

“ISRAEL MY GLORY”

Israel’s Mission, and Missions to Israel

by

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CHAPTER THREE

THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL:— ITS CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND DURATION

IN the study of the Jewish question it is most important to distinguish between that which is national and temporal on the one hand, and that which is individual and spiritual on the other.

Failing to observe this distinction numbers of Christians have supposed that the spiritual interests of the individual Jew have been unfavorably affected by the national fall; and that during the period of national rejection there is little hope of even individual conversion. Israel is an *elect* nation, an earthly people, with Palestine as an earthly inheritance, and with corn, wine, fruit and oil as their earthly blessings. **“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel”**—that is, all descendants of Jacob called Israel are not worthy of the name as applied to Jacob. There was and is a spiritual election amongst the national Israel, called **“a remnant according to the election of grace”** (Romans 11:5).

The interests of the national election are bounded by time, and are **“earthly”** in their nature; the interests of spiritual and individual election affect the soul’s destiny throughout eternity.

The eleventh chapter to the Romans speaks of the Jews as **“fallen”** and as **“cast away,”** and yet as distinctly states that they are not *fallen* and are not *cast away*.

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 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 is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”** **“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people”** (Romans 11:11, 12, 15, 1, 2).

Here we have it plainly stated that in some sense the Jews are **“cast off”** and are **“fallen;”** and as plainly stated that they are *not cast off*, and are *not fallen*. These two statements cannot possibly be understood in one and the same sense, or we should have a contradiction from which there would be no escape.

The *fall* and the *casting away* refer to the nation as such; whilst the statement “**God hath not cast away His people**” refers to their individual and spiritual interests, for the proof given is conclusive; Paul says, “**For I also am an Israelite,**” &c. As much as to say, “If I, a bigoted, blaspheming, bloodthirsty persecutor, have been converted, though my nation is cast off for hundreds of years, any other Jew maybe converted, any number of other Jews may be converted, for God hath not cast off His people in relation to their individual, spiritual, eternal interests. It is true, then, the Jewish nation has fallen, but not finally. The Jewish nation is “**cast off,**” but neither totally nor finally. Not totally, for there is now, and always has been, “**a remnant according to the election of grace;**” not finally, for “**all Israel shall be saved**” (Romans 11:26).

The rejection of Jesus by the Jew’s was a national act.

The Sanhedrin, representing the nation, as our British House of Commons represents our British nation, were responsible for that wicked act. National sins call for national judgments; individual sins for individual judgments.

Had it been possible for an individual man to have shot the Lord Jesus, that one man would alone have been responsible for the act, but the rejection was a national act and their rejection was national.

This national rejection was, however, never intended to hinder individual conversion, and never did hinder; and were it not that the *present dispensation* is for the gathering to Christ, forming the Church of Jews and Gentiles, the whole of the Jews as individuals might be converted while in dispersion, that is, while nationally cast off.

Thus, as a nation, they are cast out of Palestine; but, as individual sinners, they are not cut off from the privileges and blessings of the gospel.

This national rejection was predicted even before the tribes of Israel had ever possessed the land.

“**If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God . . .**” and, “**because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God; it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest in to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other**” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 62-64).

Our blessed Lord announces the national rejection as near at hand.

“**And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation**” (Luke 19:41-44).

“When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and *shall be led away captive into all nations*” (Luke 21:20-24).

Thus we have seen the national rejection predicted by Moses and by the Lord Jesus Christ in such minute details as to prove at once the inspiration of the Scriptures, and also the Divine mission of Moses and of Christ.

Now we come to consider the causes of Israel’s national rejection:—

- I. Idolatry;**
- II. Rejection of Christ;**
- III. Forbidding the gospel to the Gentiles.**

I. IDOLATRY

This is so obvious to all readers of the Old Testament Scriptures that nothing more is needed than a reference to a few passages of Holy Scripture.

“Even all the nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt; and went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them: therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curse that is written in this book: and the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as at this day” (Deuteronomy 29:24-28).

Here, we have correct history written hundreds of years beforehand, which none but God could foresee.

“Ye shall make you no idols, neither shall ye rear up a graven image, or a pillar, neither shall ye place any figured stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God . . . I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste” (Leviticus 26:1, 30-33).

This again is plain history written hundreds of years before the events occurred, and even before Israel entered upon the possession of their inheritance.

Now let us take a graphic passage from the Psalms.

“He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel . . . And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand” (Psalm 78:55-61).

“Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.” “Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.” “My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him: *and they shall be wanderers among the nations*” (Hosea 8:4, 8; 9:17).

But why quote these passages at such length when the doctrine they prove is so obvious to the thoughtful reader of the Old Testament Scriptures? Because so many Christians speak of the rejection of Christ as the sole cause of Israel's national rejection: indeed the intelligent Jew has been told again and again that this is the cause of his rejection.

To this he replies: Were not the whole twelve tribes turned out of Palestine hundreds of years before Jesus was born? And did not the few thousands restored from Babylonish captivity remain in national possession of their inheritance an entire generation after their rejection of Christ? For the nation was not cast out of Palestine till about forty years after the crucifixion. So that the Jew asks naturally enough—How do you know that it was anything more than a coincidence that our nation was rejected some forty years after our rejection of Christ?

It is therefore not wise in the Christian to speak of the rejection of Israel as caused solely by Israel's rejection of Christ.

Idolatry, then, was clearly a cause of national rejection.

It was thus an awful sin against God. Let the Christian reader be loyal to conscience, and ask himself the question: Am I an idolater? And let him not be in haste to say, No, certainly not, until he has satisfied himself that he is not covetous.

In New Testament phraseology God says, **“covetousness, which is idolatry.”** (Colossians 3:5), **“covetous person, who is an idolater”** (Ephesians 5:5).

As idolatry put Israel out of national communion with God, so covetousness will put any individual Christian out of spiritual communion.

II. REJECTION OF CHRIST

This, though not the sole cause, is plainly a cause of national rejection. Two or three passages will be quite sufficient to prove and illustrate this.

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation!” (Luke 19:41-44).

Compare this with **“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel; for he hath *visited* and redeemed his people”** (Luke 1:68-78).

It is very instructive to read on to verse 78. Here we have the Redeemer *visiting* his people, and the nation rejected because they knew not the time of their *visitation*.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:37-39).

III. FORBIDDING THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES

It is true the people of Israel were not swept out of Palestine immediately on their rejection of their Messiah, but were permitted to remain some forty years after the crucifixion; nevertheless, as the crucifixion did not take place till some time after the rejection of Christ by his nation, so the destruction of Jerusalem did not take place till many years after the rejection of Christ.

But the rejection of the nation took place even before the crucifixion itself, for that rejection was declared by the Lord Himself before His death, and the forty years which elapsed between the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem were simply the period during which the execution of the sentence was delayed.

The longsuffering of God gave the Jewish nation a whole generation to reconsider its decision.

The marvellous works of Christ had failed to convince the nation of His Messiahship; and now the marvellous works of the Holy Spirit are manifested in the conversion of thousands upon thousands of individual Jews; but still the authorities representing the nation adhered to their former decision, and not only refused to accept Christ for themselves, but bitterly persecuted their believing brethren, and, to the utmost of their power, forbade the Gospel to the Gentiles.

When Paul at Thessalonica, **“as his custom was,”** went first to the Jews, and preached the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and some believed, and when a great multitude of devout Greeks, and not a few of the chief women, consorted with Paul, and Silas (See Acts 17:1-4)—

“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar . . . And these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:5-7).

Again, when many Jews and many Greeks, men and women, believed in Christ at Berea, **“the Jews of Thessalonica . . . came thither also, and stirred up the people”** (Acts 17:13).

Paul, while at Jerusalem, had been seen in the city with Trophimus, the Ephesian, whom some **“Jews from Asia”** **“supposed that Paul had brought into the Temple.”**

When these Jews saw Paul in the Temple, they **“stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help . . . And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut”** (Acts 21:27-30).

In the midst of some shouting one thing, some another, among the crowd, Paul was rescued by the chief captain and soldiers from the violence of those who were beating him, and seeking to kill him; and permitted to speak to his excited and enraged brethren in the Hebrew tongue. They gave quiet attention to his address until he told them, in the account of his conversion, that the Lord had said unto him, **“Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live”** (Acts 22:1-22).

Again: **“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me”** (Acts 26:19-21).

And then, addressing Gentile Christians at Thessalonica, Paul says: **“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”** (I Thessalonians 2:14-16).

It must have cost the Apostle Paul intense pain to have to write **“wrath to the uttermost”** respecting his brethren he so intensely loved; so that it was infinitely kind of the Holy Spirit to employ Paul to write the Epistle to the Hebrews, and to tell his Jewish brethren that **“He is able to save to the uttermost.”** The Jews had rejected the Father under the old covenant. They rejected the Son under the new. And now they not only resist the Holy Ghost under the dispensation of the Spirit, but they forbid the Gospel to the Gentiles. We incur responsibility enough in rejecting Christ, and refusing His salvation for ourselves, but it is an additional responsibility to seek to hinder others.

