

“ISRAEL MY GLORY”

Israel’s Mission, and Missions to Israel

by

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INTRODUCTION

In issuing a Fourth Edition of “*Israel My Glory*,” I desire gratefully to acknowledge the goodness of God in so graciously accepting my humble effort to call the attention of His people to His own revealed purpose concerning His beloved Israel. May great blessing to the Church of Christ, the Jewish people, and great glory to the God of Israel, result from the reading and prayerful study of every copy of “*Israel My Glory*.”

It has been my life-work during the past thirty-eight years to study the Word of God with a special desire to understand His purpose concerning Israel; to get a clear and consistent view of the truth respecting the first and second Advents of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to ascertain the duty of the Christian Church in relation to the spiritual interests of the Jews. My college studies during 1851 to 1854 included Hebrew, Greek, Latin, logic and theology, together with a view to mission work among the Jews. From 1854 to this day much of my time has been occupied in preaching the Gospel to the Jews, showing from the Hebrew Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. A considerable portion of my time has also been spent in expounding to Christians God’s truth about the Jews with a view to awaken Scriptural interest in the conversion of our Jewish brethren.

Though the soil has been hard in both cases, I praise His name for having given blessing, increasing blessing, in both departments for eight-and-thirty years. During the first twenty-five years I labored under the auspices of a society, and traveled over the United Kingdom at the rate of about 10,000 miles a year for twenty-two years, preaching and lecturing amongst all evangelical Christians. During the thirteen years—1876 to 1889—of the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, my personal labors in both departments of service have been abundant, and have been attended by much larger blessing.

During all these years I have been urged again and again, by ministers and others, to write a book on the Jewish question, but I hesitated, as my views for many years had taken no definite form as to the future of the Jews as a nation. Passages relating to the Second Advent and reign of the Messiah I had been taught to spiritualize or allegorize, whilst passages relating to the first Advent and suffering I was compelled by hard historic facts to literalize. I had much to unlearn as well as much to learn.

The Second Advent as a separate subject is not discussed in this book, for the simple reason that the doctrine itself is interwoven with the entire volume.

This book, then, is written in response to the earnest solicitations of many Christian friends; and further, I know of no other book dealing with the same topics and occupying the same ground. It is full of God's Word from beginning to end, and I have endeavored to write in plain and simple language, avoiding lengthy quotations from other, though excellent authors; eschewing learned notes and criticisms on Hebrew and Greek words as much as possible; so that all who read may understand, and that all who read may run to obey.

There is scarcely anything that humbles me to the dust more than this—my very limited acquaintance with the Word of God. My Lord knows that in the following pages I have honestly endeavored to write in harmony with His revealed mind; and that should He detect any serious error as the result of ignorance on my part, my earnest prayer is that He may graciously neutralize its effect, and fasten in the minds and hearts of His children that, and that only, which is in harmony with His revealed will.

The principle adopted in quoting Scripture to prove anything, past or future, is simply to let the Word of God mean what He says; that is, if the plain and obvious sense make good sense seek no other sense. There are three forms of language in which truth is conveyed—literal, figurative, and symbolic. The symbolic largely obtains in Ezekiel, Daniel, and in the Apocalypse of John.

The image whose head was gold, the ram and he-goat vision, &c, represented historic and prophetic facts nonetheless because the form of the revelation was symbolic. No one is in danger of taking the language literally, though the facts represented are literal. Figurative language is only the form in which the truth is presented. It does not represent spiritual truth as opposed to literal fact, but may represent the one as well as the other.

We say, "**a shower of blessing**"; the shower is a figure, the blessing may be spiritual. We also say, "**An army of locusts**," the army is a figure, the locusts are facts. "**All the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**" "**I am the door.**" "**I am the way.**" "**I am the good shepherd,**" &c. No one takes this language literally; but the facts represented by the language are very real and precious. Literal language speaks of men and things exactly as they are; thus Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, Judah, simply identify the men who bore those names, and Jews or Israelites represent exclusively the descendants of the one man God called Israel, as the Ammonites, Moabites, and Midianites are simply the descendants of individual men called respectively Ammon, Moab, and Midian.

