

THE MILLENNIUM

A RED MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CHURCH POSITION PAPER

WHY WE BELIEVE IN A FUTURE KINGDOM RULED BY CHRIST ON THIS EARTH

In Zechariah chapters 12-14 there is an incredulous story about a swift revival that God would orchestrate in Jerusalem among Israelites by His sovereign and gracious hand. This story is typical of a number of prophecies, which project a future work of God in Israel.

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord of hosts is his name: “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.” Thus says the Lord: “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord.” — Jeremiah 31:35-37

Taken together, such Scriptures constitute an enormous weight of evidence in favor of the idea that God has not yet accomplished all He has planned for this people called Israel. The question is, are these prophecies speaking of ethnic Israel, or is the term Israel a metaphor, which speaks symbolically of another people group? The volume of testimony regarding “Israel” is so great that we must render a verdict regarding the identity of these people that occupy such a significant role in God’s plan for the ages.

Historically, most Christians have chosen to understand such testimony as being fulfilled through a remnant of the nation of Israel combined with a large number of Gentiles. Together these constitute a body of chosen ones known as the “elect” or the “church.” They are a spiritual Israel of sorts. This kingdom is spiritual by nature, but will have concrete and more visible form when God creates a new heaven and earth, and Christ rules as king over that earth inhabited by the elect from all ages. According to this position, the projections of future world prominence for Israel metaphorically point to the eventual reality of the kingdom of the elect on the new earth. One of the first Christian thinkers to articulate thought in this direction was Augustine in his work *The City of God*. That is a work, which continues to impact Christian thinkers to this day.

Along the way a much smaller number of Christians have chosen to believe that at some point in future time God will orchestrate a spiritual revival among ethnic Israelites. It will occur at the time when Christ returns physically to this earth. This revival will follow the script of Zechariah 12-14, and will result in the conversion of many on the earth. The eventual result will be that Christ, with the elect of all ages, will rule the present creation from the actual land of Israel. They will rule over the inhabitants of the earth who, with Israel, have come to recognize the identity of the one “they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10).

There is a considerable weight of evidence in favor of this later position in terms of the actual statements of Scripture. The position is favored as well in terms of what is implicit in Scripture. There is other motivation to embrace this position, which is less weighty, being of a more pastoral and philosophical nature, but is still of value to mention in passing. The purpose of this publication is to present a shred of this evidence so as to call all those who care, to examine the matter more closely.

A statement of Scripture that is critical in the shaping of our understanding of future events is found in Romans 11:11. There, speaking of ethnic Israel, Paul writes, “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall did they? May it never be! (NASB).

