

Cat.2 # 8 21st-century church thinking and believing about the future

By Pieter Bos

A different aspect of this subject:

1 God has something with nations; about Corporateness and future

God does not only see us as individuals, but also as nations, and with a future. And God has a special relationship with the nations. [I use "nation" as a generic term for tribe (kinship network), people (cultural network, people group) and state (political and legal network.)] What do we think, and what do we believe, and feel, about nations? Nations feature very strongly throughout the Bible. Israel as a nation is delivered and led and taught and corrected, to show all other nations who God is. The psalmists challenge all nations to praise God. God speaks through David and in the dream to Nebuchadnezzar about a one world-government, one government over all nations. Most of the prophets speak at length to many nations. Satan, at meeting Jesus after his baptism, claims the ownership of all nations and offers them to Him. Jesus commissions the church to disciple all nations. John at Patmos sees angels speaking to nations and he witnesses the emergence first of an earthly and then of a heavenly one world-government.

Not only that. Abraham was elected to be a blessing for all nations. Jesus commissions the church to disciple all nations. And when at last Israel and the Church merge, after the great tribulation, what do they sing? The "song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb" (who is THE servant of God): "You are the ruler of all nations... all nations will come and worship you" (Rev 15:3-4).

Not only the nations feature strongly, the theme of the nations seems to run through the whole Bible as a red line. Israel and the Church were elected for the sake of the nations!

This theme of Corporateness, the sense of being a body, also applies when the Bible speaks about the future. Not only I, personally, but we, corporately are going somewhere. This stands in stark contrast to the sense of meaninglessness and of the hyper-individualism of our time. God does not only love me, He also loves me-in-my-nation, or even my-nation-with-me-in-it.

Do we love The Netherlands, Sweden, God's way?

2 God had and still wants to have a covenant with all the nations

From the very beginning God had a "covenant with all the nations": God had committed Himself to the nations of the world (explicitly mentioned in Zech. 11:4-13, implicitly many times in all prophetic books, not least in Revelation). That's why He addresses them as "Virgin Daughter". A virgin is ready for marriage, i.e. ready for covenant. The nations are called to covenant with their Creator, and that is why He addresses them authoritatively, why He warns them, and appeals to them and announces judgement and deliverance to them.

This covenant was broken (Zech. 11:4-13; Isa 24:1-5), but God plans to restore it. Initially He did this through Abraham/Israel and through the prophecies and through the Church, as indicated above. He will do it definitely through the one world-government of the "Commonwealth of Israel", for the length of a millennium (Isa 2: 2-4; 25:6-7; Rev 19:11-16; 20:4). Satan tries to copy and prevent this, through "anti-covenants", nations committing themselves to what is not God, such as dedications to the Queen of Heaven or to sharia rule. He also uses wars and rumours of wars and works towards a rebellious one world-government. The present hyper-individualism is another of his ways to frustrate this plan of God. But Satan will fail.

Do we appreciate history God's way?

3 King of kings is a political function

David, the God-appointed King of kings, prophesies to his fellow kings, kings who break the covenant mentioned above, that a future King of Kings will come and rule them all (Ps 2:10-12). The great King of kings Nebuchadnezzar is confronted by a startling dream: his one world-government will be only short-lived and is only a shade compared to what is coming (Dan 2).

Jesus is very kind and inclusive to the crowds, as He paints a picture of his coming kingdom through parables. But to the leaders, be it Zealots or Pharisees or Herodians, he is emphatic in his "political" statements, though always avoiding secular and common-sense applications of these statements. He refused to be made king of Israel (John 6:15).

However, after being taken captive, he talks little to the Sanhedrin, not at all to king Herod, but to Pilate he says: "I am king indeed. That was what I was born for and that is the truth I want you to know, you representative of the one world-government" (after John 1-; very political indeed).

Do we perceive the spiritual dynamics behind the present political scene as God perceives them?

