

Reflections on the Historic Impasse Between Church and Synagogue

by Reggie Kelly

The sermon explores the historic impasse between the Church and Synagogue, and argues that Israel's history and calamities are a mystery of a divine sacrifice that has as its end the highest glory of God.

Scripture: Genesis 18:14

Topics: "Israel And Prophecy", "Covenant Theology"

Description

Reggie Kelly preaches about the profound history and mystery of Israel, highlighting its role as a key to understanding prophecy and the supernatural in the context of divine design and destiny. The sermon delves into the tension between Israel's prophetic hope and its persistent persecution, culminating in the Holocaust as both judgment and divine sacrifice. It explores the intricate relationship between Israel and Messiah, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of the covenant relationship and the eschatological significance of Israel's national redemption.

Transcript

Israel: The Key to History

The history of Israel is the history of miracle, even as it is the miracle of history. (Adolph Saphir)

Israel is a sign and witness to the spirit of prophecy. The hope of Israel is sustained by a unique philosophy of history issuing from an inspired prophetic consciousness that illuminates the past, interprets the present, and predicts the future. History is conceived as a line of purposeful events moving towards a predestined goal. Such a conception of design and destiny in history carries in it profound implications for one's world and life view.

Albeit, the hope of a golden age for the nation of the Jews has found little support from the developments of history. On the contrary, it is as if the boldness of the vision has awakened against itself the greater contradiction and refusal of history. How resilient can a hope be that is met so persistently with disappointment and disaster? "How long?" is the pained cry of all who embrace a vision of the future that is so thoroughly opposed by history and the whole world of nature. How does a faith survive that seems to ask too much of history?

The historical wonder of Israel in the light of prophecy is invincible proof of the supernatural. Apart from the key of Israel, history is a hopeless enigma. But apart from the key of prophecy, it is the story of the Jews in particular that constitutes an especially exasperating puzzle that tests and confounds the wisdom of the age. G.F.W. Hegel (1770-1831), Germany's greatest philosopher-historian, describes his own vexation towards the historical novelty of Israel:

It is a dark troublesome enigma to me. I am not able to understand it. It does not fit with any of our categories. It is a riddle.

Can it be more than irony that one of the names ascribed to Messiah in the Hebrew prophets is 'Pala'--'riddle'--'wonderful'--'hidden'--'high' (Isa.9:6)? Curiously, it is the same word used in Genesis at the announcement of the Isaac promise when Sarah's laughter elicits the divine response, "Is anything too 'difficult' (pala) for the Lord?" (Gen.18:14).

The 'Song of Moses' (Deut 28-32) outlines in tragic detail the future pattern of Jewish history. It presents an astounding prophetic foreview to which history has miraculously conformed. The prophetic song describes the future fortunes of a nation caught in a continual contradiction of circumstance that is calculated to evoke astonishment throughout the world, a pitiable race languishing in exile among the nations as a 'sign and a wonder,' a 'pele' or 'riddle'. Scattered among all nations, 'the wandering Jew' would be a continual source of astonishment and derision. And so the severities of covenant discipline becomes a frequent and distinguishing theme of Israel's growing prophetic tradition

How then do we approach a history distinguished by a mysterious tension between prophetic hope and a persistent pattern of persecution and displacement? The rational sciences have failed to give a satisfying answer to the riddle of anti-Semitism. Its uncanny resilience can not be explained strictly on the basis of natural phenomena. Tragically, the only feature of anti-Semitism that is steadily predictable is its perennial return. It is has been aptly called "the longest hatred." Scarcely does a generation pass before the cycle repeats itself, leaving the unavoidable impression that the character of Jewish suffering transcends purely natural categories.

All of this compels the searing question: What is required of this nation more than others that might prescribe such an extraordinary status in history? Indeed, what has set this people apart to such a trans-historical ordeal as to move Hegel in another place to describe them quizzically as "a people in conflict with themselves and nature ... not at home in their universe."

What then is the nature of the covenant relationship that has so uniquely determined Jewish fortunes? "Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? (Deut 29:24). Such questions crowd us to the precipice of theodicy, a theodicy not plumbed until both Church and Synagogue recognize together the historic nexus between the crucifixion of Jesus and the national and inter-national crucifixion of Israel. Only by a believing examination of the prophetic scripture may one proceed to fathom the source and nature of the divine contention by which this great 'wonderment' and 'astonishment' is prolonged.

Israel and Messiah: Face to Face in the Crucible of Theodicy

We see the tragic pattern of Israel's national history typified in the books of Job, Lamentations, and Psalms, but not least, if eyes could see, in the personal history of the Nazarene. In the Hebrew scriptures, Israel and Messiah are both termed a 'wonder' (mowpheth) or 'incomprehensible' (pala). In the New

Testament, both entities are called 'mystery.' The concept comes from the Old Testament idea of 'the secret of the Lord,' a special knowledge revealed by the prophetic spirit. "Surely the Lord will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

Scripture implies a parallel drama in which the experience of the nation is typified in the Messiah. The two mysteries exist in a mutual and complementary relationship, each holding in itself the key to the other. Messiah and the elect nation are counterparts in a grand mystery that reaches its historical climax in the 'great Day of God' (cf. Ezk.39:21-23; Zech.12:10; Rev.1:7; and 10:7). Messiah typifies in himself the historical suffering, humiliation, and eschatological exaltation of the elect nation. From miraculous conception through humiliation and death to resurrection and exaltation of the nation in the 'great day of the Lord' (Ezk.37 et al.), the two histories conform to a common pattern that point one to the other.