We have now considered fully the character and causes of Israel's national rejection, bringing upon the nation "**wrath to the uttermost,**" whilst leaving the spiritual interests, of the individual Jew untouched by his national fall, and also leaving in full force the duty of the Church to preach the Gospel, not only "**to every creature,**" which includes the Jew, but "**to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.**"

Consequences—What are the consequences of the national rejection of Israel? We must consider those consequences first, to themselves—the Jews; and secondly, to the Gentiles.

First, then, *to the Jews themselves.* Their national rejection has involved the loss of country. As long as they remain in dispersion they remain nationally without a true knowledge of God; and during the same period they cease to be in their corporate or national capacity the religious teachers of the world.

"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD, and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:4, 5).

Thus we see that while out of Palestine Israel is without king and without prince; they are also without a true knowledge of God, for they are to seek the Lord their God on their return.

Whilst in dispersion they are a nation without Christ, because without a true knowledge of God. They are also without Mosaism, for they are without a sacrifice. They are also free from idolatry, for they are without teraphim.

No wonder, then, that during their national rejection, and as its consequence, they have ceased to be the religious teachers of the world in their corporate capacity, "**Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof**" (Matthew 21:43).

Briefly put, these are the consequences to themselves.

Now let us consider, secondly, *the consequences to the Gentiles.*

These may be summed up in the words—partial blessing, as *occasioned* by their national rejection; in contradistinction from the universal blessing their national conversion will instrumentally cause.

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 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 11:11, 12, 15)

The argument in these verses is clear and full of force: that if the national “**fall**” and the national “**casting away**” has been overruled by God for great though limited blessing to the Gentiles; how much more may we expect their conversion as a nation to prove the instrumental cause of blessing to the entire world. In other words, if a national calamity has occasioned partial blessing, how much more will national conversion instrumentally cause universal blessing.

What is the extent of the partial blessing to the Gentiles, as occasioned, though not caused, by the national but temporary rejection of Israel?

The full extent of the partial blessing includes the civilizing influences of Christianity amongst many Gentile nations, the influence of Christianity upon literature, upon politics, and upon domestic and social life in many lands for many ages; but the blessing which relates to personal salvation is confined to those individual Gentiles, who, in addition to individual believing Jews, have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ since the opening of this dispensation at Pentecost.

As the saved individual Jews are called “**a remnant according to the election of grace,**” so the saved individual Gentiles are called a people *taken out* for His name. This is an elective dispensation. It is not the final dispensation. It will not gradually develop into the millennium, but is as distinct from the millennial era as it is from the Mosaic which preceded it.

This is most important to understand, in order to harmonize the statements of Scripture with the facts of this dispensation. Whilst the elect nation of Israel is scattered into all lands, the Holy Spirit by the Gospel is gathering an elect Church from all lands, composed of Jews and Gentiles. The Church of this dispensation was not clearly revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:1-11).

The same doctrine is taught also in the epistle to the Colossians and to the Romans.

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:24-28).

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was *kept secret since the world began, but now is manifested*” (Romans 16:25, 26).

It had been plainly revealed in the Old Testament prophecies that a Divine Messiah was to come, bless the nation of Israel, and through Israel, bless the world. But this Divine Messiah had come; Israel had rejected Him, and God rejected Israel. Now even believing Jews, with the Hebrew Scriptures in their hands, were greatly perplexed, especially when Gentiles were being blessed with salvation through Christ. When Peter preached remission of sins through faith in Christ to Jews and Gentiles at Caesarea, even **“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 10:44, 45).

Peter is now called to account for his strange conduct.

“Now the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them” (Acts 11:1-3).

Peter gives a full explanation of the vision at Joppa, his mission to Caesarea, and its blessed results; and states frankly, **“As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them (the Gentiles) as on us (the Jews) at the beginning . . . If then God gave unto them the like gift as He did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? And when they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life”** (Acts 11:15-18).

Here the fact that individual Gentiles are as truly converted as individual Jews is fully confirmed, even though Israel as a nation has been rejected, and will soon be scattered to the four corners of the earth. But the question with thoughtful Jews, who know and believe the Old Testament Scriptures, seems to be this:

How can Gentiles be saved now, during the time of our national rejection, when our Scriptures predict that Messiah shall come, bless Israel, and through blessed Israel bless the Gentile world?