The same principle holds with reference to places, as Jerusalem, Zion, Olivet. Wherever Jerusalem is to be understood as meaning anything but the literal city, an additional word is attached, as "**New**," "**Heavenly**," "**Above**." The words sanctioned by the Holy Spirit to describe the elect nation and their earthly inheritance, we take in their plain, natural, and obvious sense.

All other nations are designated *Goyim*, which may be translated indifferently by the words, nations, heathen, Gentiles. The terms Israelites and Gentiles are not interchangeable, but are as distinct as are the peoples to whom they apply. To call Israelites, under any circumstances, Gentiles, is not less unscriptural than to call Gentiles Israelites.

How strange it would seem to find Jews appropriating promises made to Gentiles by name, and yet it is far from uncommon to find Gentiles exclusively appropriating promises made to Jews or Israelites by name. We must let Israel mean Israel, and Gentiles mean Gentiles, or we miss the purpose of God in the miraculous origin, history, and preservation of the natural and national Israel. Observing carefully this distinction the Holy Scriptures are easily understood, and we learn without difficulty what God intends to do with the Jews, and by the Jews in blessing the Gentile world.

Commentaries and sermons are still too largely characterized by spiritualizing all promises made to Israel and literalizing all curses denounced on the same people. This principle is unjust, unscriptural, and misleading. All the promises in the Word of God are made, some to Israel, and some to the Gentiles; if the Gentiles take their own and Israel's also, none are left for poor Israel. No wonder so little interest has been manifested in the spiritual welfare of Israel, "**still beloved for their fathers' sake**," when the Gentiles have found only curses under Israel's name as the Jews' portion of the Word of God. The promise that Christ will be "**a light to lighten the Gentiles**," is a promise to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. This is readily admitted. The promise that He will be "**the Glory of His people Israel**" will be fulfilled literally and exclusively in the interest of His ancient people.

"**Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people**," which occurs both in the Old Testament and in the New, gives the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles, and the relation of one to the other in blessing. On this simple principle, adopted throughout the following pages, of allowing Israel to mean Israel in promise, as in threat, in blessing as in curse, we get a clear view of the revealed will of God both as to Jews and Gentiles. Nevertheless, there is a legitimate use by Christian Gentiles of promises and threatenings primarily made to the Jewish people. What is that use? This is a most important question.

We say again—not to spiritualize promises and literalize curses, giving the promises to the Church, and the curses to the Jew; but rather to give the Jew the primary application of both, literally understood, wherever his name is mentioned or implied: and then, as the national election typified the spiritual election, apply in a secondary and spiritual sense, on the same conditions, to the Church of Christ, all the promises and threatenings standing in Israel's name.

"**God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us**" is an inspired prayer by a Jew for the Jews. "**God shall bless us**" is inspired faith in a Jew respecting the Jews. "**That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations**," "**and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him**," are promises of blessing to the Gentile world.

The *doctrine* taught in Psalm 67 is plainly the ordained connection between the blessing of the Jew and the blessing of the world, but the *principle* taught is this—in exact proportion as God's people in any age or nation are blessed of Him they will be blessings to others.

So that while the Church of Christ may legitimately pray this prayer, God bless us that we may bless others, she must not forget that the prayer, in its primary application, is made respecting Israel in the interest of the world, and that it will yet be answered in the future blessing of the Jew, and of the world through the Jew.

It ought to be unnecessary to insist that the following passages belong primarily, if not exclusively, to the national Israel, and only in a very secondary sense to the Christian Church:—

- “**Let Israel hope in the lord, for with the Lord there is mercy;**”
- “**And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities;**”
- “**Let Israel hope in the Lord from this time forth and even for evermore;**”
- “**Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;**”
- “**In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory;**”
- “**All Israel shall be saved;**”
- “**O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten by Me;**”
- “**For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest;**”
- “**And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication,**” &c.

