

The Lamp of Prophecy

or

Signs of the Times

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ISRAEL, JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

IN ISAIAH 43:10, we read "**Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.**"

It is customary to use these words in order to stir up Christians to give public testimony for CHRIST, but while it may be legitimate so to use them, a careful study of the context makes it evident that this is not their true and primary import. When the Lord said to Israel, "**Ye are my witnesses,**" He meant that the history of this particular nation is the proof that He was speaking through the prophets.

In the Scriptures, we have set forth the past, present, and future of this remarkable people, and their history for thirty-five hundred years has been a positive authentication of the inspiration of the Bible.

Let us briefly notice how wonderfully this comes out in the Word of GOD.

THEIR PAST CONDITION

We have to go back to the Book of Genesis from chapter 12 on to get the beginning of this nation. There we have the Abrahamic Covenant with its solemn and unconditional promises to the friend of GOD and his seed.

Note the exact promises made:

- (a) "**I will make of thee a great nation.**"
- (b) "**I will bless thee, and make thy name great.**"
- (c) "**Thou shalt be a blessing.**"
- (d) "**I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee.**"

(e) **"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"** (Genesis 12:1-3).

An additional promise is given in verse 7 - **"Unto thy seed will I give this land."**

In various forms, these promises are repeated again and again to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob.

To what extent have they been fulfilled? As we follow the history of the record in Genesis to II Chronicles, we see the people in the Land of Palestine, the objects of GOD's peculiar care. To them was committed the Oracles of GOD, and thus they were blessed and made a blessing.

When we turn to the four Gospels, we come face-to-face with the Promised Seed through Whom the blessing was to come to all the world. But alas, **"He came unto his own and his own received him not."** So we have the sad record of His rejection and crucifixion and, for the time being, Israel's national history as a divinely favored people comes to a close.

Have, then, the promises of GOD failed? Not at all, for in the prophetic writings of both Testaments it is clearly predicted that because of their sins they would be scattered throughout the entire world, and this is and has been their state for nineteen hundred years.

THEIR PRESENT CONDITION

Moses plainly predicted this when on the plains of Moab, and said to them: **"The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth"** (Deuteronomy 28:25). He depicted the Roman invasion and destruction of their cities in unmistakable terms in the same chapter from verse 48 to the end. Space forbids quoting it all, but the following verses are too plain to be misunderstood:

"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand: a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee . . . And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind" (Deuteronomy 28:49-52, 64.65).

One might almost think these words must have been written in the present century, but for thousands of years they have been in the hands, first of Jews, and then of Christians, a solemn witness to GOD's displeasure with His people because of their great sin and a conclusive proof that Moses wrote by divine inspiration.

The Jew ordinarily takes it for granted that the greatest sin of which a Hebrew can be guilty is that of idolatry. Because of this sin their fathers were carried into Babylon and not permitted to return to their land until seventy years had expired. But the greater sin was committed nineteen hundred years ago as a result of which they have been out of the land all the centuries since, and that sin was the rejection of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

During all these years, Israel as a nation is set to one side and "**blindness in part has happened to them,**" so that even when they read their own Scriptures there is a veil over their hearts and they cannot see the many references to JESUS, their rejected Messiah. But while this is true of the nation as such, an individual Jew may be saved if he will put himself on the same ground as the Gentile sinner. He must come to GOD owning his guilt and putting his trust in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the One whom his fathers rejected.

Our blessed Lord referred to this present time and their wretched spiritual condition when He declared "**Your house is left unto you desolate. Ye shall not see me again until ye say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**" Thank GOD, that day is not very far distant.

During all this time of Israel's national rejection, GOD is taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. From Jew and Gentile saved by grace, He is forming one new man, the body of CHRIST. When this special work is finished, He will turn again to Israel who are still beloved, for the Father's sake.

We read in Romans 11:25-27:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

This brings us then to think of

THEIR GLORIOUS FUTURE

concerning which the prophetic Scriptures have much to say. Unfortunately a great deal of this has been lost to the average Christian through the pernicious habit of calmly appropriating to the church the wonderful prophecies of blessing for Israel and Judah and Jerusalem, with which the prophetic writings abound.

Most illogically, many expositors apply all such Scriptures to the progress of the church in this age, ignoring completely their true relationship to Israel, GOD's earthly people. As someone has well said, "They give all the curses to the Jews and take all the blessings for the church," whereas it should be perfectly plain to any thoughtful person that if the judgments predicted as about to fall on Israel were fulfilled in the sufferings of that people, then the prophecies of their future restoration and blessing must be just as literally fulfilled in the Lord's appointed time.

It is plainly predicted that there will be a great national return to GOD when they shall recognize in the once rejected JESUS their rightful King and Saviour. Then they will be restored to their own land and the Abrahamic covenant fulfilled in the largest possible way.

Already we see a great stirring among them. Thousands in recent years have returned to Palestine, and vast changes are going on in that country, but this is not yet the great return spoken of by the prophets. It is rather that preliminary movement in unbelief that will result in the reestablishment of a Jewish state to be eventually dominated by the Antichrist, but when the Lord JESUS CHRIST descends from Heaven at the close of the Great Tribulation, then will come the great recognition and the great ingathering, and then through the Promised Seed will all nations be brought into fulness of blessing. The world's redemption hangs upon the restoration of Israel.

"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"
(Romans 11:12-15).

Well may Christians heed the Psalmist's pleading:

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."

For in Jerusalem's peace will be found the peace of the world, when the Prince of peace reigns in righteousness and all nations will know Him and be subject to His scepter.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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