In scripture, the eschatological vindication and national resurrection of Israel comes in the hour of greatest suffering (Ezk 37; Dan.12:1,2; Jer.30:7). Millennial glory dawns when Israel awakens to see its own tragic reflection in Messiah (cf. Zech.12:10; Mt.23:39). Until then, church and synagogue must remain at an impasse, giving mutually exclusive answers to a mystery that is divinely hidden from the pride of unaided reason.

Traditionally, the Church and the Synagogue have taken an opposite approach to the mystery that each has confessed of itself to the exclusion of the other. This stalemate must continue until, in the light of an eschatological resolution, each come to recognize in the other the key and complement to its own significance, role, and 'fullness' in the larger scheme of redemptive history.

The mystery of Messiah's coming, departure, and return to Israel forms the background for the comprehensive 'mystery of the ages,' to be consummated at the end of the age. Therefore, we say it is Israel that forms the context of salvation history and the eschatological framework inside which the church is defined in spiritual continuity with 'the righteous remnant,' and certainly not its replacement. And not only this, but we will suggest in what follows that as much as Israel has failed to discern its own calamities as judgment, neither has the church recognized that its own place in the covenant of redemption is only "through Israel's fall." In this sense, the judgement that has passed on the covenant nation is understood as a divine sacrifice, necessary for the salvation of the nations.

The Holocaust as Both Judgement and Divine Sacrifice

The mind-numbing spectacle of the Holocaust has exposed afresh the historical impalement of the servant nation. Certainly, the most overwhelming event of modern times, it has bequeathed to modernity the ultimate exercise in theodicy. Its appalling scenes raise again the specter of a much longer and tragic history. Biblical passages allude to corporate and national Israel as God's elect son. How could this happen to God's son? Such contemplation calls to mind the holocaust of another, likewise a son, Israel's only begotten (Zech.12:10). How could this happen to him? Surely the parallels are too striking to dismiss.

That Jewish interpretations of the Holocaust show a complete absence of any reference to the biblical and prophetic perspective is a statement all its own, reflecting again how far modern Judaism has drifted from its traditional stance. Such wholesale dismissal of the prophetic tradition is a modern departure from the historic and rabbinical view of Jewish tragedy. Though once the starting place of Jewish self-understanding, the Hebrew Bible is virtually unconsulted for its own vivid interpretation of the Jewish dilemma. Though typically dismissed as a relic of an antiquated world view, the Bible understands Jewish tragedy as a corollary to Israel's own election, calling, and revelatory status in history that is not canceled

by the mere passage of time.

But though it is admitted that the Holocaust shatters conventional theological models, it does not, for all its magnitude, exceed the language of scripture (cf. Deut 28-32; Lev. 26 et al). And yet for many modern thinkers, it is the Holocaust itself that has passed final verdict on the now defunct biblical view. Since the Holocaust, it is no longer possible to consider the biblical prophetic model of covenant, election, and judgment as anything more than an unimportant anachronism of Israel's religious history. Earlier perspectives of Jewish calamity in categories of divine sovereignty, covenant, and prophecy must now, since the Holocaust, be condemned as not only inadequate, but an unconscionable violation of all that is human and moral, an unthinkable notion to be condemned as both anti-Jewish and anti-human. It is a fearful presumption of serious portent that can so blithely dismiss history's remarkable corroboration of Isaiah's prophetic lament:

But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses; they are for a prey and none delivereth; for a spoil and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore, he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of the battle; and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." (Isa. 42:22-25).

To understand the Holocaust as covenantal severity calls us to a profound re-evaluation of our view of God. How can such a judgment be humanly fathomed? It cannot! Not only is the Holocaust a staggering revelation of holy wrath, but in the mystery of the divine will, the offering up of the Jews to judgment speaks solemnly of divine sacrifice. Surely such a judgment as this can only be measured as a sovereign sacrifice of infinite cost, and a cost that is measured only by what will prove "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (Isa.40:1,2).

Indeed, 'Auschwitz' symbolizes far more than a supreme example of man's inhumanity to man. In the words of Michael Wyschogrod: "It is an event which can be understood only in biblical categories and in the context of Jewish election." To understand it as less misses entirely that kind of empathy and identification with the suffering of God implicit in Paul's expression:"the fellowship of His sufferings." If "in all their afflictions, he was afflicted," then God forbid that the significance of such a sacrifice be lost on the church, Israel itself, and ultimately the world. Unless the church (and only that is church which has passed into resurrection life through its own necessary death) as stewards of the heavenly mysteries shall step forward with the key of knowledge, the meaning of this seismic event risks being lost, and its powerful instruction squandered. And so it will be unless the Holocaust is seen as a "divine arrest," a window through which Israel's past should be reviewed and her destiny contemplated.

