

345 “the land of unwallled villages”

The later chapters of the “Book of the Prophet Ezekiel” dwell on the many blessings that the Lord is to bestow on His covenant people, the “house of Israel”. In Chapter 37 we read of the valley that was full of dry bones, in which these bones of the slain were transformed step by step until “they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (Ezekiel 37.3-10, KJV). The result is that God’s original covenant people will know that the Lord truly is the Lord: they shall have God’s Spirit within them, they shall live, and they shall be placed in their own land (37.11-14). Times of unity, gathering, purity and covenant fellowship will return - quite a prospect!

We know that many biblical prophecies involve “multi-fulfilments”, usually comparatively small in the short-term (for example in this case the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile though they were never a free people again), and then subsequently great and full in the longer term.

One prime example of this latter fulfilment must be the astonishing return of the Jews to their own land and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 – a totally impossible prospect for 2000 years but now it has happened. In view of this extraordinary fulfilment we can be sure that the rest of the Ezekiel prophecies will indeed also occur in God’s chosen time. At present the Jews remain “stiffnecked” and largely “spiritually slain” (37.9,12-14) due to their rejection of their Messiah, but that will all change when they “shall see the sign of the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” at the end of the “great tribulation” (Matthew 24.3-30 / Luke 21.20-28 / Zechariah 12.10).

We know that then the millennial reign of Christ will be established on earth, during which “the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, Satan” will be bound and shut up within “the bottomless pit” (Revelation 20.2-3). This is when the Jews will dwell in “the land of unwallled villages” (Ezekiel 38.11a), a simple description of peace and freedom from fear at last.

But finally, before the close of the lovely reign of Christ Himself over this earth, Satan will be released for one last attempt to thwart God’s plans. Satan will gather Gog and Magog, a group of nations from the north, who will then plan to “go up to the land of unwallled villages ... to take a spoil, and to take a prey” (from Ezekiel 38.11-12a), and will “compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city” (that is, Jerusalem, Revelation 20.7-9). But this rebellion is at God’s instigation for His own

purposes (Ezekiel 38.16). He will have total victory over Satan and his Gog-and-Magog forces, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire (Ezekiel 38.1-4a, 9-23 / Revelation 20.9b-10).

These prophecies from Ezekiel and Revelation, along with the many other such prophecies from elsewhere in God's Word, deal with very solemn truths. With the way that things are now going in this world, such prophecies are no longer nearly as far-fetched as some have assumed them to be over the centuries. Furthermore, the strange view of some liberal teachers, that Satan himself is just some primitive idea rather than a specific, created, malevolent being, is also seen to be increasingly ridiculous (egs., Luke 4.1-13 and parallels / I Peter 5.8 / Ephesians 6.10-13 / Revelation 12.9-10 & 20.1-3).

Notably we see that Israel as a nation lies at the heart of the deeply unstable Middle East, an object of extraordinary hatred among most of her neighbours and further afield too. Stockpiles of horrifically destructive weapons are well-prepared, including "NBCs" - nuclear, biological and chemical weapons; truly, never before has Man had the ability to wreak mass devastation on this scale with so little effort. Meanwhile Jerusalem, "the beloved city", is no longer "trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke 21.24b) – another significant sign - though as yet it remains at the epicentre of hostility towards Israel and the Jews.

In all these ways we see that events are gathering pace, entirely in accord with biblical prophecies and promises, towards their final fulfilment. But crucially and thankfully, the Lord God remains in full control of events. Time and again in those Ezekiel prophecies we read two refrains: first, "Ye/They shall be my people, and I will be your/their God" (eg., Ezekiel 11.20 / 36.28 / 37.23,27), this applying to the Jews but also now to all Gentiles "in Christ", for in Christ the old Jew-Gentile divisions have gone (eg., Ephesians 2.11-22); and second, "They shall know that I am the Lord" (eg., Ezekiel 6.7b - via dozens of others in your Concordance! - to 38.23), the "They" this time ultimately applying to every human being who has ever existed.

The Lord God will indeed have His way and the glory that is His due, and in His own good time will ensure that that "land of unwall'd villages", with all the blessings implied in that phrase, will finally come to pass.

We watch and we pray, and we praise His holy Name.

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