

# REFORMED

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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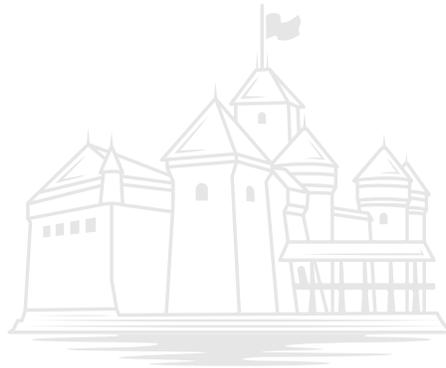
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And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God."

—Exodus 29:43–46

### The God Who Dwells Among His People

Jehovah is the God who dwells among his people. Thus he said as he revealed the tabernacle and the priesthood to Moses. In his glory-cloud he would descend upon the tabernacle in the midst of the camp of Israel, and there he would dwell with his people. Listen as God reveals this wonderful covenant promise to Moses: "There I will meet with the children of Israel." And: "I will dwell among the children of Israel." And: "That I may dwell among them." Jehovah is the God who dwells among his people.

Jehovah dwells among his people because he is their God. From all eternity he chose them as his own in his gracious decree of election. In all their pilgrim way in the wilderness, he keeps them, leads them, feeds them, and blesses them. Again and again on Mount Sinai, God pronounced his covenant claim upon his people. Listen to what God said: "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God." And: "They shall know that I am the LORD their God." And: "I am the LORD their God."

It was Jehovah's covenant formula, Jehovah's covenant vow. To his helpless and sinful people through all the ages, he speaks these most tender words of his covenant love and faithfulness: I am yours, and you are mine. To aged Abraham God promised "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). To his captive people God declared, "But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared" (Isa. 51:15). At the

end of the Bible, God sends forth this resounding word: "God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

How full of grace and truth is Jehovah's covenant promise to his people. For the reason that God dwells among his people cannot be found in the people themselves. The people are sinful and corrupt. The people are full of rebellion and disobedience. Consider Israel at Mount Sinai as God was speaking his covenant words to Moses in the mount. Though God had just delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea, fed them with manna in the wilderness, replenished them with water from the rock, and brought them to himself at Mount Sinai, the people grew weary of waiting for Moses to return from the mount. Very soon the children of Israel would make a golden calf and play before it. Jehovah would dwell with them? Jehovah would be their God?

Or let the church consider herself, of whom rebellious Israel was a type. Consider the coldness of heart, the bitterness of spirit, the ready complaint, the will worship, the murder, the idolatry, the lust, the deceit that lies in the flesh of God's people. Jehovah would dwell with us? Jehovah would be our God?

How gracious is our covenant God! How great are his mercies to us sinners! For the holy Jehovah is our God, and he dwells with us!

And now let us see by faith the heart of God's great mercy. God dwells with his people in Jesus Christ. Jesus, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In Jesus God dwells among the

children of Israel, his church; for Jesus is the great Emmanuel, God with us. In Jesus is fulfilled God's blessed covenant formula: "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God."

—AL

## HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

*The Banner*

April 6, 1922

(pp. 214–15)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

### Article CLIII: The New King and His Kingdom: The Rejection of the Nation

"And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel and afflicted them and delivered them into the hand of the spoilers until he had cast them out of his sight."—2 Kings 17:20

We saw that prophecy was a necessary concomitant of the law for Israel under the old dispensation.

The law, so we found, minutely described the duty of God's covenant people of the old dispensation. It mapped out the path in which they had to walk. Every step was directed by precept. Their obligation with regard to the service of God in the narrower sense of the word, in temple and at altar, on Sabbath days and holy days; their obligation with regard to one another and their attitude toward the nations about them and to the sinners in their midst, it was all prescribed in detail, and at every step the law accompanied the people of God before the fulness of time. At the same time, however, the law served the purpose of bringing out the offense, of bringing to light the corruption of that which was corrupt and of corrupting it more. For the law became an occasion for sin to manifest itself in actual offenses. It provoked sin to transgression. And it served to bring the true people of God to a clearer consciousness of the fact that for their righteousness with God a better sacrifice was needed than that of bulls and goats. Again, the very law contained itself a promise of things to come, a promise of the better future, when the forms of the old dispensation would

be removed to make room for the realities of the new. Surely, Israel was truly the people of God; the temple of God was essentially among them; the throne of God really was established among them, and Jerusalem was really the city of God. But the forms under which all these existed in the old dispensation were not essential, neither were they final. That Israel existed as a nation; that the temple appeared as a building made with hands; that Jerusalem was a city of wood and stone; that the throne of David appeared in tangible and earthly form, all this belonged not to the essence of the Kingdom of God, but merely to a temporal and fleeting manifestation of it. These forms had to disappear to make room for better manifestations. They had to be destroyed to be replaced by the reality of the new dispensation. They contained, in their very imperfection, a promise of future things. They were themselves prophetic. But to bring the people of God to a clearer understanding of this prophetic character of the dispensation in which they lived, prophecy, in the sense of prediction, was absolutely necessary. When the outward forms crumbled into ruins and when, because of the destruction of these external forms of the kingdom the people of God would be filled with anxiety and worry that the essence of God's covenant might disappear with the form and temporal manifestation of it; when, therefore, from an outward point of view things looked dark, prophecy came to direct their

eye of faith to the future and to make them understand that though all temporal forms might crumble into ruin, God would still establish his Kingdom and never forget his covenant.