Only an "exceeding weight of glory" can ultimately vindicate and imbue with meaning the catastrophic sacrifice of the elect race. There is a theodicy of divine glory at work in the imponderable fortunes of history. And from the standpoint of the biblical concept of predestination and the ultimate glory of God through "the election of grace," the concept of judgment takes on the character of divine sacrifice. To conceive of the Holocaust as judgment only, apart from its character as divine sacrifice, is insufficient to save the church from its historic self-conceit and inherent anti-Semitism, ascribing a special stubbornness to Jewish unbelief. This is precisely what Paul feared for the church when he said, "lest you become wise in your own conceits" (Ro 11:25).

There is a latent triumphalism at work any time the church's faith is construed as its own. If the church can glory in its superior willingness to believe, as though faith were a human prerogative, then the problem of Jewish unbelief amounts to nothing more than its own failure to appropriate its historic opportunity. The recognition of a greater divine intention does not extenuate Jewish culpability in the national rejection of Jesus. It is rather to emphasize the impossibility of faith apart from personal revelation. The mystery that Israel encounters in the person and work of Jesus, is part of a 'hidden wisdom', 'a mystery hid in other ages' that is only revealed to the elect by the Holy Spirit.

Israel's covenant failure reveals not a uniquely Jewish propensity, but a chronically human condition. Much more is at stake in the divine judgement of Israel than a lesson in covenant responsibility. It is not enough to recognize that through moral defection, the people of the covenant are self condemned to perpetual desolation without precedent or equal. To see in Israel's calamities nothing more than the fearful wages of sin falls pitifully short of the larger purpose of divine glory that is revealed in no other way than through Israel's failure. It fails of the revelation of glory that Paul sees coming out of the mystery of Israel's fall.

The church has not adequately considered the import of Paul's words; "but as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes" (Ro 11:28). It seems that Paul conceived of Israel's momentary unbelief and the judgement that must follow as somehow necessary to the salvation of the Gentiles. In this sense, the temporary blindness of the larger part of Israel assumes the character of divine sacrifice. In the pattern of Abraham's offering up of Isaac, and the Father's sacrifice of the Son in the cross of Jesus (Isa. 53), the beloved but disobedient nation is likewise surrendered to blindness and to the sword that the Gentiles might be saved. And not only this, but Jewish salvation is effected when they will be moved to jealousy because the blessing of the promised Spirit is seen now to rest on an election from among the gentiles in answer to faith in Messiah Jesus (Ro. 11:11-14,30-31).

The scripture is clear that one form of divine judgment is the hiding of God's face, the divine right to hold back light and revelation from the disobedient. But more than the natural process of hardening that comes as the result of faithlessness, the emphasis in Paul's review (Rom. 9-11), is God's righteous choice to leave the nation under the power of its self chosen sin. It is the divine decision to refrain from opening Israel's eyes until "the set time" (Ps.102:13) in order to show that the revelation that opens the eyes of the spirit and turns the heart in repentance "does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Ro.9:15-16 NIV). It is a sovereign prerogative of unmerited grace. In this case, the nation is bound over to unbelief "until the deliverer will come out of Zion and turn ungodliness from Jacob" (Isa.59:20; Ro. 11:26,27).

According to Paul, something of the divine wisdom is revealed in this mysterious exchange that is achieved in no other way. For this cause, Paul zealously condemns the presumption of gentile believers who, "ignorant of this mystery," were "boasting against the natural branches" (the physical descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) by supposing that their place in the covenant owed something to their own (implicitly superior) compliance (Ro 11:18-23). Paul corrects this dangerous presumption by showing that the faith that has come to gentiles is no less the result of special grace and revelation of the Spirit than the faith that will come to "all Israel" at the time appointed: "for God is able to graft them in again." It is an error to conceive of the eschatological salvation of 'all Israel' as constituting a greater divine task than the present anomaly of gentile salvation. In the perspective of history, both are equally sovereign acts, and equally "impossible with man."

In failing to understand the sovereignty of God in judgment and in salvation, the church has not understood that Israel's long exile is more than the demonstration of divine justice, but represents also the mystery of a divine sacrifice that has as its end the highest glory of God. Such sacrifice is, according to Paul, a divine necessity in the plan of salvation history (necessary because God is constrained by His own glory as the highest good). It is when the church will recover the full implication of Paul's profound overview of salvation history (Ro 9-11) that it can be saved from its own humanistic conceit, and enter into the fellowship of an eternal glory that is purchased through an imponderable divine suffering. It is a startling perspective to contemplate, but one that we are compelled to consider if we would share in the divine pathos.

What manner of mystery then is summoned in Paul's assertion, "they are enemies for your sakes"? Such words are too wonderful for us, they are 'pala' (difficult). But even if mysterious, they evoke something in the heart of faith that is also wonderful, and though bitter, also very sweet, a sublimity of glory inspiring Paul's paeon of praise, "O the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and the glory of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" They are, to continue our romance with this Hebrew term, 'pala.'

