

2 Chronicles 7:14 Reconsidered

INTRODUCTION

A. Misuse of the Bible – Much confusion among Bible-believers arises from thinking that we should be able to “apply” anything in Scripture to any and all believers – almost anywhere. This, of course, ignores a basic factor of interpreting Scripture – and, for that matter, literature in general – namely, the context of a passage. Context reveals content – and should control content. A truth well worth repeating is “A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text.”

B. Misuse of one verse – One Bible passage that’s often thus misused is 2 Chronicles 7:14. Specifically, some believe that the verse could apply to any (even every) nation in the world and at any time in history. Numerous American pastors and patriots have tried to make it say that God will save ANY nation from decay and decline politically – and maybe (but not necessarily) spiritually save quite a few people in it – if either (1) God’s SAVED people in that nation do the four things the verse mentions or (2) the population of the nation generally does them.

What did God really mean in that passage? Does it apply today in any way?

I. The passage as a whole

A. A unique passage – To begin with, it should be noted that this passage is found only here in Scripture.

B. A unique person – The passage concerns a promise given to only one man (Solomon).

1. He was a Jewish king.
2. He was the son of David.
3. He was a major ancestor of the human nature of Jesus Christ.

C. A unique promise – This verse contains a promise found nowhere else in Scripture.

D. A unique place in Scripture

1. The context of this verse
 - a. The construction of the temple – Solomon had it built over a period of 7 years.
 - b. The dedication of the temple – Solomon led the 7-day ceremony of dedication with the sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 20,000 sheep plus those of the people (2Ch 7:4-5).
 - c. The 7-day feast was with “all Israel,” “a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt” (2Ch 7:8).
2. The content of this verse – very simply a promise
 - a. The requirements (the human part)
 - b. The results (the divine part)

E. A not-so-unique practice – As stated above, many pastors, writers, and other believers have used this verse to refer to the USA – as if God had said it in the present to another nation than Israel. It should not need to be stated that pinning a doctrine or practice for today on one such Bible verse is unwise – and can, in fact, be dangerous.

II. The human part – “If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways...”

A. The who – God used two terms to identify the group about which this verse is concerned.

1. A unique title (**My people**) – First, God limited the promise in this verse by the term “My people.” Israel was uniquely God’s possession.

a. This term is used 231 times in Scripture – always (except Rom 9:25,26; 2Co 6:16; Rev 18:4) referring to just one nation, Israel, never of any other nation in the past or present.

b. Even these four New Testament verses simply refer to those whom God is saving from all over the world (people in various nations), not to any specific nation.

2. A unique people – Israel belonged to God in four ways:

- a. By creation (Gen 1:26-27)
- b. By selection (starting in history with God’s choice of Abraham – Gen 12:1-6)
- c. By redemption (His delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt – Ex 3:8; 7:4f; 20:2; etc.)
- d. By preservation (God’s delivering Israel from enemy nations – Joshua - 2 Chronicles).

3. Unique label (**called by My name**)

a. The designation – God chose that His name should be on Israel (e.g., 6:34,38; 7:15) – for her to be known as His people. If “My people” indicates Israel’s being God’s possession, “called by My name” indicates their unique profession to others.

b. The limitation – Israel was THE ONLY NATION in all history identified with and by Jehovah. The expression is found only in the OT. The NT has nothing equivalent or similar. Thus, it is never used of the Church. The term “called by My/Thy name” is used of Israel (Dt 28:9,10; 2Chr 7:14; Isa 63:19), Jerusalem (Jer 25:29; Dan 9:19), the temple (1Ki 8:43; Jer 7:10, 14,30; 32:34; 34:15) the remnant (Amos 9:12), Jeremiah (Jer 15:16), individuals (Isa 43:7), Gentiles (Isa 65:1), “Thy city and Thy people” (Dan 9:19), and seven women wanting to be married to the same man and thus have his name (Isa 4:1).

c. The indication – the term MAY indicate one of a number of things. It certainly contains the idea of identification (the equivalent of “after my name” – 2Sam 12:28) – and is used of the naming of a city after a certain person (comparable, probably, to God’s putting His name on a place [Jerusalem] – Dt 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2). It may also indicate possession (being known as belonging to someone), subjugation (being under someone’s dominion), and/or protection (being cared for and defended by someone).

B. The what – Having identified the people of whom He is speaking, the Lord now gives four prerequisites for restoration of their land.

1. Submission – They are to **humble themselves** – recognizing human inability AND divine ability to help.
2. Petition – They are to **pray** – probably implying the need for both confession and supplication.
3. Devotion – A third prerequisite (**seek My face**) is not as clear. The expression is rare in Scripture – just found in a few places in the Old Testament. Two passages shed light on what it means.

a. Psalm 105:4 says “Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore.”

b. Hosea 5:15 says “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early.” “Seek My face” is paralleled with “seek Me early.” The idea seems to be that of **devotion** – directing attention to Him, pursuing Him, longing or yearning to learn more of who He is.

