of the new heaven, the new earth and the New Jerusalem is the final state of the new creation. After the creation of the new heaven and the new earth the creation of the New Jerusalem will take place. The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven and will be the throne of God. The Bible declares that the saints of God will be with Him in this new creation forever and ever.

CONCLUSION

All mankind will have a final state. What this final state or last things will be is for each person to decide. Prior to the end times and the subjection of eternal beings to their final state, each individual must choose life in Christ or eternal damnation with Satan. The most important decision one makes may very well be the last thing they do.

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