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As we study in the books of the Old Testament the record of God's dealings with His chosen people the Jews, two fundamental "spiritual barometers" concerning God's covenant with Abram and his descendants become apparent.

The first of these involves the central place of the land, the promised land, in the spiritual understanding of the Lord's people. Abram, with his wife Sarai, followed the Lord's instruction and entered the land of Canaan, "the land that the Lord would show him" (from Genesis 11.31 and 12.1,5). After their deaths we note that the only part of the promised land that Abraham ever possessed was a burial plot, and even that, by his own choice, was a purchase not a gift (Genesis 23.2-20 / 25.8-10). The promises of the Lord stood firm but were not yet come to pass.

There followed Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, the giving of the Law and the tabernacle, and the forty years in the wilderness because of unbelief (Numbers 14.26-39). Finally, in the Book of Joshua, we read of the crossing of the Jordan into the promised land, the gradual conquest of the wicked inhabitants (eg., Joshua 23.11-13 / Psalm 78.55), and the division of the land between the twelve tribes.

In these ways the scene was set for the land itself, long promised and now possessed, to be seen as one crucial barometer of the true spiritual state of the people before the Lord God, the Lord of the covenant. When the people had victory, plenty and peace in the land, these were signs that all was well between the Lord and His people. Equally, defeat, scarcity and war conveyed a very clear and very opposite message.

The temple came to be seen as a second "spiritual barometer" by God's covenant people. The first magnificent temple was constructed during the reign of Solomon (I Kings 5-7). When it was finished the ark of the covenant was placed within it and the shekinah glory, the presence of the Lord, "filled the house of the Lord (8.1-11). The king, still-wise Solomon (but see 11.1-3), lifted a wonderful prayer to the Lord before the people (8.12-61), which was followed by quite a party (8.62-66)! Truly, with possession of the land, and now with possession of this wonderful temple visibly indwelt by the Lord Himself, the people could see that all was well between the Lord and themselves.

Now while the people had these two visible "spiritual barometers" of the land and the temple, of course their well-being under the covenant really

depended on the state of their own hearts under the Lord. Looking back we can see that after the spiritual “high point” under Solomon, the needles on those two barometers swung rapidly towards “Storms”. Sure enough, both Israel and Judah were defeated and exiled, the land was lost and the temple was destroyed.

But as always God kept faithful to His covenant, even amid the ruins: the people came back and a temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem, though rather “second-best” (eg., Haggai 2.3). Yet the land remained under foreign domination and that second temple was destroyed by the Romans in 63 BC.

Then from 19 BC came the third, splendid, temple under Herod the Great, built to ingratiate himself with the Jews. The long-awaited Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, saw that, despite its outward glories and the sacrificial rituals of the covenant, this temple was largely a sham, a “den of thieves” (Luke 9.46), whose days were now to be short-lived because of Jerusalem’s rejection of her Messiah (Matthew 23.37-24.2). This wonderful temple was indeed burnt to the ground in AD 70 during the horrendous sacking of Jerusalem by the Roman legions.

The Jews were then scattered, the land was gone, the temple was gone – truly, the Lord of the covenant had wrought terrible judgment on His people because of all that lay within their dreadful boast, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19.15 end).

And yet, and yet ... While the Church age, of the gospel of grace for both Jew and Gentile by faith in Jesus Christ, has intervened, we know this age will come to an end (eg., Luke 21.24), perhaps sooner than we might expect. Then the Lord will continue to graft His covenant people back into that “good olive tree”, and they will be blessed once again (eg., Romans 11.25-36).

We read the many yet-to-be fulfilled promises within such books as Jeremiah (notably Chapter 31), Ezekiel and Zechariah for example. We note that the Jews are back in their land despite their continuing unbelief. We know that that fourth temple, of Ezekiel 40-48, is still to be built.

Surely, after the approaching “great tribulation” is past (Matthew 24.21-22, also described as the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30.7)) – 7 years of dreadful “Storms” for the Jews and the Gentile nations indeed - the needles on those two old spiritual barometers of the covenant, the

land and the temple, will move by God's grace to "Fair Weather" in the millennial kingdom.

The Lord God keeps His covenant promises. All praise to His holy Name!

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