4. Conversion – The fourth thing that God required of Israel is **conversion** – to **turn from their wicked ways**, to change direction (away from evil activities) – presumably accompanied by a intention (or internal change of mind).

III. The divine part – God then tells Solomon that once repentant Israel meets these four conditions – submission, petition, devotion, and conversion – He will “hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” “Then” confirms that man’s part must come first; they are the pre-conditions to God’s part – which includes three factors.

A. God will listen to their cry (“hear from heaven”)

First, God will “hear” His people Israel. God’s hearing humans is almost exclusively an Old Testament concept (Jn 9:31; 1Jn 5:14-15 being the sole exceptions). Of course, by His omniscience He perceives (sees and hears) all that occurs. So the idea of hearing must refer to something more than simple audible perception.

Actually it means to heed (or react to) what someone hears. This idea is clear in the steps Jesus gave His disciples about dealing with sin (Mt 18:15-17). If a believing brother will not “hear” the private rebuke of first one and then of a few fellows, the sinner was to be brought before the group or assembly (*ecclesia*) of believers; if he then refused to “hear,” he was to be looked upon as a heathen and a publican.

B. God will pardon their sin (“forgive their sin”)

Next comes forgiveness. Note that the forgiveness is conditional – IF Israel did four things, THEN God would forgive.

By contrast, forgiveness of believers in this present age of grace is totally UNCONDITIONAL. It is clear from many passages that ALL of OUR sins were paid for and forgiven at Calvary (1Co 15:3,17; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:11; Heb 1:3; 8:12; 9:28; 10:12,17; 1Pt 2:24; 3:18; 1Jn 2:12; 3:5; 4:10; Rev 1:5).

Thus, this promise of God’s forgiveness was clearly for Israel, not the Church. It was God’s response to Solomon’s prayer for Israel, when he had asked God to “hear Thou from the heavens and forgive the sins of Thy people, Israel” (2Ch 6:25).

C. God will recondition their land (“heal their land”)

The expression “heal their land” occurs only here in Scripture. Usually we think of healing in connection with people (or

animals) that are ill or injured. Here, interestingly, God did NOT say He would heal individuals or groups of people (the Israelites), families, political or legal leaders (king, judges, et al.).

It's **land** that God would heal. Also, it's **Israel's** land – NOT America or any other nation on earth. God limited the place He meant when He referred in verse 12 to the just finished temple by saying that He had “chosen this place to Myself for an house of sacrifice.”

Likewise, verse 13 shows that “land” is not referring to people. “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people.” It's the land that would need healing if God did these things to it.

Thus, 2 Chronicles 7:14 refers to a theoretical time after Solomon when – due to Israel's sin or simply God's testing them – God would send drought, locusts, or pestilence among “My people.” This is not even remotely equivalent to what is the current experience of any individual nation (or group of nations) in the world today – including any that have a majority of professing Christians.

The whole land of Israel is much smaller than most other nations and thus could easily experience a national disaster – a total physical calamity that needed divine “healing,” such as the Lord listed in the previous verse (13 – drought, locusts, pestilence) or one of the calamities mentioned earlier by Solomon (6:28 – dearth, pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts, caterpillars).

One more thing about the land. Scripture never says God designated a specific earthly land to or for the Church or any segment of its members.

CONCLUSIONS

Certain conclusions seem clear – if we take this passage for what it literally says.

A. Limitation – God gave this great promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 solely to Solomon and solely about His chosen earthly people (the nation of Israel) and their Promised Land. So much of what God said to and did for the nation of Israel is NOT meant for the Church, and this passage seems to clearly fall into that category.

B. Population – It seems clear that an entire nation (the nation as a whole) would need to meet the four requirements given (not a select minority). God did not limit the submission, petition, devotion, and conversion to a portion of the population – a minority, the “believers.” The worst sinners in most nations are not those whom God has saved. Thus, this verse could not apply if only a small percentage of the nation did what God required. It's twisting God's Word to say “if the saints in any nation repent” It would be the God-rejecting (often God-denying) unsaved Israelite sinners who would have needed to repent.

C. Omission – The rest of the Bible and the annals of history are silent regarding this verse.

1. God's Word – Saying God intended this verse for the Body of Christ (in the Church age, the age of grace) conflicts with the fact that NOT EVEN ONE verse written to us quotes, paraphrases, “applies,” or even alludes to it.

2. God's world – World history lacks even one instance of the literal fulfillment of this verse – when a nation (or even its believers) had their land divinely “healed” of some plague or disaster.

D. Exclusion – Thus, this passage could NOT apply to believers today in the Body of Christ.

E. Distortion – Spiritualizing or allegorizing the words of Scripture to try to apply them to the Church age can – and often does – do great disservice to God's Word and to His people.

F. Caution – It is much safer to maintain that neither this verse nor any other gives a direct promise to believers (or a nation) today regarding their relation to God and the well-being of the land in which they live.