

THE SALVATION of ALL ISRAEL

SOME QUESTIONS:

-- *"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matt. 24:13). **Does this mean that if we fail to endure temptations until the end of our lives we will lose our salvation?**

-- *"And so all Israel shall be saved"* (Rom. 11:26). **Does this mean that every Jew who ever lived will some day be saved?**

-- *"And two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left"* (Matt. 24:40, 41). **Is this a description of what will happen at the Rapture of the church?**

The above questions, and many more, find an answer through an understanding of Ezekiel 20:33 - 44. This rich and enlightening portion of Ezekiel takes us from the time, during the Great Tribulation period, when great persecution breaks out against the Jews in the world, to the happy day at the close of that "time of Jacob's trouble" when all Israel shall be saved.

ISRAEL REGATHERED.

When God made it possible for the Jews to return to Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, most of them were happy where they were. They saw no reason to make the long and hazardous trip to live in a devastated city. Only a small remnant took advantage of the opportunity.

In a future day, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, God will sound the trumpet that will usher in the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets, inviting Israel again to return to her land. In that day, too, many of them will be unwilling to respond -- even though exciting things will be happening there. A world dictator will have come on the scene and made a covenant with their leaders.¹ At long last their temple is being rebuilt in the very place where Solomon's temple once stood. All of the religious and military power of the Mohammedan world has been defied to make it possible. They are under the protection of a world empire, giving them freedom from fear of their enemies for the first time in more than two thousand years.

Yet, in spite of what appears to be a "new day" for Israel, many of them will be saying in their hearts, "We will be as the heathen [Gentiles], as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone" (Ezek. 20:32). But God will not allow them to lose their identity as Jews, and stay in their homes among the Gentiles. He declares, "**I WILL** rule over you" (Ezek. 20:33-b). He does not allow them to remain behind this time, as He did during the reign of Cyrus. "**I WILL** bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out" (Ezek. 20:34). He

¹ This covenant is spoken of in Daniel 9:27, and is evidently the "covenant with death" described in Isa. 28:15, 18..

will not bring them directly into Palestine, however, as He did in Ezra and Nehemiah. He will gather them into the vast wilderness where Israel had wandered during the exodus, "And I shall bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face" (Ezek. 20:35).

The apostle John foresaw this time when he described Israel as a woman fleeing from the wrath of Satan. "And when the dragon [Satan] saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] who brought forth the man child [Christ]. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time [three and a half years], from the face of the serpent" (Rev. 12:14).

Evidently in the middle of the Tribulation, when the antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27; Isa. 28:18), there will be a great worldwide persecution of the Jews. God will use this wrath as a tool to force Israel to leave their homes among the nations. They will flee for their lives to the Sinai Peninsula, the only place of refuge open to them. This may become the greatest "air-lift" in history as they are given "two wings of a great eagle" to take them to safety.

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON REGATHERED ISRAEL

In the wilderness they will be protected from Satan's wrath, expressed through antichrist's persecution, as Rev. 12:16 indicates. Satan will then turn his attention to the only Jews who will not be in this wilderness refuge (apparently the 144,000 Jews who are already saved and seeking to evangelize the world). He has a special hatred for them for they "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

While the Jews gathered in the wilderness will be protected from Satan, God Himself will enter into judgment with them, just as Israel of old was protected from Pharaoh, but judged by the Lord in the desert. "'As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,' declares the Lord God" (Ezek. 20:36).

The purpose of the judgment is clear. These Jews are all unsaved, but some have a love for the Old Testament and are seeking to worship the true God. Others have long ago turned their backs on both God and His Word. The latter group has been brought out of the lands where they have been scattered, but will not be brought into the land of Israel. They are the "rebels" mentioned in Ezek. 20:38. "And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

THE CONVERSION OF "ALL ISRAEL"

Those who are not rebels will be chastened, but brought to know the Lord. "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the [New] Covenant" (Ezek. 20:37). Their conversion will come when they are brought into the land. "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezek. 20:42). At that time they will loathe themselves for all the evils they have committed (Ezek. 20:43).

More details are given about this conversion in Zech. 12:10. "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem [those brought into the land, upon the holy mount] the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him [loathing themselves] as one that is in bitterness for his first born." This is the day Paul has in mind when he writes, "All Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). These are the ones in view in Matthew 5:4, who are blessed because they mourn (over their sin of having rejected for so long the Savior) and are comforted (saved). This is the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement wherein all the people of Israel were to afflict their souls (Lev. 23:27, 29). These are the ones who have triumphantly endured and overcome the temptations and testings of the Tribulation. They are saved because they were not slain in the wilderness, as were the rebels, and thus are present and alive in that glorious day when salvation is poured out on Israel.

