

Israel: Past, Present, and Future #6

Isaiah 19:18-25

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Though Scripture teaches that God will in the future save Israel as a nation, that blessing will not fall upon Israel until Israel believes in Jesus Christ whom she has pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

Israel will yet become a covenanted Christian nation with a distinctly Christian constitution together with the Gentile nations of the world. Israel will not have a different form of Christianity from that of the other Christian nations of the world.

The Christian Church of Israel and the Christian Church of Egypt (which is presently an Islamic nation) will in the future hold the same biblical doctrine, worship, and church government. The Christian Church of Israel will not gather in a rebuilt temple, offering animal sacrifices, through the Levitical priesthood, nor will the Christian Church of Egypt gather in mosques and pray toward Mecca, but both of these national churches will gather on the Lord's Day (the Christian Sabbath) to hear the Bible preached by faithful pastors, and will both confirm the New Covenant in Christ's blood by means of the Lord's Supper.

In other words, there is coming a time when God will remember His covenant made with Israel as a nation. The New Covenant of Grace for Israel is the same New Covenant of Grace for all nations. When the Lord converts Israel and the nations of this world to Himself, He will do so through faith in the gospel of Christ alone, and both Israel and the nations will become Christ's people by way of national covenants made with the Lord Jesus.

Our main points are: (1) A Brief Background to the Book of Isaiah; (2) Important Questions to Be Answered from Isaiah 19.

I. A Brief Background to the Book of Isaiah.

A. As we continue to consider Israel's future, let us hear once again what God prophesies in the Old Testament will come to pass (next week we plan to consider the New Testament promises).

1. Isaiah the prophet penned this book by inspiration of the Holy Spirit between about 740-686 b.c. He was in the city of Jerusalem when it was besieged by the massive Assyrian army (ca. 722 b.c.) under the reign of the righteous king, Hezekiah, at which time God slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night.

2. Isaiah is filled with important promises of the coming Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7). The fullest description of the Messiah's suffering for the sins of His people, His death, and resurrection are given in Isaiah 53. Isaiah addresses God's righteous judgment that is to fall upon Israel and the surrounding nations due to their rebellion against the Lord (1-39), and in the latter half of the book, the Lord comforts His people with His tender mercies which will be realized in Jesus Christ.

B. Isaiah 19 is a very unique chapter in Isaiah in that there are two parts to the chapter. In the first part of the chapter, God's judgment falls upon one of Israel's greatest enemies in biblical history: Egypt (Isaiah 19:1-17). But in the second part of that chapter, God promises to pour out upon Egypt His mercy and salvation through Christ (Isaiah 19:18-25). Isaiah 19 ties together the future salvation of Israel with the future salvation of two of Israel's greatest enemies from the past: Egypt and Assyria (modern Iraq).

1. I submit that the blessed salvation of Israel, Egypt, and Assyria is not realized in a small REMNANT of those nations coming to Christ, but in Israel, Egypt, and Assyria as NATIONS coming to Christ (not every single person in those nations, but the greater part of those nations and their national representatives swearing by covenant to be Christ's people).

2. Most of Isaiah 19 is not a prophecy about Israel, but is actually a prophecy about Egypt

(Isaiah 19:1). However, Egypt's conversion to Christ is not without Israel's conversion to Christ.

3. I will not be expounding the whole chapter, but I emphasize that in Isaiah 19:1-17, God brings His judgment upon Egypt "as a nation"; and in Isaiah 19:18-25, we see the gracious salvation God shall bring upon the same Egypt "as a nation" (together with Israel "as a nation"). In both sections, God is addressing the same nation of Egypt though at different periods in her history.

II. Important Questions to Be Answered from Isaiah 19.

A. When will the blessing of salvation be realized by Egypt?

1. "In that day" (Isaiah 19:18,19,23,24). In what day? What are some of the notable events that help us to understand what day is in view beginning in Isaiah 19:18?

2. "In that day" the Lord will send Egypt a great savior when Egypt cries unto the Lord (Isaiah 19:20). This is what we saw would be the case when Israel is overcome by her enemies as well (Zechariah 12-14). Who is this great savior that Jehovah will send to deliver Egypt? Some have thought it was Alexander the Great (or some other political ruler), but did Alexander or any other ruler bring the nations of Israel, Egypt, and Assyria into a blessed covenant with one another to swear to be God's people? I'm not aware of any such historical record.

3. I submit along with many notable historical commentators (like Calvin, the *Geneva Notes*, John Trapp, the *Dutch Annotations*, Thomas Gataker in the *Westminster Annotations*, John Gill, Matthew Poole, and Matthew Henry) that the Savior here is Jesus. Paul declares that Jesus is "the great God and our Savior" (Titus 2:13). It is Jesus whom Jehovah will send to deliver Egypt as He will send Him to deliver Israel (Zechariah 12-14).

4. Thomas Gataker (*Westminster Annotations*) states on this verse (Isaiah 19:20):

But certain it is, that the Lord Jesus, that great Saviour, Titus 2:13, is here principally intended.