4 Breaking the sound barrier of the rational

When Gabriel approached Zechariah (Luke 1) he broke "the sound barrier of the rational": after 400 years without prophets, of closed heaven and unanswered and therefore fading prayers, the divine silence was interrupted. The angels appearing to Mary, to Joseph, to the shepherds and to the wise men were also break-ins; and the birth of Jesus, and all the miracles around it gave massive proof of heaven opening up. When Jesus later said: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand", he meant: A kingdom with an open heaven is about to become visible, and you can see it clearly when evil spirits are publicly shown the door; miracles will be normal from now on.

In our time, in less than 200 years, rationalism has almost closed heaven, denying miracles, deeming faith irrational and pushing God outside public life into private corners. Theology as talk-about-the-living-God has turned into comparative-religious-science. Rationalism has made us believe that the world is 4,5 billion years old and, as Mother Earth, may survive if only humans behave correctly.

Did God change his plans? NO. God poured out (!) his Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, in the charismatic renewal and whenever necessary, for no other reason than to break in through this and any other sound barrier, to emphasize that His Christ has a public, political, and global role to play. Jesus is very emphatic about the coming kingdom: it is not spiritual but visible, though unlike the world.

Jesus' first coming was in a way hidden, in a small corner of the world and known to shepherds and uneducated disciples, who knew only through faith and revelation who he was; Jesus and his coming kingdom could still be denied. Jesus' second coming will, on the contrary, be on the clouds, for the whole world to see and covered by CNN non-stop reporting. It will confront kings and generals; Jesus and his kingdom will be undeniable.

The visible and the invisible, the rational and the super-rational will be shown to be one reality; he will rule out of Jerusalem through angels and e-mail. Thinking and believing, torn apart as they have been in the last two centuries, will meet again and be reconciled, through revelation and miracles breaking in from outside.

Do we discern how secular our thinking has become?

5 The "covenant with all nations" in the 21st century

During the last 20 years we are seeing at least eight international "anti-covenants", blocking nations off from any covenant with God. The EU- and UN-membership is little less than nations covenanting for "a better world for all". The dedication of cities and states to the Queen of Heaven has the nature of covenant. The enforcement of sharia rule over regions and states excludes any covenant with God. Unbiblical church-state relations block a God-intended God-state relation. States that declare themselves communist do block the living God out of state-life. Sustainability as a core value in politics (eco-utopism) blocks out the living God. Revival of the worship of ancient gods does the same. Freemasonry connects cities and nations to what they call the "Great Architect of the Universe". Each of the nations so involved "grope" where thinking and believing touch, "grope" in the sense of Acts 17:27! This is 21st century history.

The last 20 years we see at least three one world-governments emerging. By some the EU and the UN are hoped, by some feared, to be the run-up for a one world-government. The sudden emergence of Islam and forceful islamisation hardly hide their vision for world rule. Every year the Dalai Lama and his lamas perform kalachakra and mandala rituals at hundreds of rivers all over the world, pretending to settle peace on earth, but it is a "peace" for the entire river basins under Shamballah kingdom rule. Each of the nations involved "grope" where thinking and believing touch! This is 21st century history.

In the last 20 years we see not only God repositioning Israel on centre stage, but also no fewer than 10 states covenanting/dedicating themselves to God at government level, including Zambia, Benin, Vanuatu and Sierra Leone. And no fewer than 100 (in 2014:300) cities in Brazil dedicated themselves to God at government level, including Diadema, Sao Luis, Cuiabá and Cornelio Procopio. And no fewer than 120 villages and islands in Fiji covenanted to God. Each of these nations, cities and villages "grope" in this area where thinking and believing touch, as pilot projects of the Commonwealth of Israel! This again is 21st century history.

The concept of "covenant with all nations" seems alive and well, if not on the church's agenda, then certainly on Satan's and on God's!

