

Categorie 7 - Nations/ Volken

By Pieter Bos

Cat.7 # 1 Nations are God's idea

God created them (even in his image). God also covenanted them, all of them, all nations, tribes, peoples, kingdoms and states, even the coastlands USA and Netherlands.

>> Are USA and Netherlands in for surprises?

God "gave the nations their inheritance" (Deut. 32:7), which suggests an intimate relationship with the nations. God addresses not only Jerusalem and Judah, but also pagan nations and cities as "Virgin, Daughter", virgin meaning ready-for-covenant; "Virgin Daughter Babylon" (Isa 47:1)

God commands nations to praise Him (Ps 67, 117), to rejoice in Him (Deut. 32:43, Isa 42:11). He wants them to know that He reigns (1Chr 16:31). God sends prophets to the nations (Jer. 1:5, Obadiah, Jonah). The nations will tremble before Him, awaiting his righteous judgement (Ps 98:9; 99:1).

God proclaims justice and judgement to all nations (Ps 9:17,20; Isa 2:4; 42: 1; Jer. 50:2; Mic 4:3; Matt 10:15; 12:18; Luke 10:14; Rev 18:5,6). God also announces that He will "restore the fortunes" of Moab, Ammon, Elam (Jer. 48:47; 49:6; 49:3) and of Sodom and Samaria (Ezek. 16:53).

>> All this makes us wonder: How intimate God is dealing with all nations?

And then, towards the end of the OT, the veil lifts.

In Zech. 11:4-17 we see sheep (nations), led and misled and abused by under-shepherds (kings and presidents), who are not on speaking terms with the chief-shepherd. The chief-shepherd "took two staves and called one Favour..., and I [chief-shepherd] pastured the flock" (vs 7). The chief-shepherd subsequently becomes angry with the unfaithful hired shepherds (vs 5,8), and, in the end, with the flock (vs 6,8-9). In his anger, the chief-shepherd performs a symbolic action: "Then I took my staff called Favour and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations" (Zech. 11:10). NB first, that "I", the chief-shepherd, is the shepherd-under-God, Jesus-to-come. NB second, that "I" originally was in covenant relationship with all "nations" (as defined in a previous blog), was and is the good shepherd of all the nations, your nation, and mine, not excluded! Favour is one translation of the Hebrew term; other translations are "Beauty", "Grace", "Friendliness" (German), "Tender Love" (Dutch).

>> How glorious a covenant. And how terrible the breaking of it. The whole creation holds its breath!

But then a most unusual event occurs, vs. 12: the chief-shepherd requests his under-shepherds, the kings and presidents He had just kicked out of office (!), to be evaluated by them! And they evaluate their chief-shepherd at 30 pieces of silver, the Moses ordained bottom price for a slave. The chief-shepherd does not need to respond to this offence, because immediately his God comes to his aid, instructing him: "Throw it to the potter" (vs. 13). When later Judas betrays Jesus for the same amount of money, which is thrown to the potter, Matthew is inspired to say that by that act the prophecy of Zech. 11 is being fulfilled. In other words, Jesus did not only die as the Shepherd of our souls;

>> Jesus died also as Shepherd of the nations; and he wants to be their Shepherd still!

Jesus, by shedding his blood, laid the basis not only for the New Covenant with Israel (Jer. 31, 1Cor 11:25). But he laid also the basis for the new covenant with all nations. That's why Jesus sends his disciples "to disciple all tribes, peoples, states and cities". And during the millennium Jesus will rule his Commonwealth of Israel with all nations covenanted into that Commonwealth. And when after that God sovereignly institutes a new creation, he will again invite the nations to live with their God in covenant relationship: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples." (RSV; also Rev 21:24,26, 22:2). That is the traditional covenant-formula: to Israel: I will be your God and you will be my people; and here to the nations: I will be their God and they will be my peoples!

>> The western world is stuck in an increasingly ridged separation of church-state. But that is entirely different from the God-intended intimate God-state relation. We are in for surprises.