5. Calvin notes the same on this verse:

When the Lord promises that he will send a Savior, by whose hand the Egyptians will be delivered, this can mean no other than Christ....

6. The *Dutch Annotations* (1637, 1657 in English) note on this verse:

and he shall send them a Saviour, [to wit, the Lord Jesus Christ].

7. Matthew Henry expounds as follow on this verse,

Doubtless Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the great one here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings of to the Egyptians, and by whom he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear....

8. Thus, the time that this prophecy shall be realized is in the age of the New Covenant after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension—sometime after the Savior has come. Having identified the general period of time when this prophecy will be fulfilled, let's turn to another question.

B. What blessings will the Lord bring to Egypt?

1. Egypt as a nation will repent of their sin (Isaiah 19:22, "return" means to turn back or repent), will call upon the Lord (Isaiah 19:20; Romans 10:13), the Lord will be known to Egypt through the gospel preached and received (Isaiah 19:21), Egypt will worship the Lord—the Old Testament forms of worship are used to signify New Testament worship (Isaiah 19:21), and will swear/covenant to the Lord to be a Christian nation (Isaiah 19:18,21).

2. Note this prophecy says five cities in Egypt will speak "the language of Canaan" (Isaiah

19:18) while one city shall be called “the city of destruction” (Isaiah 19:18). To speak “the language of Canaan” would be a way of saying that Egypt will speak the same truths in the same way (by way of uniformity) as God’s people, Israel, will do. In other words, Egypt will be a covenanted together with Israel (and Assyria) as were the three kingdoms of England, Ireland and Scotland by the Solemn League and Covenant. I submit that these words are teaching that throughout the nations of Egypt and Israel there will be a covenanted uniformity in doctrine, worship, and church government—they will speak the same thing as to the truth (1 Corinthians 1:10). The vast majority in the nation of Egypt will in the future covenant with the Lord (Isaiah 19:18). This is a national covenant which Egypt will keep (Isaiah 19:21).

C. What changes will this bring to Israel and the world?

1. In that future day (Isaiah 19:23) there will not only be national covenants made with Jesus at that time of millennial blessing, but national covenants with one another that will bring peace, prosperity, and unity in the faith and a brotherly commerce between Israel and the nations of the world at that time (that is the “highway” Isaiah 19:23). Those nations that had been hated, violent enemies to Israel (Egypt and Assyria) will become brotherly nations in Christ, bound together by covenant (as were England, Ireland, and Scotland—and their posterity—in the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643). Together they will serve the Lord (Isaiah 19:23). Together they will be a blessing “in the midst of the earth” (Isaiah 19:24).

2. Finally, note in Isaiah 19:25, the Lord will bless Egypt (“my people” Leviticus 26:12; 2 Corinthians 6:16), will bless Assyria (“the work of my hands” Isaiah 60:21), and will bless Israel (“mine inheritance” Isaiah 47:6), each of these nations together in Christ Jesus. This is precisely the same promise made by the Lord to Zechariah (Zechariah 2:11-12). Is there anything in the New Testament that parallels and confirms these prophecies that we have considered from the Old Testament of Israel’s future salvation being tied together with the salvation of the nations? That is where (God willing) we will turn next Lord’s Day—Romans 11:25-27 (all Israel will be saved together with the fullness of the Gentile nations coming to Christ).

3. I submit that these national blessings of salvation have not yet been realized. These nations have not yet covenanted to the Lord Jesus to be His people, nor have they entered into a brotherly national covenant to worship the Lord in a covenanted uniformity (per the Solemn League and Covenant). But the hope that we have is that the present devastation, wars, terror attacks, loss of life, and hatred that exists among these nations for Israel in the Middle East will not continue forever. There will be a blessed peace when they call upon Jesus to save them—their swords of war will be turned in to plowshares of peace (Isaiah 2)—the wolf and the lamb will dwell together in a blessed peace (Isaiah 11). Jesus the Prince of Peace will bring this to pass (Isaiah 9).

4. This is not pie in the sky or a mere wish or just an optimistic outlook on the future. These promises are conditioned upon God’s faithfulness. The Lord will not restore an unbelieving nation to Him, but only a nation that constitutionally declares God to be its Lord (Psalm 33:12), and constitutionally declares Jesus to be the Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). That happens not by a remnant, but by the vast majority of a nation engaging in covenant through its representatives to covenant with the Lord as Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will do. This is a certain expectation of hope built upon the promise of God.

5. When Isaiah penned this prophecy, it was a dark time for Israel. The worldwide threat to Israel was Assyria, and yet our sovereign God assures God’s people that He will convert Assyria to Himself and will bring Israel into a brotherly covenant with this fierce enemy. Let us not fear whatever the worldwide circumstances that exist among the nations that hate our great Savior—Jesus Christ (Psalm 33:10-11; Psalm 37:1-3). That is the firm foundation for our hope—not wishful thinking, but a confident, certain expectation. These prophecies are not given by the Lord to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to strengthen our hope in the Lord Jesus—our great Savior and King.

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