

259 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem”

There is a long-running but central question facing the Christian Church: has God finished with the Jews as His covenant people or not? The prevailing answer to that question is currently, “Yes He has finished with them”, due to their wilful rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Meanwhile individual Jews may enter the Church on the same terms as anyone else enters, by personal faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour (eg., John 3.16-18).

But this view of a “divine good-bye” to the Jews as a people and nation is fraught with problems! Its proponents are obliged to argue that, while hundreds of biblical prophecies have been fulfilled already, literally and meticulously (eg., Psalm 22 / Isaiah 52.13-53.12), God has since altered the “prophecy rules” at some stage and for some reason, so that the numerous as-yet unfulfilled prophecies involving the Jews will no longer be fulfilled literally and meticulously. Instead, because, we are told, God has abandoned the Jews, when we read of “Israel”, “Judah” or “Jerusalem” in these prophecies, (eg., Zechariah Chapters 12-14), we are simply to assume these terms all refer to the Church in various ways. But why?

A second problem is even more serious. If God really has finished with the Jews, then He is a God who breaks His promises; all the scriptural promises He has made, of eventual abundant blessing for the Jews, turn out to be mere hot air. Really? Does this notion, that God breaks His promises if it suits Him, really fit with His character and behaviour as revealed in the Word of God? If He is a promise-breaker, then on what possible grounds can we have confidence in any of His other promises, be they about the Jews or anyone or anything else??

A third problem involves what we see before our eyes. Various Bible chronologists, such as Grattan Guinness (in 1882) and Arthur Ware (in 1932), noted from their studies of biblical prophecy that the following years were likely to be of significance for the Jewish people: 1914, 1917, 1923, 1933 and 1948. They were “spot on” each time! - (for the details, see on fsmins.org / Weekly Reflections by Theme / 05 Faith & Topical Issues, Number 228).

Since the re-birth of the State of Israel in May 1948, (subsequently found to be on the exact anniversary of the Exodus itself in 1639 BC – a coincidence?), four wars have been fought seeking to eradicate Israel, plus numerous insurrections and terrorist attacks, but the Jewish state is still there, against all human odds.

Are all these predictions and subsequent events mere coincidence, irrelevant these days and with no spiritual significance? Surely not! Do they not point undeniably to the simple truth that God does keep His promises and is far from finished with the Jews? (eg., Romans Chapters 9-11).

This makes it all the more vital that Christians keep a very close eye on Israel. And in this regard, what has just happened? President Trump has now recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and is to move the US Embassy into the city from Tel Aviv, thus breaking with decades of western policy towards the Jews and

Palestinians. This is clearly a massive decision likely to have far-reaching consequences, and the predictable riots have already started. This President is certainly “different”! – but perhaps in this matter he is an instrument in God’s hands, consciously or not, carrying out God’s gracious purposes in ways not yet apparent. So often it is only with hindsight that we can appreciate what God has been doing and why.

Next week God willing, we will examine the credentials, spiritual and historical, which undergird the claims of Jews, Christians and Muslims concerning Jerusalem. But for now two quotations from the Authorised Version (referring to the promised removal of the true Church) are worth mentioning: “.... we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (I Corinthians 15.51b-52a); and, “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (I Thessalonians 4.16). Two trumps are mentioned here, and a third is the surname of the current US President!

All the evidence before us suggests that God’s original covenant people the Jews still possess a pivotal place in His plans. Psalm 122.6-7 remains as valid a prayer for us as ever – “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces” – a prayer for the glorious and promised outcome which God will surely bring to pass, irrespective of any political realities of today. And as always, the Key to this “peace of Jerusalem”, with all that that entails, is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah and the Saviour of the world (John 1.41 and 4.42).

© 2017 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org