

261 The Peace of Jerusalem

The ultimate claim of the Jews concerning Jerusalem and Palestine rests on the well-founded biblical belief that they are God's original covenant people, to whom God promised this "promised land" in perpetuity (eg., Genesis 13.17 / 17.8 / ...), and duly gave it to them by conquest after the Exodus from Egypt.

This Israelite conquest of the land was bloody and messy (see the Book of Joshua), raising eyebrows among Christians and others over what went on, but is best understood in the light of Scripture itself: that divinely-ordered conquest serves as a stark demonstration of God's attitude to sin. God hates sin. God is utterly holy. God keeps His promises. God judges sinners, and has every right to do so. His judgment of the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan and their vile practices, in this case by means of the armies of the children of Israel, was wholly justified, just as God's promised future judgments on God-rejecting sinners will be equally so. These truths about God's abhorrence of sin (the very reason for the gift of Christ as Saviour of the world, eg John 4.42) have never been palatable to "natural man", but we do well to keep them in mind in today's errant world.

Since their arrival in Canaan, and over the many ensuing centuries of Jewish obedience and disobedience regarding the covenant, God has behaved consistently towards His people – truly "his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 136 ...) – and now, sure enough, He has brought them back, still largely "a stiffnecked people", into part of the promised land (Acts 7.51 / Deuteronomy 9.6).

But there remains a fearful hatred of the Jews in many quarters. From God's Word we know that what is going on before our eyes in Jerusalem and Palestine is only the outward expression of what is going on behind the scenes in the spiritual realm. Since the time of his rebellion in the earliest days, Satan, "the adversary", has had one central goal – to replace Almighty God with himself. Whenever possible this involves Satan trying to thwart God's plans, and ultimately striving to ensure that God's promises concerning His creation and the crucial role of "the seed of the woman" within that creation will never be fulfilled. He is desperate to make it impossible for God to keep His promises.

Thus for example we see Satan's deception of Eve leading to the sin of Adam (Genesis 3); his use of fallen, demonic angels to foul up the human genetic line from Eve (Genesis 6.1-7, a major reason why the Flood had to happen); his constant attempts to lead God's covenant people astray through their dealings with idolatrous neighbours; his attempt through Herod to kill "he that is born the King of the Jews" (Matthew 2.2); his "triumph" at Calvary with the body of "the seed of the woman" now neatly disposed of in that tomb (John 19.8-42); his role as adversary, walking about as a roaring lion, seeking someone whom he may devour (1 Peter 5.8), and using his wiles as he does so (Ephesians 6.11); his role as "the accuser of our brethren", accusing these before God day and night (Revelation 12.10); and his yet-to-come efforts at "a final fling" (Revelation 12 and following). It is because the Jews are God's original covenant people and the channel through which God's promises are fulfilled, that Satan hates them in particular - he is truly the oldest and greatest "anti-

Semite” of them all, stoking up the many violent, vocal enemies of the Jews and the nation of Israel.

In view of these underlying spiritual realities, the true starting point of any attempt to solve “the Palestinian problem” by well-meaning politicians has to be the genuine acceptance of the Bible as God’s Word, regarding Almighty God and His binding promises to the Jews. Humanly speaking such an acceptance is “a big ask”, but it is within that framework alone that, please God, some fair and workable outcome may be found, so that the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael can indeed live sensibly side by side as much as is possible. Perhaps all this may turn out to be very short-lived in view of the promised return of the Lord Jesus.

Meanwhile as we mark once again in this season the precious gift of the Christ-Child born into our midst, “Immanuel, God with us”, we also proclaim the victories that He has won! (I Corinthians 15.55-57). Satan is defeated; he is on borrowed time and his fate is sealed (Revelation 20). God is faithfully bringing to glorious fulfilment all His promises in Christ, including His gracious answer to that simple little prayer, uttered by His people down through the ages, for “the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122.6).

© 2017 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org

(For further coverage of this theme, please see Weekly Reflection 182 on www.fsmins.org)