To confirm the fact of Gentile conversion under such circumstances does not lessen but increases the perplexity. A council is held at Jerusalem. Some thought the difficulty would be solved by circumcising the believing Gentiles, and incorporating them with the Jewish Church.

With such men **“Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation.”** Paul and Barnabas and others were appointed to **“go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”**

On their way to Jerusalem their minds were evidently full of the question, for they “passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren” (Acts 15:2, 3).

“ . . . **And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.**” Peter again bears his testimony to the conversion of Gentiles. Then “**all the multitude kept silence; and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name**” (Acts 15:6, 12, 13, 14).

Here we are getting precious light on the immediate purpose of God in permitting individual Gentiles to share with individual Jews the blessings of the Gospel of Christ. The Jew’s difficulty is not yet altogether solved.

He naturally feels that the conversion of some Gentiles during Israel’s national rejection does not realize his expectation that when the Messiah comes Israel shall be blessed, and become a blessing to the world. In looking for his Messiah he has been taught to look for universal peace and blessing as the result of His advent.

Has he not been told; “**Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness!**” (Jeremiah 33:14-16)

And has he not been taught to pray— “**God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations**”? And also to believe that—“**God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him**”? (Psalm 67:1, 2, 7)

In the presence of such hopes and expectations, the Jew naturally asks—Will not even the partial blessing of the Gentiles during Israel’s national rejection thwart the purpose of God to bless Israel on the advent of the Messiah, and through Israel to bless the world?

No, says James, Certainly not. The promised blessing is only delayed. A part of the Divine plan is now to be revealed which hitherto had been kept secret, and directly resulting from the rejection of Christ by Israel, and the rejection of Israel by God. The lie is not given to the prophecies by this new revelation. God’s revealed purpose in Israel and through Israel is not changed. For “**to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written. After these things I will return**”—after I have taken out from the Gentiles a people for My name, then, “**I will return**”—come back again. What to do?

“And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up”— that is, I will restore and bless the Jewish nation on My return. What then? **“That the *residue* of men might seek after the Lord, and *all the Gentiles*, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world”** (Acts 15:15-18).

The purpose of the present dispensation, the dispensation of the Spirit, is the salvation of individual sinners of all nations, of the Jew first, as a matter of Divine order; and also of the Gentile. These saved individuals constitute the Church, the Bride of Christ. The saved Jews are called **“a remnant according to the election of grace;”** the saved Gentiles are described as **“a people taken out for His name.”**

The phraseology is most appropriate in each case.

In the case of Israel the whole nation was elected for a Divine purpose, but the national election did not secure eternal salvation for one individual. The saved Jews constituted a spiritual within a national election, and were properly designated **“a remnant according to the election of grace?”**

The saved individual Gentiles were properly spoken of as **“taken out for His name,”** because they were to form the Gentile portion of the Bride of Christ. When a man takes a woman for his wife, he takes her out from all others to bear his name, and as soon as the marriage ceremony is over the bride is introduced to friends by the name of the bridegroom.

The Church, so composed of Jews and Gentiles, is the Bride of Christ, the second Eve for the second Adam—the reward the Father gives to His beloved Son during the period of His rejection by His own nation, and the period of Israel’s national rejection by God. This is not the dispensation for converting the world, but for gathering the Church. So that *Church* and *world* are definite and distinct in the mind of God until the Church has been gathered. All converted sinners, and these only, form the Church, but if the world were converted during this dispensation, the world would become the Church, and the Church the world—they would be co-extensive. What, then, would become of such passages as **“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil?”** (John 17:15).

The blessing of the world stands over to the millennial era. Indeed, no nation, as such, is to be saved during this dispensation.

The late Dr. Hugh McNeil, in my hearing, put the matter most scripturally, from the platform at Exeter Hall, about the year 1852, when he said, “There are four steps in the conversion of the world: some Jews, some Gentiles; the nation of Israel, and the nations of the Gentiles, Some Jews, called ‘**a remnant according to the election of grace;**’ some Gentiles, called ‘**a people taken out for His name**’—these are both one in Christ, and form the Church. Then the nation of Israel, on the return of the Lord; then the Gentile nations.” Partial blindness has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentile portion of the Church has been gathered: and then **“All Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”** (Romans 11:26).