So what is the end? Both Tenach and New Testament identify Israel as 'the people of his wrath,' but why? Is it not because Israel is his firstborn and the people of his heart? Therefore the beloved and elect nation is being brought through the bitterness of exile and judgment to a profound apprehension and sensibility for the claims of covenant. It is as if God will not rest until Israel comes, through their own acquaintance with sorrow and grief, to fully commiserate in the affliction and sorrow that a holy love feels when outraged by unfaithfulness. Oh the cost and the glory of a love that will not resign its jealous quest! Even in exile and unbelief, Israel remains the witness nation. Though blind and deaf, Yaweh's servant is an eloquent teacher; "hear ye him!" (Isa.42:18-20)

Impossible to Dissociate the Messianic Deliverance from National Redemption

Israel's hope of messianic redemption is necessarily conceived in corporate and national terms. It begins against a background of election, covenant, and an indestructible ethnic identity that has miraculously withstood the enmity of history. The long history of suffering and persecution has only served to deepen in the Jewish heart an unsinkable sense of destiny. It therefore brings no surprise that any so-called messianism that so alters the original face of prophecy as to leave the people of sorrow and promise blanched beneath the rubble of a futile history is in Jewish thought a mockery of the biblical promise.

Therefore, is there a biblical hope that Jews will someday be able to live as Jews in this world? The traditional church, to its shame, has said no. But, if Jewish suffering is without hope of resolve in this present world, what is its significance? This is the reasonable concern to which Jacob Neusner, the popular professor of Judaic studies, gives profound expression:

And what of Israel's long and pathetic history? Is it merely a succession of meaningless disasters, worldly happenings without end or purpose? ...The fate of Israel, the lamb slaughtered not once but many times over, is suffering that has an end and a purpose to be understood in the end of days.

What kind of messianic hope has the church presented the Jew? Traditionally, it has been one that so flagrantly alters and disfigures the original face of prophecy as to deny Israel's election and national hope. Indeed, any eschatology that leaves Israel in the reproach of suffering and exile insults not only the perspicuity of biblical language, but also the very character of God.

Writing a generation apart, two significant Jewish scholars give expression to what may be regarded as the essential and non-negotiable distinctives of Jewish messianism:

Joseph Klausner's *The Messianic Idea in Judaism from its Beginning to the Completion in the Mishna*:

But this much we can determine with complete confidence: in the belief in the Messiah of the people of Israel, the political part goes arm in arm with the ethical part, and the nationalistic, with with the universalistic. It is Christianity which has attempted to remove the political and nationalistic part which is there, and leave only the ethical and spiritual part. ...The Jewish Messiah also comes to prepare a world for the Almighty's kingdom, but the world to be prepared is this world. The Jewish Messianic world becomes ethical, is idealistic and exalted, but it remains terrestrial. The Kingdom of Heaven of the Jewish Messiah is not only within the soul of man, but also upon the earth. ...Hence Israel was not able to imagine a man who had attained a completely divine stage. And hence its Messiah was not entirely spiritual: he was spiritual and political at the same time.

Gershom Scholem: *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*:

Any Discussion of the problems relating to messianism is a delicate matter, for it is here that the essential conflict between Judaism and Christianity has developed and continues to exist... A totally different concept of redemption determines the attitude to messianism in Judaism and in Christianity... Judaism in all its forms and manifestations, has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history... It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world and which cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance...The reinterpretation of the prophetic promises of the Bible to refer to a realm of inwardness, which seemed as remote as possible from any contents of these prophecies... What appeared to the Christian as a deeper apprehension of the external realm appeared to the Jew as its liquidation and as a flight which sought to escape verification of the Messianic claim ...

In all the chronicles of Jewish-Christian polemic, from Justin's dialogue with Trypho through the historic disputation of Barcelona in 1263 conducted by the learned Nahmanides before the king of Aragon, the faithful retort is hurled: "the condition of the world refutes Christianity, pure and simple." Nahmanides in bold form before Aragon argues from the apparent non-fulfillment of the promises.

The prophet says about the Messiah: His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River until the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). Jesus, however, never had any power, but in his lifetime he was fleeing from his enemies and hiding from them, and in the end he fell into their hands and could not save himself . . . The prophet says that in the time of the Messiah, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me" (Jer. 31:34); also "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11: 9); also "They shall beat their swords into plowshares . . . nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more " (Isa. 2 : 4). Yet from the days of Jesus until now, the whole world has been full of violence and plundering, and the Christians are greater spillers of blood than all the rest of the peoples, and they are also practicers of adultery and incest. And how hard it would be for you, my lord King, and for your knights, if they were not to learn war any more.

Only since the 'emancipation' has the hope of a personal Messiah lost ground in all but the most orthodox circles of Judaism. Today, the ancient hope has been re-interpreted to mean a 'messianic era' of human progress. But until the eighteenth century, however great the suffering, or cruelly disillusioned by

pseudo-messiahs and failed calculations, the hope for a sudden and supernatural intervention continued to burn bright in the bosom of the exile. The same God who stepped into history to create and give distinction and calling to the nation will once more, by another act of powerful intervention, effect the ultimate fulfillment of its predestined glory.

The Evolution of the Impasse

Documents from before and during the beginnings of the Christian era present a greater diversity in messianic thought than seen in any other period of its long development. Scholars point to a variety of 'messianisms' current among the different sects and parties in the first century. In a televised discussion, Pinchas Lapide, a Jewish scholar of the New Testament remarks;

At the time of Jesus, so far as documentation in Judaism can prove it, we have fourteen different and distinct Messianic expectations, all children of the fervent Messianic hope of Israel.