SOME ANSWERS:

Going back to our opening questions:

-- **The expression "He that shall endure unto the end ... shall be saved"** (Matt. 24:13) is found only here, in Matt. 10:22, and in Mark 13:13. In each case the reference is to one nation (Israel) and one period of time (the Great Tribulation). It does not say that anyone else at any other time must endure to be saved. Also it does not say that even those who are in view in these verses have to endure in order to remain saved. The salvation comes at the end of the enduring. The "end" is not the end of one's life, but the end of the Tribulation, the "end of the age" the disciples asked about in Matt. 24:3.

Are these Jews, during that time, saved by works, -- by enduring? No, they are saved by grace. It is this spirit of "grace and supplications," not the spirit of "works and endurance" which is poured out on them. It is the work of Christ alone, called to mind by the nail pierced hands, that saves them. Let me illustrate how this can be.

Suppose two men in the Philippines (or some other such primitive mission field) start out to attend evangelistic services across a mountain. It is the rainy season. They slip and slide on the muddy trail and are drenched to the skin in the rain. Finally one man turns back. The other endures the hardships of the trail to the end. He arrives at the meetings. There he hears the gospel and is saved, while the one who turned back is still lost. Is he saved because he endured, or because Christ died for him and he believed? The enduring did not save him, but it did bring him to the place where he could be saved. So the enduring of the remnant does not save them, but it does bring them to the place and the day when Christ manifests Himself to His people. They will be saved much as Saul of Tarsus was on the road to Damascus, by the work of Christ and the grace of God.

-- **Paul's cry, "And so all Israel shall be saved"** (Rom. 11:26) refers to all of the Jews who are alive and in Jerusalem on the holy mount at the time when Christ appears to Israel. At His coming in glory He brings them to Himself. Zech. 13:8, 9 tells us that two parts in the land (the rebels) shall be cut off and die, but the third part (the remnant) shall be left. It goes on to speak of those who are still left (those who survive and are allowed to go into Jerusalem and see the

One they pierced. "And I will bring the third part through fire [as the three Hebrew children were brought through the fire in Daniel three], and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they [the one third still living at that time] shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, 'It is my people:' and they shall say, 'The Lord is my God.'" This is the "all Israel" of which Paul spoke.²

-- What about the passage in Matt. 24:40, 41?

Perhaps the most important rule in biblical interpretation is "study the context!" Matt. 24:37 - 39 is the key to our understanding of the following two verses. "For the coming of the Son of Man [coming in glory, not the Rapture] will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (NASB).

Who is it that was "taken" in Noah's day? Was it Noah taken in salvation? No, it was the wicked "taken" in judgment. Noah was left. So also in verses 40 and 41. The ones taken were taken in judgment,³ and the ones left are those destined for salvation. This fits with Ezekiel twenty. The rebels are taken (purged) in judgment first. Those surviving this judgment go on into the land of Israel where they come to know the Lord.

A study of the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24 - 30 and 36 - 43) gives us the same truth. The sower of the good seed is Christ, as in the previous parable of the sower. Here, however, the seed is not the "word of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:19) but the "children of the kingdom" (v. 38), not a message, but people. The field is the world, but the children of the kingdom are Jews, not Gentiles. The tares are people also, the children of the wicked one (compare John 8:44). These also are Jews rather than Gentiles. If the tares were Gentiles it would not require angelic wisdom to differentiate between them and the Jewish children of the kingdom. In that day, Jews will be scattered all over the world (the "field") but some are wheat and some are tares. The separation of the wheat from the tares comes at the end of the age, and takes place in the wilderness, where God has gathered them together. He is evidently using angels to help in this judgment. Notice that the tares (the rebels) are gathered out first. The wheat is left behind and shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

This is just the opposite of the Rapture. There the believers are taken to heaven and the

² For further study on the meaning of Rom. 11:26 see the following Scriptures: Deut. 4:30; Isa. 4:3; 10:20; 28:18 (with context); 66:17 - 19; Jer. 31:2; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:13; Rev. 13:8.

³ In Luke's account of this sermon there is a significant addition. His account reads: "I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left. And they answered and said to Him, "**Where [will they be taken], Lord?**" So He said to them, "**Wherever the body is, there the eagles [vultures -- NASB] will be gathered together.**" (Luke 7:34 - 37 -- NKJV). That is, they will be taken away to judgment!

unbelievers are the ones left behind.

The separation of the wicked and righteous Gentiles at the close of Israel's age is not in view either in Ezekiel twenty or in the parable of the tares. It is the subject of the parable of the dragnet (Matt. 13:47 - 50). There the "good" fish are not "children of the kingdom," but are taken from the seas (symbolic of the Gentile nations in many prophecies) and are of "every kind." In this judgment the good fish are "gathered ... into vessels" first (Matt. 13:48) and then the bad are thrown away. This is the judgment described in Matt. 25:31 - 46, where all "nations" (v. 32) are gathered before the Lord. The good are considered first (vs. 34 - 40) and then the bad (vs. 41 - 46).

The Age of Grace, and its concluding program, is not in view in any of the above Scriptures. See the chapters on the Rapture of the Church in this volume.