If this is clear, it is not difficult to understand the apparent contradiction we meet with repeatedly in Old Testament prophecy, a contradiction that is also realized in Israel's history. Prophecy contains the double message that Israel will be rejected and that Israel will be saved; that the Kingdom will be surrendered into the hands of the enemy and that it will stand forever; that God will cast his people out of his sight and that he will love them with an eternal love. And what is predicted in Israel's prophecy is actually realized in its history. Gradually, after David and Solomon, the kingdom of Israel loses of its national power and glory, the nations round about her gain in power and with ever increasing boldness and success encroach upon her dominion, till finally Israel's glory is trampled under foot and disappears in the fulness of time. And yet, Israel is still there. It has not disappeared. It has only been deprived of its national form to reappear, after Christ had fulfilled all things, in brighter form and higher realization among all nations and tribes. Israel disappears, yet Israel exists; the temple is destroyed, yet the temple still stands; the throne of David was cast down forever, yet that throne of David stands eternally; such is the prediction of Israel's prophecy, and such is the truth embodied in the history of the Kingdom of God.

What is true in regard to the human race in general, namely, that God realizes his Kingdom and covenant organically, along the lines of election and reprobation, is also true of Israel's history. It is as with some vines. When the vine is allowed to grow wild, without being trimmed, there will appear in such a vine suckers, parasite-branches, shooting forth from its very roots or from among its branches. These suckers constitute part of the vine, but they never bear fruit. They only serve to divert the nourishment from the fruit-bearing branches. And, therefore, they must be trimmed off. They may be present in such great abundance that their removal trims down the vine to a mere

shadow of its former self, and the fear would seem justified that the vine itself was killed. Yet, this is not the case. Presently the live branches again shoot forth and bear fruit, and, because the suckers have been removed, they bring forth fruit more abundantly. This is, according to Christ's own word, an image in nature of what God is performing in the sphere of grace. And this is also true of Israel. Israel is the vine. But the vine has its "spongers," its parasites, its suckers. In different periods of its history Israel's vine is trimmed. The great Husbandman employs Israel's enemies to trim his vine, which he has brought down from Egypt and planted in Canaan. And this trimming of his vine assumes such proportions at times that Israel's psalmist is filled with dismay, and complains that it is burnt with fire and cut down (Ps. 80). And when finally the fulness of time arrives, the vine has apparently disappeared. Christ appears as a root out of a dry ground. Yet, in him the vine is saved. All that has happened is that the Husbandman of Israel's vineyard continually trimmed the vine and removed the suckers, Israel that was not Israel. And with the removal of these suckers on Israel's vine the national form of the kingdom disappeared.

In this light it is not difficult to understand Israel's history, either from a spiritual point of view or from an outward, matter-of-fact aspect.

The general lines of Israel's development are indicated clearly in 2 Kings 17:7–23. There the sacred historian gives a general review of Israel's history from the time the people were delivered from Egypt to the moment that the ten tribes are led into captivity. And he views that history in the light of Israel's spiritual development and continued apostasy from Jehovah. Israel began to apostatize from the Lord when they chose to serve him according to their own imaginations in a manner as he had not commanded them. And instead of adhering to the central sanctuary in Jerusalem, they built themselves high places in every corner of the land (Vs. 9). They continued in their apostasy and went a step further when they tried to serve Jehovah and the gods of the heathen nations side by side. They became broad-minded.

Why serve Jehovah only? Why not admit that there was some good also in the worship of the nations round about them? Why imagine that they were “it,” and that the other nations and their gods contained nothing sound? They attempted to serve the other gods together with Jehovah, and they set up images and groves in every high hill and under every green tree. Thus they served the idols and, naturally, soon forgot Jehovah to serve the gods of the nations alone (Vss. 10–12). The Lord, however, sent his prophets against them to testify against their shameful apostasy and to call them to return to the Lord their God. But the only result was that they hardened their necks, rejected all the statutes of Jehovah and his covenant and testimonies, and became vain, making molten images and sacrificing the children of God’s covenant to the abominations of the heathen round about them (Vss. 13–17). And the end was rejection. One long history of apostasy, from bad to worse, till the Lord rejected the nation and cast them from his sight, such is the history of Israel, first of the ten tribes and later of the entire nation. But the remnant is always left, and God remembers his covenant forever.

And so we also understand the development of Israel from a historical, matter-of-fact point of view. First there is the breaking away of the ten tribes from Judah and Jerusalem. It is but natural that these ten tribes, after they have severed their relation with the very heart of Israel’s existence, hasten to their destruction and are cast out of Jehovah’s sight first. But Judah does not learn a lesson from the rejection of her adulterous sister, but also whores after the gods of the nations. She also is led into captivity. But the remnant returns. And after Israel returns from Babylon, they do not

more walk in their former sins. They have learned to be afraid of the abominations of the heathen. The development of their apostasy now runs in a different direction, namely, in the direction of pharisaism. They begin to emphasize that they are Abraham’s children. They emphasize the external keeping of the law and make an attempt to work out their own righteousness by keeping the letter of the law. And although this form of apostasy appears less abominable than their former whoring after the gods of the nations, essentially there is no difference, except that the cloak of self-righteousness in which they disguise their corruption makes them more abominable still and less fit to see the Kingdom of God when it comes. The result is that when the fulness of time arrives and the King of Israel is born, according to the prophets, in Bethlehem, and walks among them, and preaches that the Kingdom of heaven has come near, they turn their necks against him. They reject the Son and prove that they are darkness by loving darkness rather than light. Thus the measure of iniquity is become full. Israel as a nation is rejected finally and once for all. Jerusalem and temple are destroyed. And never are they to be rebuilt. Israel and its temple have served their purpose. The vine is trimmed down to its root. But that root is alive. Though the nation is rejected, Israel still lives. In Christ Israel’s vine shoots forth new branches. And instead of confining the scope of its branches and fruit to Israel’s national existence, it now appears among all nations and tribes and tongues.

All they that believe in him are now children of Abraham.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