Summarizing from the non-canonical literature from the pre-Roman period [that continued to be used and read], Palestinian literature of the Roman era, and Diaspora Jewish literature, E.P. Sanders isolates four of the most consistently recurring themes of early Jewish eschatology:

The chief hopes were for the re-establishment of the twelve tribes; for the subjugation or conversion of the Gentiles; for a new, purified, or renewed and glorious holy temple; and for purity and righteousness in both worship and morals...The general hope for the restoration of the people of Israel was the most ubiquitous of all.

The Psalms of Solomon (70 - 40 BC), a document bearing evident Pharisaic connections, is representative of the kind of messianic speculation that would characterize Talmudic tradition in the following centuries.

...that he may shatter unrighteous rulers and may cleanse Jerusalem from the Gentiles that trample her own in destruction. At his rebuke the nations shall flee from his presence, and he shall convict sinners in the thoughts of their hearts. And he shall gather a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness, and he shall judge the tribes of a people that has been sanctified by the Lord, his God... Happy are they who will be born in those days, to see the Lord's goodness which he shall bring upon a generation to come.

The Parting of the Ways

The historic 'parting of the ways' occurred when in the absence of a cohesive or uniform eschatology, a new sect, influenced by the events associated with Jesus, began to promulgate its own unique synthesis of the messianic tradition. On the other side, formative Judaism (as embodied in the Mishnaic-Talmudic tradition) received its greatest impetus for re-definition and development in response to the disruption of national and religious continuity brought about by the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, and the messianic debacle of the Bar Kochba revolt sixty-five years later.

While certain aspects of the prophetic tradition were combined in Christianity, formative Judaism never attempted a definitive synthesis of the multiple layers of its messianic tradition. This goes to explain why from earliest times, Judaism has allowed great room for differences of eschatological opinion. This especially follows where messianic speculation is concerned, since in Judaism, Messiah serves a much more subordinate role than in Christianity. Unhappily, Judaism's generous provision for eschatological diversity is not so large that it can countenance belief in a mystery that includes two advents of the

Messiah. Almost any eschatological scenario is sufferable within the pale of Judaism except this one. Why? Simply because when Messiah comes, Israel will have rest and the world will be at peace. This single axiom of Jewish eschatology is invoked as final dismissal of Jesus from Jewish consideration.

The Revelation of the Mystery

Through the Spirit's revelation of the messianic secret, the burgeoning circle of disciples conceived itself in continuity with the elect remnant (the Israel within Israel), namely, the eschatological Israel of God. Authority for this new synthesis of Messianic fulfillment and hope lay in the signatory events of Jesus' resurrection and the palpable return of the prophetic spirit, beginning with John the Baptist, and now manifest in the corporate experience of the believers.

The gift of the spirit signals the advent of the messianic era. Numerous Old Testament passages make clear that Israel's collective redemption in 'the age to come' is marked by the advent of the Spirit in the 'day of the Lord'. It is the Spirit's role to regenerate, cleanse, and empower the nation 'in that day.' Perhaps the most revolutionary concept coming out of the revelation of the mystery is that the gift of the spirit is being 'poured out' in advance of the day of the Lord and that this gift is mediated, whether now or in past ages, on no lesser basis than Messiah's predestined sacrifice. The ground of justification and reconciliation is come to light by revelation of the mystery of the gospel, and, as its sign, the eschatological spirit is poured out on the penitent believer as 'first fruits' of a final resurrection harvest.

In the New Testament the resurrection is the sign of Jesus' vindication, both of his messianic dignity and eschatological triumph over the demonic powers. But the spirit constitutes the 'open sign' of the resurrection and of Jesus. This is true because, though the empty tomb represented tangible evidence for the residents of Jerusalem, still, the body of Jesus was actually seen and touched by only a limited circle of chosen witnesses (1Co.15:6)). The Spirit, on the other hand, is the 'public sign' and evidential vindication of their testimony. The palpable and visible power of the Spirit on the remnant identified with Jesus constitutes a witness against the nation's apostasy. The emergence of a 'foolish nation', increasingly comprised of 'those which are not a people;' viz., the Gentiles, is calculated to provoke Israel to jealousy (Deut 32: 21; Ro.11:11).

In all the writings of the pre-Christian period, there is no hint that the Messiah would function as the personal mediator of the regenerating, baptizing Spirit, or that Messiah, like the Word of God itself, should be made 'a quickening spirit' (1Co. 15:45). It was expected however, that a 'secret wisdom,' 'hidden from other ages,' would be revealed according to a divine timetable in order to conduct a war of strategy in the heavenly realms against the fallen spiritual rulers. In parts of the Old Testament, Qumran, the apocalypses, especially parts of Enoch, and subsequently in the New Testament, this knowledge belongs to a 'hidden wisdom,' 'shut up and sealed,' among the faithful through the Spirit of revelation.

