

A Look at God's Earthly Purpose in Israel Part 3

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Baptismal Salvation

He who believes **AND IS BAPTIZED** shall be saved: but he who believes not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

Could this be any clearer? In the gospel of the "Great Commission," baptism was essential for Israel's salvation from that "*untoward generation*" (Acts 2:38-40).

Israel's baptismal salvation was also found in John the *BAPTIST's* message.

John did baptize in the wilderness, and **PREACH THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS** (Mark 1:4).

Peter understood well what the "Great Commission" said, because water baptism for salvation is exactly what he preached on Pentecost.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, AND BE BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Because of the problems which many preachers have trying to make Israel's "Great Commission" ours, they must begin to alter the text. This involves *changing* or *explaining away* certain words in some of the other passages.

On the other hand Paul, our Apostle, functioned under a completely different commission. Unlike Israel's Twelve Apostles, our Lord Jesus Christ **DID NOT** send him to baptize. Listen to these clear words:

CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, but to preach [herald] the gospel [evangel] (I Corinthians 1:17).

Instead of water baptism, the revelation of Jesus Christ committed to Paul included the "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5) of being placed into the "one body" (I Corinthians 12:13). This "one body" is Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), *i.e.*, the Body of Christ. This is a SPIRITUAL baptism rather than a PHYSICAL one. It is an "operation" performed by God (*i.e.*, "the operation of God" Colossians 2:12), rather than an "ordinance" performed by men.

Miraculous Signs

These signs **SHALL** follow them who believe (Mark 16:17).

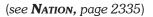
Again, the words of the "Great Commission" are unmistakable. Signs would follow the Jewish believers. It is not that they *could* follow them, but that they *"shall."*

The Bible is explicit in its teaching that miraculous signs were for Israel.

The Jews require a sign (I Corinthians 1:22).

The signs belonged to Israel and their land.

We see not **our** signs (Psalms 74:9).





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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
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NATION (continued from page 2333)

... for signs and for wonders **IN ISRAEL** ... (Isaiah 8:18).

References to signs in the Scriptures are *ALWAYS* found in a Jewish setting. The first mention of miraculous signs should give any student of the Scripture a clear message of its relationship to Israel (Exodus 4:8).

The "Great Commission" had water baptism as a requirement for salvation with miraculous signs following. This is *exactly* what happened in Acts chapter 2 and in the early part of the Acts period.

Healing and the Great Commission

If we survey the quantity of miracles throughout the Greek Scriptures, starting in the Gospels, we'll see a steady trend towards decline. It is not that God won't, or can't do them. It is that they're almost always counterproductive towards producing faith. What happened in the cities where Christ did the most miracles?

In his early ministry, Paul did many healings, more so than Jesus' other apostles combined. Near the end of his ministry, though, he prayed to God three times to have his thorn in the flesh removed, but God said, *"My grace is sufficient for you"* (II Corinthians 12:9). There is no instance in the four gospels of someone asking for such deliverance and God refusing, but there are several in Paul's epistles. Instead of healing Timothy, Paul instructs him to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake (I Timothy 5:23).

Another interesting thing to observe is the types of healing found in the gospels. It is not that someone simply prayed and got better. Jesus and the apostles actually raised people from the DEAD – people who, in some cases, had been dead for several days. Jesus even instantaneously reattached severed body parts. We do not see these types of healings today. Sure, there are stories of doctors reviving someone against all odds, but has anyone seen someone being raised from the dead days after the fact? Or someone's ear being reattached with no medical tools? This was the nature of God's ministry to Israel that was to be discharged in the Great Commission. This is not, however, the way that God reveals Himself today.

It's not that God will never heal anymore; in fact, God has designed the body to heal itself – and we see this marvel every day. It is just that healing served a specific purpose in the specific point in time of the period covered by the four gospels and the early part of the book of Acts. The Hebrew prophets foretold of these healings because they were a sign to Israel to prove to them who their Messiah was. Because it was proven to Israel during the apostles' time that Jesus was the Messiah, there is no longer a need to prove this.

Specific Miraculous Signs

It is also important to note the specific type of miraculous signs that were attached to Israel's "Great Commission."

And these signs **shall** follow them who believe; in My name **shall** they cast out devils; they **shall** speak with new tongues; they **shall** take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it **shall not** hurt them; they **shall** lay hands on the sick, and they **shall** recover (Mark 16:17-18).

Notice all the "shall" of this commission: "these signs **shall** follow them who believe."

There is nothing here about praying for our sick friends. These are not signs. Here is what it says,

They **shall** lay hands on the sick, and they **SHALL** recover.

Yet that's not all ... two of these signs are quite AMAZING SIGNS!

... SHALL follow them who believe ... They SHALL take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it SHALL not hurt them.

THESE were sure signs accompanying the "Great Commission." The actual words of Scripture are very helpful!