Then God will destroy “**And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and *the veil that is spread over all nations***” (Isaiah 25:7)

We have now seen most clearly that the consequences of Israel’s national rejection may be summed up, so far as the Gentiles are concerned, in the expression—partial blessing. It has been the occasion of the announcement of reconciliation, through the atoning death of Christ, to sinners—Jews and Gentiles—throughout the world, for the definite purpose of gathering the Church, which is Christ’s body, “**the fulness of Him that filleth all in all**” (Ephesians 1:23).

All the blessing, therefore, that has come to the Gentiles during the eighteen and a half centuries that have elapsed since the rejection of Christ, has been *caused* by the atoning value of Christ’s death, and *occasioned* by the national rejection of Israel.

Duration—How long will Israel’s national rejection last? When will the dispersion cease, and Israel’s sorrows come to an end?

Our blessed Lord, when predicting the rejection of Israel nationally, throws important light upon the period of its duration. He says, “**There shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled**” (Luke 21:23, 24).

The word *until* implies continuance and cessation —continuance during a period and cessation at its close. Whatever, therefore, may be understood by “**the times of the Gentiles,**” Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles till those times run out; but, by plain inference, no longer; and as there are only Jews and Gentiles in the world, either the Jews will have Palestine again when “**the times of the Gentiles**” terminate, or that land will be possessed by nobody. This latter alternative is both improbable and unscriptural.

What, then, is meant by “**the times of the Gentiles**” during which Israel’s national rejection continues?

“**The times of the Gentiles**” are generally understood to represent the period of Gentile power and dominion, commencing with Nebuchadnezzar and terminating with the destruction of Antichrist. By many able expositors these “**times of the Gentiles**” are represented as seven times, or seven years of days, or seven times three hundred and sixty days; that is, a period of 2520 years, on the principle of a day for a year.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to fix the exact year when the times of the Gentiles commenced, and, this question is outside our purpose to discuss here; but all the best interpreters of prophetic dates are agreed that whatever may have been the exact elate for the commencement of these “**times of the Gentiles,**” their termination must be near at hand. When our blessed Lord was asked: just before His ascension, “**Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power**” (Acts 1:6, 7).

The prophetic Scriptures should be, prayerfully studied, and passing events carefully observed by all Christians, but we question the wisdom of fixing or even suggesting dates at which unfulfilled prophecy will become history.

Thus, without even suggesting who Antichrist will be or when his power will culminate, we know that he will be destroyed, not only before the millennium, but also before Israel as a nation will, again be in peaceful possession of Palestine; and we know further that he will be destroyed by the brightness of the personal second advent of our Blessed Lord. **“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming”** (II Thessalonians 2:8).

One remarkable passage in Isaiah quoted in the Epistle to the Romans links the culmination of the power of Antichrist with the return of our blessed Lord, the blessing of Israel as a nation, and the blessing of the Gentile world.

Take the New Testament passage first.

“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 Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:25-27).

Now, when we read in the New Testament the words **“as it is written,”** we know perfectly well that the words given as written are found somewhere in the Old Testament Scriptures. We do well under such circumstances to read carefully the quoted text with its immediate context.

In Romans 11:25 we have the revealed mystery of Israel’s partial blindness, ignorance of which in the Gentile Christian breeds conceit. This partial blindness on the Jew will continue **‘until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in’** and then even this partial blindness will pass away.

“The fulness of the Gentiles,” as we have already shown, we take to mean the full number of believing Gentiles forming the Gentile portion of the Church composed of believing Jews and believing Gentiles. The partial blindness will pass away at the close of this dispensation, and on the return of the Lord. Now let us refer to the Old Testament passage.

“So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever” (Isaiah 59:19-21).

Let us halt here for a moment.

The expression “**fear the name of the LORD from the west**” evidently refers to this present dispensation, during which, though the Gospel came from the east, the western nations have been specially blessed, but “**His glory**” will be “**from the rising of the sun,**” that is, from the east.

Palestine, for suffering and glory, is the Lord’s geographical center.

“**The enemy**” is plainly the Antichrist. His coming in “**like a flood**” represents the climax of his power. The Spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against Antichrist seems to mean the same as—Only there is one that “**letteth**” (restraineth) now (II Thessalonians 2:7) as stated in II Thessalonians.

Then we have the Redeemer coming to Zion, for the conversion of the Jewish nation on the destruction of Antichrist. We have now the immediate call on the nation of Israel to carry out her grand mission. “**Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.**”

Then follows a description of the state of the world when the blessing of Israel as a nation takes place.

“**For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising**” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

The *duration* of Israel’s national rejection is till the times of the Gentiles close, and those times close on the destruction of Antichrist, and the second advent of our blessed Lord.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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