Traditional Judaism inculcates properly motivated Torah obedience as the key to divine favor and blessing. It is salvation through sanctification; however, it is a sanctification that is attained through discipline and the will rather than a sanctification that is the result of rebirth and 'new creation' as in Christian theology. Two questions that continue to divide church and synagogue is what does the law require, and how is it fulfilled? The second question hinges on the necessity of a new nature through spiritual regeneration in order to fulfill the "righteousness of the law" (Ro 8:4), or, as in Judaism, the adequacy of the will.

Judaism, in common with Roman Catholicism, subscribes to a synergistic view of divine grace, whereby God and man work together to achieve sufficient sanctification to "merit" the age to come. The question may be examined from the standpoint of the extent of the fall of the race in Adam i.e. original sin, (a doctrine wholly absent from Judaism). The question touches more than whether the power for authentic righteousness lies within human reach, or indeed requires a miracle of divine grace. It is the view that one has of the nature of righteousness that will determine that person's approach to it. This then is the heart of the division between church and synagogue (see Ro.9:31,32). All else is incidental to the question: How is the broken relation between man and God restored? The Christian view understands personal regeneration to be no less a miracle of divine intervention and power than the resurrection of the body, or its analogy in the sudden national regeneration of Israel in the Day of the Lord. Charles Feinberg, in a brief article on Jewish ethics corroborates the above:

A religious nomism, it is said to be optimistic. The claim is made that Jewish ethics instills faith in man and the future. It has been described as autonomous, because it sees the divine spirit in man. For this reason Jewish ethics makes much of the free will of man, whereby he is self-redemptive through prayer and repentance... Christian ethics, on the other hand, deals with man as a victim of the fall with no self-redemptive ability in an abnormalistic world, and standing in desperate need of divine interposition through regeneration.

It is therefore plain that a personal Messiah plays no part in the Jewish system of justification, except to lead the nation and the world into Torah obedience. In this regard, one might consider that Rabbinical Judaism remains in continuity with pre-Christian messianism. It should be remembered however, that Rabbinical Judaism represents the triumph of only one stream flowing through first century Israel, and so warns Davies, "Hence the possibility that many emphases or tendencies in the first century are not represented in our rabbinical sources."

This is not to suggest, especially in view of the conflict with the Saducee and Pharisee parties reflected in Qumran and the gospels, that the idea of righteousness by faith was original to New Testament revelation; quite the contrary is true. It is rather that John the Baptist appears to be the first to identify the Messiah as the sole mediator of the divine righteousness and the eschatological Spirit. Judging by his allusion to Jesus as the 'Lamb of God,' John demonstrates a unique and precocious knowledge of the character of Jesus' messianic mission.

The righteousness that Messiah mediates, and that God requires, is 'wholly other' in nature. It is the personal righteousness of God himself that is perfectly incarnated in the humanity of Messiah. Because the Messiah is given the Spirit 'without measure,' he perfects obedience in our nature as 'the second Adam' and is thus suited to offer, 'through the eternal Spirit,' his own corporate and representative humanity in an exchange that satisfies the righteous claims of the covenant.

Before resurrection into the life of the new creation is possible, the condemnation of death attaching to the sin of the first creation must be canceled through sacrifice. The Old Testament sacrificial system continually reminded the worshipper that the wages of sin is death, and that sin is only purged by sacrifice. In the death of Messiah, the divine attributes of justice and mercy meet in the reconciliation of sacrifice (a holocaust of divine judgment). Through the holiness of this mysterious and glorious exchange, God is self-liberated through propitiation to be 'the Lord our righteousness' (Jer.23:5,6) in the person of Messiah. No lesser righteousness can stand in the presence of divine holiness. It is an Old Testament concept unveiled in the 'ends of the age.'

According to the revelation of the mystery, before Israel can be ultimately delivered and history transformed according to promise, God must "provide himself a lamb" (Gen. 22:8). This means that before Jacob can be "saved from all his enemies, and from the hand of all who hate him" (Lk. 1:71), he must first be justified by sacrifice from the guilt of sin in order to be inwardly renewed by the Holy Spirit. It is the glory of this mystery that God, in fulfillment of all of the imagery of the Tabernacle, would satisfy the law's demand by offering himself in perfect identification with the elect nation and of all humanity in the person of the Messiah.

In Messiah, God and the elect nation meet over 'the mercy seat' that is only approached through sacrifice. The substitutionary sacrifice of the Messiah is the self-holocaust of God on behalf of his people. Nothing less is required to atone for and conquer the intractable power of inherent sin, (a condition more profound and humanly insurmountable than the mere 'evil inclination' recognized in the hamartiology of Judaism). He is the God who 'laid aside,' in order to come down, to not only dwell 'with', but to indwell (Jn 14:7).

The National Hope in Context

According to the Old Testament (Jer.31:34; Ezk.36:27 et al), authentic and abiding Torah obedience is impossible apart from the enablement of the Spirit. In order for the nation to inherit the promises, the obedience of the law must be established in the only way possible, viz., the Spirit of faith. However, final freedom from the curse of the broken covenant (judgment and exile) requires more than the obedience of a few. Until the righteousness of the covenant is fulfilled by the entire nation at once and forever, there can be no permanent possession of the land. Herein lies the key to understanding the element of the covenant that is still outstanding with this people, and of the power and grace that is yet to be demonstrated through this elect nation ("for this is my covenant with them, when I shall (future) take away their sin " Ro.11:26-27 with Jer.31:33-34 et al).