Beginning at Jerusalem

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

Both Luke 24 and Acts 1 make the geographic procedure of the "Great Commission" known. The twelve apostles were to start at Jerusalem – Israel's capitol city – and go to the "Jews first." The Jews were first, over the Gentiles, because they were in covenant relationship with God, and in the Kingdom gospel the Gentiles could be blessed ONLY in Israel's national ►

rise (*c.f.* Genesis 22:17-18; Isaiah 2:4; 60:1-3; 62:1-3). Therefore, under the "Great Commission" Israel must first accept the message before the Gentiles could be blessed.

All is different under the *evangel* committed to Paul for "the dispensation of the grace of God." In "the gospel of the Grace of God" the Gentiles were to be blessed, NOT through Israel's rise, but through Israel's *FALL*.

... Through their [Israel's] fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office (Romans 11:11-13).

How many of us have heard the interpretation "where you are is your 'Jerusalem?'" What type of interpretation is that? If this is our "Great Commission," and we are to follow it literally, we would have to sell all of our possessions and go to Jerusalem with "the gospel of the Kingdom" (c.f. Acts 3:25-26; 13:46).

Remission of Sins

Whosever's sins you remit, they are remitted unto them (John 20:23).

How many messages have you heard on this part of the "Great Commission"? Again, this passage is clear and was in perfect harmony with Christ's *earthly* teaching ministry, for the Lord Jesus told Peter,

And I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19; c.f. Matthew 18:18).

Many believers, and even preachers, have been left perplexed and confused by failing to follow Paul's instruction to us of *"rightly dividing the Word of Truth"* (II Timothy 2:15).

Once again we are dealing plainly with the message of Israel's Kingdom, during which the Twelve Circumcision Apostles would have authority in the Messiah's absence.

Witnesses of What?

You shall be witnesses unto Me (Acts 1:8).

Under the "Great Commission" Israel's Apostles were to be "witnesses," but "witnesses" of what? Before we deal with the answer to that question, let's first find out what a witness is.

Noah Webster defines the word "witness" as a person who knows or sees anything; one personally present. So, to be a witness, one must have firsthand knowledge concerning the thing which is being witnessed. Of what were the Twelve actually witnesses? On this, Scripture is abundantly clear.

Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to **SUFFER, AND TO RISE FROM THE DEAD THE THIRD DAY** ... and you are **WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS** (Luke 24:46, 48).

Wherefore of these men ... must one be ordained to be a *witness with us of His resurrection* (Acts 1:22).

This Jesus has God **raised up**, whereof we are **all witnesses** (Acts 2:32).

Whom God has **raised from the dead**; whereof we are witnesses (Acts 3:15).

The God of our fathers **RAISED UP JESUS** ... AND WE ARE HIS WITNESSES (Acts 5:30-32).

And we ARE WITNESSES OF ALL THINGS which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; Whom they slew and hung on a tree, Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but TO WITNESSES CHOSEN BEFORE OF GOD, EVEN TO US, WHO DID EAT AND DRINK WITH HIM AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD (Acts 10:39-41).

And He was seen many days of them who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, **who ARE HIS WITNESSES** unto the people (Acts 13:31).

How clear are all of these verses! The "Great Commission" was for those who had been actual *EYE-WITNESSES* of the Lord Jesus Christ's ministry, death and *resurrection*.

What if you read in your local newspaper of a horrid crime which had been committed in your community, but one that you had not personally witnessed? Then suppose that you showed up at the trial and offered to testify, and were subsequently placed on the witness stand. While on the stand you vividly and accurately describe the details of the crime as they had been recorded in the newspaper article. During the crossexamination you are asked, "Where were you when you saw this crime committed?" To which you would respond, "Why, I didn't see the act, but I did read all about it in the paper."

Your proclamation of the details of that crime may be true, or not, depending on the accuracy of your source; *but one thing is certain:* your testimony would not be accepted because *you simply did not witness the event.* Your witness would be thrown out as inadmissible evidence.

We never witnessed the death, burial or resurrection of Jesus Christ. We heard His Word and believed its message (Romans 10:17); but, although we cannot bear *witness* to the resurrection, we can *proclaim* it. We are teachers of this wonderful truth and all that it means.

We can give witness and testimony to God's wonderful work of salvation in our own lives, but we can *NEVER* fulfill the "Great Commission's" duty of being "witnesses chosen before of God."

What About Grace?

One should take particular notice that not ONCE in all five of the "Great Commission" passages does the word "grace" even appear. This is not to say, of course, that God did not have grace during this time. Surely, He did – as He always does – for it is an attribute of God's Own character and nature. If it had not been for grace Noah could not have been saved (Genesis 6:8). Yet we must remember that there is a difference between the grace of God as a part of His nature, and "the dispensation of the Grace of God" where the administration of all of God's dealings is conducted in full and total grace (Ephesians 3:2).