These passages, and a host of other similar ones, have been exclusively appropriated by the Christian Church, ignoring altogether the national Israel, as though the Jew had now no interest in these promises, and, indeed, no national future.

In the following pages we not only adopt the literal interpretation of Scripture in relation to the Jew and the Gentile, both as to promise and threat, blessing and curse; but we adopt the same principle in relation to truth respecting both the first and second advents of our blessed Lord. Two distinct advents are plainly taught in Scripture, the first in weakness, as the Babe of Bethlehem; the second as a full-grown “**Son of Man**” on the clouds of heaven. Is one advent to be understood literally and the other figuratively or spiritually; or are both to be understood literally or both figuratively?

The Scriptures relating to the first advent as to time, place, circumstances, in full details have been fulfilled to the very letter. Why should not the predictions relating to the Second Advent be also fulfilled to the very letter? Does not fulfilled prophecy throw light on the unfulfilled? In other words, is not sacred history the best guide to Divine prophecy?

Our only means of knowing that any prophecy has ever been fulfilled is by placing our finger upon some definite historic event that fulfilled it. All prophecy is history with God; and why not virtually so with us? Is it consistent, wise or safe, to say that only that part of prophecy which has passed into history from our point of view is to be understood literally? The first advent is prophecy in history; the second advent is history still in prophecy. Both advents are foretold in similar language to be understood in the same sense—its plain, natural, and obvious sense. The language therefore relating to Israel’s gathering we treat as literally as that relating to the scattering; and the language relating to the second advent we treat as literally as that relating to the first.

A few words as to the title of this book

The words “*Israel My Glory*” occur in Isaiah 66:13.

The immediate context is not only in beautiful harmony with the contents of this book, but is also expressive of the state of Israel—past, present, and future. “**Hearken to Me, ye stubborn of heart; ye that are far from righteousness. I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off; and My salvation shall not tarry; I will appoint salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory**” (Isaiah 66:12, 13).

Israel is still stubborn of heart, and still far from righteousness, except their own, which God pronounces “**filthy rags,**” They have been far from righteousness ever since they rejected Him who is “**The Lord our righteousness.**” God does not say He will bring Israel to His righteousness, but will bring His righteousness near to Israel, and it shall not be far off, and His salvation shall not tarry. He will appoint salvation in Zion, for Israel His glory. How beautifully this harmonizes with—“**The Redeemer shall come to Zion,**” and “**There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob**” and “**O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!**”

“**Israel My glory**” is a remarkable expression. Again and again we have the statement that God will be Israel’s glory. “**Thy God thy glory;**” “**In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.**” Their Messiah is to be “**the glory of His people Israel.**” “Here Israel is to be the Lord’s glory, when ‘**The Redeemer shall come to Zion;**’ that is, Israel shall be converted as a nation at the second advent of our Blessed Lord.”

The word for “**glory**” here is special, and means *ornament, beauty, splendor*. The same word is translated “**beauty**” in the reference to Aaron’s garments and the garments of Aaron’s sons (Exodus 28:2, 40). “**The garments were for glory and beauty.**” It is the same word in Second Chronicles 3:6, where we are told that Solomon “**garnished the house with precious stones for beauty.**” The same word in Isaiah 28:1, where Ephraim’s “**glorious beauty is a fading flower.**” The same in verse 4; but in verse 5, “**The Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people.**” The Lord will be Israel’s glory, beauty, splendor, and will cover Israel with His own beauty and splendor, and of the “**faded flower**” God shall say “**Israel—My beauty—My glory.**”

The chapters (12-18) on “conversational answers to Jewish difficulties” is intended to help Christians in their intercourse with Jews, and to encourage aggressive effort for Christ. Should the Lord be pleased to use this book in giving its readers clearer views respecting His purpose concerning Israel; and also in creating or deepening interest—prayerful and practical—in Israel’s conversion, my heart will be full of joy and my lips with grateful praise. To Him, who says of Israel, “**My glory,**” be all praise and glory!

John Wilkinson
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