Does the Church discern what is happening? Does the Church have God's vision for the (10) tribes and states? Does the Church have vision for market place redemption? Does the Church discern that Satan proves better prepared than the Church for the coming of God's Christ? Does the Church dare to experiment with new church-state relations, to make room for new God-state relations? Does the Church cry for the return of Jesus, rather: for THE coming of Christ/Messiah and his one world-government, and for the Commonwealth of Israel?

6 Thinking and believing and expecting, at corporate level

This article is not primarily political or even philosophical but existential: challenging us to re-integrate thinking and believing, thinking and believing and expecting, at corporate level, in a God-centred way.

The Old Testament prophesies about the "Day of the Lord" are elaborated by John as referring to a concise period, symbolically of 1260 days, in which simultaneously five actions take place:

- the appearance of the two witnesses;
- the birth of an authoritative church generation;
- the final war in the heavens;
- the satanic one world-government and
- the great tribulation.

It is all very intense and very terrible. My understanding is that this Day of the Lord agenda kicks off with the attack of Michael against Satan (Rev 12:7). But that is not mentioned first. Surprisingly the impressive and authoritative performance of the two Moses-Elijah-Daniel type Jews in Jerusalem and the authoritative performance of a new generation in the church are mentioned first (Rev 11:1-13 and 12:1-6). That means that even during the Day of the Lord, during the persecution, during the Satan-led one world-government, there will be a relevant and authoritative presence and witness of God's truth and God's plans, confronting, even tormenting, with non-stop CNN coverage, all government leaders of the world.

When life is the product of time+matter+chance (that is believing without too much thinking), then why bother about the future? When Mother Earth runs the risk of being polluted, then the political agenda is set. But when a living God reveals his plans to those who follow him, then why not follow him with all societal and political means available, with market place redemption, with a Christian political party, with mercy ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit, with any creative means that God wants to bless, so that the world can see that the Father sent the Son?

7 Is there a plan for you and your nation?

If our thinking does not allow us to admit that the visible and the invisible can interact, to recognise and expect God acting in the visible, if we doubt there is a (divine) plan for me and this world, then this question does not make sense!

As long as we think purely as individuals and in fact refuse to identify with our tribe or nation or city or continent or race, this question does not make sense!

I understand that God had and wants to have a covenant with all nations (tribes, peoples, states) and that he called the natural nation Israel and his spiritual people the Church to reach out to the nations for that very goal, in order to eventually establish a one world-government (God, not us), in the natural, in Jerusalem, to rule them all in righteousness and truth.

Can a person be/become a Christian? Yes. How? Not by just going to church and reading the Bible and not cursing, but by committing (covenanting) his life to God, receiving forgiveness for his sins through the sacrifice of Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to cleanse his heart and his habits.

Can a nation be/become a Christian nation? Yes. How? Not through some anti-abortion and anti -alcohol legislation, but by, in short, at government level, top down, asking forgiveness for the corporate sins, appealing to God for the covenant with its nation and allowing the Holy Spirit, through the believers and the Church, bottom up, to permeate society with kingdom values.

What the early church did was just that, and after 300 years there were so many Christian generals, mayors, bankers, senators and artists, that the emperor could think of nothing else than recognising these Christians... and their God. (The way he did it was disastrous, but that is another story.) Just like the people of Nineveh: "The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast... put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne... put on sackcloth..." (Jonah 3:5-6). When a people seeks God (bottom up) the government is moved to seek God too in its ruling (top down).

It seems that African nations are ahead of western nations, because their thinking does not yet block out their believing. It seems that western nations through their modern thinking are lagging behind. They do not at this point discern the schemes of Satan, who out of the invisible realm affects the visible world. It seems that even the Church, which is supposed to be a spiritual body, does not at this point discern the schemes of Satan or even of God. This prevents her from being salt for the world.

It may well be that God's hope is focussed on the one million new believers per week, who are not part of any organised church, who are just a movement for God, to prepare the world for the return of Christ!