In other words, there is a difference between the grace of God in a dispensation and *"the dispensation of the grace of God,"* a difference between God's attribute of grace and grace being the ruling principle.

That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might **GRACE REIGN** through righteousness unto age-lasting life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:21).

Grace did *NOT* reign in Noah's day, for God did not at that time show grace to the rest of the world – ONLY to Noah and his family. The world perished. Grace was, then, for that time, selective and limited. Only small rays of God's grace broke through. Now, during this present age, God's grace is immeasurably released.

Under Israel's "Great Commission" there is not even ONE single reference to "grace" – let alone to "the Gospel of the Grace of God." The fact is that it was still hidden at that time. The free gift of God's grace, as well as the Jews and Gentiles being placed in one Body, were not to be found *anywhere* in this commission. These were still yet unrevealed truths. They were not known or preached about until Paul (I Timothy 1:16; Galatians 1:25). Paul received them by revelation (Galatians 1; 2) from the *heavenly* Christ.

The plain truth of the matter is that God, in Paul's epistles, has given us a complete and independent body of truth for this dispensation in which we now live (Romans 2:16), and a "*much more*" blessed commission than that found in "the Gospels" (II Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 3:8-9).

Let us recognize that our position today is *NOT* that of being "witnesses" under Israel's "Great Commission," but instead a position of being "Ambassadors for Christ" of the evangel of the grace of God – God's *GRACE* Commission (II Corinthians 5:20). We have the "ministry of conciliation" given to us (II Corinthians 5:18), and the "Word of conciliation" committed to our trust (II Corinthians 5:19).

There is a two-fold purpose of God: the heaven and the earth. Israel is God's instrument of His earthly purpose, and we, the Body of Christ, are the instrument of His celestial purpose.

ISRAEL'S PROPHETIC PROGRAM

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for the ages (Daniel 2:44).

This verse is at the very heart and soul of all Jewish prophecy, because it anticipates that day when "*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord*" (Revelation 11:15).

Daniel 2:44 is the goal of Israel's prophetic program

in a nutshell. It is the establishment of righteousness on earth through a literal, physical, earthly kingdom vested in the nation of Israel.

The nature of this prophecy is that it will be fulfilled suddenly, not progressively.

The stone was not to fill the earth by degrees and eventually "crowd out" the image. This is not a gradual process. Rather, it suddenly demolishes the kingdoms of this world with one blow.

The means of this prophecy being fulfilled is through the return of Israel's Messiah, the Stone cut without hands.

Then you saw that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth ... Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure (Daniel 2:34-35, 45).

This prophecy will be fulfilled **by** the "Stone of Israel," the Lord Jesus Christ. He is at the very heart of Hebrew prophecy.

"Therefore thus," says the Lord God, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16).

The Stone which the builders refused is become the Head Stone of the corner (Psalms 118:22; c.f. Matthew 21:44).

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel) (Genesis 49:24).

This "Stone of Israel" will become "a great mountain," and fill "the whole earth." Mountains in the Scriptures

represent kingdoms. Israel's Messiah will *become* her kingdom, and His knowledge will fill the entire earth.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

The timing of this prophecy is that it will be fulfilled *after* the formation of the ten toes – "*In the days of these kings*" the Stone (Christ) shall come. This is not Christ's first coming; this is the Second Advent. The Stone smites the image, **not** the image the Stone!

The surety of this prophecy is that it *will* be fulfilled!

And in the days of these kings **SHALL** the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which **SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED**, and the kingdom **SHALL NOT BE LEFT TO OTHER PEOPLE**, but it **SHALL BREAK IN PIECES AND CONSUME ALL THESE KINGDOMS**, and it **SHALL STAND FOR THE AGES** (Daniel 2:44).

Of the increase of His government and peace there **SHALL BE NO END**, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice ... **THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS** (Isaiah 9:7).

God is *not* done with Israel. One day, through their instrumentality, this earth will be filled with the knowledge of God. *This* is the goal of Israel's prophecy: the establishment of the righteous kingdom of God on earth, through the Nation of Israel. As members of God's *heavenly* purpose, we find great comfort and expectation in the realization of the fulfillment of God's *earthly* purpose.

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope [confident expectation!] (Romans 15:4).

Our celestial promises and destination are as SURE as Israel's terrestrial ones! God's purposes are as definite and sure as He.

ISRAEL'S DAY OF MOURNING

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn ... And one shall say to Him, "What are these wounds in Your hands?" Then He shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends" (Zechariah 12:10; 13:6).

God took Israel on a national journey of folly that led to the rejection of their Messiah. In unbelief they had upon their hands the blood of the Son of God. Listen to the indictment placed upon them.

His Own [Israel] received Him not (John 1:11).

We [Israel] will not have this man [Christ] to reign over us (Luke 19:14).