Apart from an eternal righteousness through regeneration of the Spirit, a righteousness that brings a lasting remedy to the propensity to backslide, there can be no permanent or secure inheritance of the land. The prophets understood this and pointed to 'that day' when everyone born in Israel will be preserved in righteousness and blessed with the enlivening Spirit (Isa.54:13; 59:21; Jer 32:39,40). This astounding prospect anticipates not only the elimination of apostasy from Israel, but the end of the perennial presence of 'the remnant,' since at that time all of Israel will be uniformly righteous in heart and life (Jer.31:34; Isa. 4:3, 60:21). Only an everlasting righteousness can guarantee an enduring possession of the land (else the possibility of covenant failure would continually threaten of further discipline and exile).

History shows that more is required for permanent possession of the land than the presence of a righteous remnant, or even the fleeting revivals under kings Josiah and Hezekiah. While these may temporarily forestall judgment and exile, they are never sufficient to once and for all prevent it. The prophets and saints were never exempted from the fortunes suffered by the apostate nation. The promise meant that the personal renewal and circumcision of heart known only to the few, would be true of all who make up the nation 'in that day.' Until there is no longer a single Jewish individual living in the land who does not know the Lord (Jer 31:34 et al), the "transgression" of Israel is not yet "finished" (Dan 9:24). It is only when the whole of the nation is renewed after its last and greatest trouble (Dan 12:1,2) that the promise is fulfilled "forever."

Israel is never assured of more than temporary possession of the land "until the Spirit is poured out from on high." Israel continues to be subject to the cycles of judgment until the eschatological 'new heart' (Jer.31:34; Ezk.36:36) and Spirit are given in order that the conditions of the covenant might be sufficiently kept so as to assure the permanence of the inheritance. In that day, the law will be in the heart of not only of a David or a Jeremiah, but in the heart of every one that is left (Isa. 4:3,4; 11:11,16; Jer. 31:2) of "the escaped of Israel" (Isa. 4:2).

Manifestly, God intends to vindicate his sovereign prerogative and ability to sanctify a people and to cause them to 'persevere in holiness' in order to make the promise eternally sure to them. Such an 'everlasting righteousness' precludes forever the prospect of future covenant failure. In this way, the inheritance is based on a better covenant (Jeremiah's new covenant) through a new creation of spiritual regeneration, and is thus secure forever. By a new creation of the Spirit, the law is written on the heart of every individual member of what will be in 'that day,' a broken and contrite nation (Jer.31:33). At that time, the threat of the broken law will no longer threaten expulsion, since now the power has come to fulfill the covenant in its proper and original intent, viz., by the gift of the Spirit who sovereignly reveals and quickens faith to "whom He will."

So then, God not only fulfills the covenant for his people, he fulfills it in them by the Spirit of holiness (see Jer.32:40). Personal regeneration of spirit and heart, known through the ages by only a small remnant, will be the corporate experience of the nation at the public and glorious appearance of the Messiah in the great 'Day of God.' And so, the nation that was initially conceived by a miracle (Isaac) is born in a day (Isa.66:8). Jesus reprovved the learned Nicodemus for not recognizing that this principle of national re-birth is likewise prerequisite for every individual's entrance into the Kingdom of God. Jesus' concept of the kingdom is the divine initiative subduing the old order through the revealing, regenerating, and resurrecting activity of the sovereign Spirit, and this, whether presently in a 'first-fruits' of inward and individual renewal, or of the full and public harvest in the 'age to come' of comprehensive world redemption.

Moreover, Jesus understood that in his person the 'powers of the age to come' are already set decisively and powerfully in motion, producing salvation and healing in unforeseen advance of the 'last day.' Hence, the 'life setting' of the parables that mention or assume a "mystery of the kingdom" should be understood in the context of popular Jewish belief. The revelation of the mystery of the Kingdom stands in radical contrast to the contemporary eschatology of the nation. It is a mystery, reflected in scripture as hidden from Israel for a last day's crucible of testing and judgment. That is to say, the long threatened eschatological judgment of the "stone of stumbling," descends on the nation in a manner wholly unanticipated, because, though foretold, the manner of fulfillment remains sealed until the appointed time of revelation and fulfillment.

Due to the prophets' vivid portrayals of the climactic 'day of the Lord,' the eschatological judgments that would separate the apostate elements of the nation from the righteous remnant were inevitably associated with a time of national crises. This foretold period of brief duration, reaching to the 'last day,' was popularly named the 'messianic woes' or 'footsteps of the Messiah.' Against such a background of expectation one can begin to imagine the effect that this eschatological 'secret hidden from other ages' (Col.1:26; Eph.3:9) had on first century Israel, when during a time of relative normalcy, and with little disturbance of its public life, a silent judgment of solemn magnitude passes fatefully, albeit quietly, through the midst of the unsuspecting nation. Messiah indeed appears, but in an unforeseen, (even though enigmatically foretold, see Isa 52, Ps. 22), role of suffering and rejection as 'the stone of stumbling and rock of offense' (Isa.

8:14-17).

