

## 158 "Rolling up His sleeves" - 6

As we give fresh thanks to Almighty God in these days for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour of all who will receive Him, we give thanks to God also for His being clearly at work in this broken world: He is warning and He is calling, as He allows Man's innate sinfulness and wickedness to become gradually more apparent.

In recent Reflections we have considered the current spiritual state of "the West", where Christian-formed, Christian-shaped nations have in practice "moved on", in their opinion, to a no-need-for-God-any-more secularism and humanism: (the folly of that supposed moving-on is not hard to see in the spiritual and social chaos all around us). We have seen the significance of the current march of Islam, and of the role of Rome in the promised times of trouble that are starting to develop; all of which brings us finally on to the central part of the action - Israel and the Jews.

The Jews remain God's chosen people, the "apple of His eye" (eg., Zechariah 2.8), even though they have been, and still are, often so awkward to both God Himself and to everyone else!

Unfortunately it is fashionable in some Christian circles to argue that God finished with the Jews long ago, and that the Israel-based promises of Scripture now simply apply to the Church. There are no good grounds for such "replacement theology" as it is termed. In Luke 21.24 for example the Lord tells us that Jerusalem would be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled", and then He tells us through Paul in Romans Chapters 9 - 11 that the Jews were to remain on the spiritual "back-burner" in a state of blindness until "the fulness of the Gentiles" had come in (Romans 11.25).

So, where have things reached to today in all this? In 1917 after the British forces had driven the Turks out of Jerusalem, General Allenby, a man well-versed in the Scriptures, entered Jerusalem on foot as a sign of humility, for he realised that events of great spiritual significance regarding the Jews were starting to happen. The State of Israel was reborn in May 1948, and the Gentiles' "treading-down" of Jerusalem ended in June 1967 when the young soldiers of the Israeli Defence Force retook the Old City - and the Temple Mount. Christians could not have clearer signs before our eyes that the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled and that God's focus is now back on His chosen people the Jews.

The Jews have always been spiritually so blessed, for it is to them that have come "the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the service and the promises"; theirs are "the fathers", and best of all, from them came "Christ in the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (from Romans 9.4-5). The Lord loves the Jews, and they have a special part to play in times to come.

Not only are the Jews blessed in themselves: they serve as the channel through which everyone else is also blessed by God (eg., Genesis 12.1-3 / Isaiah 60 / Luke 2.32). The principle of Genesis 12.3 is very simple: the Lord blesses nations and individuals who bless His people, and He curses those who curse them - western and Arab politicians would do well to bear that in mind.

The path ahead for Israel is tortuous, notably regarding the very real "Palestinian problem", the chaos and hostility all around her, and the presence of two mosques on the Temple Mount where the Jewish Temple is to be rebuilt (eg., Daniel 9.27, 11.31, 12.11 / Matthew 24.15). No wonder we are to watch and pray! Our Christian concern for the well-being of the Jews has nothing to do with our having to applaud all the deeds of the Israeli government. But as God's people of the New Covenant we are obliged, and privileged, still to "pray for the peace for Jerusalem" (Psalm 122.6-7) - for when that peace has fully come, Christ's kingdom itself shall have fully come, "on earth as it is in heaven".

Meanwhile may the Lord's blessings be upon you and those whom you love, in these days and in all that lies ahead. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60.1). Amen and Amen: "O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!".