His [Christ's] blood be on us, and on our children (Matthew 27:25).

By wicked hands have crucified and slain [Him] (Acts 2:23).

Not only did Israel reject their Messiah unto death, but in the book of Acts they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:6). However, this rejection could never change God's earthly purpose.

For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? (Romans 3:3).

Even in Israel's unbelief and rejection they did the will of God.

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

Israel's blindness of unbelief has a duration which only finds its end in the fullness of the Gentiles. Then God will lift their sightless condition and **"all** Israel shall be saved." Make no mistake about it: God is *not* done with Israel. For I would not, brothers, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:25-26).

Israel's Future Repentance

Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they [Israel] also who pierced Him: and all kindred of the earth shall mourn because of Him (Revelation 1:7).

This passage, along with that of Zechariah listed earlier, shows us that Israel will be brought to a place of national mourning. This will not just be a portion of Israel, but "all Israel." Notice in chapter twelve of Zechariah's prophecy the various classes within Israel that are mentioned:

The Royal Lineage

Represented by the house of David (:12).

The Prophets

Represented by the house of Nathan (:12).

<u>The Priesthood</u>

Represented by the house of Levi (:13).

The Scribes

Represented by the house of Shimei (:13).

Israel's mourning will be personal and intense.

Personal – notice that the word "apart" ("alone" – *CLT*) is used eleven times in three verses (:12-14).

Intense – notice that this "great mourning" (:11) is "as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn" (:10.)

Israel's mourning is a result of the work of God's "spirit of grace" (:10) when looking upon Christ. We see a type of this with their Apostle Peter who, after he had betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ, "wept bitterly" (Luke 22:54-62).

God is not done with Israel. Although they are blind, one day God will give them the spirit of grace and restore them to His earthly purpose.

In **that day** there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1).

SECRET ... SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN or SPOKEN ... SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

We will draw the current series about Israel to a close. Later, from time to time, we may again find ourselves addressing aspects of this vast subject. The purpose of dealing with Israel here has been to mark their scriptural distinction apart from God's present purpose with the Body of Christ.

God has designed a certain way by which we are to study the Scriptures: We are to *"RIGHTLY DIVIDE"* them, or CORRECTLY CUT them. THIS is the divinely approved approach to the study of His Word.

We must remember that while all Scripture was written for us, it was *not* all written *to* us, *nor* was it all written *about* us. Thus, the Scripture must be divided; and not just divided, but *RIGHTLY* divided. That is, we are to look for the many dividing marks (or distinctions) that God Himself has placed within Scripture. We must learn to make a difference where God makes a difference!

Let's look at an example of GOD making a difference:

If you have heard of the DISPENSATION of the GRACE OF GOD which is given ME to you: how that by REVELATION He made known unto ME the MYSTERY (Ephesians 3:2-3).

If one wants to be an approved workman, he must begin by understanding what God's program is for today. This can be known *only* through the ministry of Paul. The *"dispensation of the Grace of God"* was given to Paul for us. This dispensation was a *"mystery"* (secret) that was made known to Paul by divine *"revelation."*

God clearly makes a distinction regarding Paul's message. He gave to Paul a revelation "which was kept SECRET SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN [or, in ages past]" (Romans 16:25). This revelation stands in contrast to

Peter's message which had been "SPOKEN by the mouth of all His holy prophets SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN [or, in ages past]" (Acts 3:21).

Note the distinction: one message had been *spoken* through the past ages (eons), while the other message had been *kept secret* during those same ages. A message that had been *spoken* down through the ages and a message that had been *kept secret* during the same period obviously *can't* be the same message. God clearly gave Paul and Peter different messages.

To make note of this distinction is to learn to make a difference where God makes a difference.

Not only did God make a difference between the message of Paul and Peter, but between their apostleship as well.

For I speak to you GENTILES, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the GENTILES, I magnify my office (Romans 11:13).

... The Gospel of the UNCIRCUMCISION was committed unto ME [Paul], as the Gospel of the CIRCUMCISION was unto Peter (Galatians 2:7).

C.I. Scofield made this comment concerning Paul's distinction:

In his writings **alone** we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church. – *Scofield Reference Bible*, page 1252.

William R. Newell has also said,

The failure or refusal to discern the Pauline Gospel as a separate and new revelation and not a "development from Judaism" accounts for twothirds of the confusion in many people's minds today as regards just what the Gospel is ... You can judge any man's preaching or teaching by this rule – Is he Pauline? Does his doctrine START and FINISH according to those statements of Christian doctrine uttered by the Apostle Paul? – Paul's Gospel

We find *OUR* instructions as members of the Body of Christ in Paul's letters: Romans through Philemon. We cannot just arbitrarily take truth from the words written to others and build an approved life. Remember the words of Paul in Romans 2:16.

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to MY GOSPEL.