

384 God is on the move

The scenes of joy when VE Day finally came on 8th May 1945, 75 years ago, are a vivid reminder for us today of all that that steadfast generation had to cope with through the hardships and heartaches of the Second World War.

This anniversary prompts us to pause and take stock. In the light of Scripture where has God's fallen world "got to" since 1945, and what of the path ahead? Limited space prevents detailed analysis here, but each of the following three subjects merits our prayerful reflection.

Scripture centres on Israel and the Jews so we are right to begin there. After the unprecedented horrors of the holocaust the State of Israel was re-born in May 1948, against all conceivable human odds. From God's perspective, that rebirth is probably the most important event of the past 75 years, and humanly speaking, it came about in no small part because of Bible-believing Christians in the British Cabinet who "knew the Word" and produced the Balfour Declaration of 1917. On the basis of the familiar texts such as Matthew 24.32-33, Luke 21.24 and Romans 11.25 we surely could not ask for a clearer sign from this re-emergence of the Jews as a nation that "God is on the move" and that, as promised, His emphasis is turning away from the Gentles and back to the Jews.

Since 1948 Israel has survived four major wars mounted by its neighbours, each of which was designed to "drive the Jews into the sea"; she endures ongoing terrorist attacks that are rarely reported; and she receives constant, negative media coverage, most of which is palpably untrue, yet which is driven by the strange mantra "Palestinians, good; Jews, bad". The Jews are "no angels", (are any of us?), and are still largely in unbelief with regard to their Messiah, but they clearly remain God's original covenant people to whom He is giving His serious attention. As mentioned before in these Reflections, our Christian prayers for "the peace of Jerusalem" (as we are bidden in Psalm 122) have little to do with Israeli politics and much to do with God's ultimate plans, for Jerusalem will be at peace when, and only when, Christ has returned and His Kingdom will have finally come (eg., Matthew 6.10).

Next we come scripturally to "the Church", the "body of Christ", consisting of the born-again believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (egs. Romans 12.4-5 / I Corinthians 12.13 / John 3.3-8).

In adopting in these Weekly Reflections a conventional biblical approach concerning the order of events in “end-times” prophecies, we know therefore that these believers are watching, ready and waiting, for the removal, “the rapture”, of the true Church, as explained in the glorious scenes of I Thessalonians 4.13-18 and I Corinthians 15.51-52. This great event is to be followed by the 7-year tribulation (the time of divine judgment upon the Jews, the Gentile nations and the apostate Church), the public return of Christ in judgment and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth (egs., Daniel 9.27 / Matthew 24 and parallels / Revelation Chapters 4-19).

Thirdly we come on to the Gentile nations, including those of “Christendom”, each one of which God mainly views in the light of His gracious promise to Abram in Genesis 12.3: “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” – truly one of the key foundational texts of the whole Bible.

We see in Matthew, 25.31ff how, when “the Son of man”, “the King”, will have come in his glory after the tribulation, all the nations will be gathered before Him, “and he shall separate them one from another ...”, dividing “the sheep” from “the goats”. The basis of this division is very simple: how each nation has treated the Jews, “these my brethren” (v.40), both over history and especially during the tribulation. It is a solemn scene of either cursing and punishment, or of blessing and life eternal (vv. 41,46), and a stark expression of Genesis 12.3.

So here is much “food for prayerful thought” regarding Israel, the true Church and the Gentile nations, the three central scriptural strands in the midst of the steadily growing global chaos that has occurred since 1945, now evident in its many manifestations.

In Psalm 11.3 the Holy Spirit prompts David to ask, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”, and we are now living in times when so many of Man’s “we-know-best” foundations are indeed being destroyed. We know the answers to the Psalmist’s question, which can be summed up - “we run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12.1b-2a, KJV).

Truly, God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is on the move, and – praise Him - He knows exactly what He is doing.