The Messiah represents in his person and hidden advent, the eschatological plumbline of judgment that comes in unimagined advance of the 'the last day.' So understood, 'the mystery' functions to sift and judge the nation, visiting in advance the eschatological separation of the last day. At the same time 'a door of faith is opened to the gentiles,' ushering in a new dispensation of personal salvation that grants to gentiles a full and equal share in Israel's inheritance and hope through the representative, and sacrificially substitutionary body of the Messiah. It is 'the glory of this mystery' (Col.1:25-27), that the very Spirit of God perfected in the Messiah without measure (Jn.3:34 b) should indwell the faithful Gentile. This wonder vastly exceeds anything formerly looked for in connection with the millennial re-instatement of Israel. The Gentile had looked for the 'crumbs from the children's table' but received instead, the promise that said:

"Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." And of the promise that follows: "The Lord God, who gathereth the outcast of Israel, saith, I will gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him." (Isa. 56:5; Compare also the prophecy concerning Messiah's task to gather the Gentiles in Isa.49:5-9).

Meanwhile, in the interim, the nation on the whole remains temporarily in the grip of apostasy and judgment under a sovereignly ordained condition of blindness and hardening. Provocatively, and by divine design, the mystery is at once an instrument of blessing and of judgment. It is goodness to all who by revelation perceive the wisdom of it, but paradoxically, to those who 'stumble,' the very device prepared to bless becomes itself 'a trap and a snare', the portent of judicial 'severity' (Rom.11:22). It is, although disguised and ill esteemed by the prudence of the age, the full 'summing up' of the 'hidden' and 'unsearchable riches' of the 'manifold wisdom of God'.

That gentiles would be blessed in Abraham's seed was well known, but this expectation was naturally associated with the time of Israel's national restoration at the end of the age. That there should be a 'calling out of the gentiles' in advance of 'that day,' and in result of Israel's greatest 'stumbling,' was a mystery of staggering proportion. Only a revelation coming with the strongest attestation and confirmation could have convinced the throngs of pilgrims gathered at Pentecost (Acts 2) and as came in the conversion of Paul.

Therefore, when the church in lawless disregard for the plain meaning of language, re-interprets the Old Testament promises in exclusion of the national and historical hope, it misses entirely the wisdom and strategy of the mystery and thus becomes "wise in its own conceits" (Ro.11:25). However, for the Jew to ignore the witness of the New Testament is likewise presumptuous, arbitrarily omitting viable historical evidence that may hold a key of understanding that is altogether other than what has been historically represented by nominal Christendom.

The Church's Dereliction towards Israel: A Symptom of Apostasy

The church's failure to grasp the theological significance of the Holocaust is not stranger than its reluctance to recognize the most prophetically loaded event to occur since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, specifically, the repossession of Eretz Yisrael, and the formation on its soil of a Jewish state. The reticence of the church concerning the importance of this modern sign is at once spiritually obtuse and a statement of the church's costly ignorance of the very mystery that is calculated to save it from the boastfulness of humanism (Ro.11:25). It is more than vincible ignorance; it betrays a disposition that sees

no incongruity in the divine character if Israel's failure is final. But, "have they stumbled that they should fall?" "God forbid!" is the apostolic riposte that the larger part of that which calls itself the church has ignored to its eternal loss (Ro.11:11).

While the church waits to recover her original consciousness of Israel's role in world redemption, the nations are condemned to languish under demonic domination until Israel comes to understand Yom Kippur in the light of the cross (Zech.12:10). The sudden and powerful inbreaking of the revelation of this mystery will finally answer the prophet's question "shall a nation be brought forth in a day?" (Is.66:8).

The Eschatological Task of the Church

One crucial dimension of the eschatological calling of the Church remains virtually untapped and awaits vital fulfillment. It is the calling of the church to model before the Jewish Diaspora the presence of the departed Shekinah Glory through the power of the promised Spirit and so move Israel to emulation. Thus, we could say that the 'justification' (national regeneration) of Israel waits for the 'sanctification' of the Church, and world peace the resurrection of the fallen nation. Toward this end Paul labored indefatigably, that through a mature church, (which is always a martyr church), Israel might be impressed of its missing link. Paul was not one to rest short of the goal, knowing that the key to Israel is the church, and the key to the nations is Israel. Therefore, when the church in its corporate 'fullness' attains to move Israel to emulation, it attains also the conclusion of the age.

This is manifestly the Pauline perception of the divine strategy. Paul recognized, as we must, that so long as Israel languishes in estrangement and unbelief, so must the world. It is not commended as a panacea, but may we not consider that the church's anemia in evangelism derives in part from its neglect of the apostolic pattern in going 'to the Jew first.' The church has learned well enough that "they are not all Israel that are of Israel" but it will require an historical demonstration on an unprecedented scale to convince Israel that 'they are not all church that are of the church.'

It is prophetic irony that the rallying cry of national Zionism should be "never again!" when alas, once again, in a final test ('birth pangs of Messiah'), Israel will be thrust out into the wilderness of the nations (Ezk. 20), where this time a prophetically prepared church (Rev.12:6) will be waiting to lay its life down for the beleaguered remnant, soon to become a holy nation. When the kingdom is restored to Israel after a cleansing by fire, the creation will have its Jubilee of rest.

"What shall the receiving again of them be but life from the dead."

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