

## 438 Doubly Prepared

Thankfully, on the surface the recent conflict between Hamas and Israel is over for the time being, but its root cause – Islamic detestation of the Jews – remains in place. This means that Hamas can now restock its weaponry, and that any supposed “two-state solution” will eventually hit the brick wall of Qur’anic teaching about the Jews, which states for example that Muslims should wage war against Jews and subjugate them because they are under “Allah’s” curse (Sura 9.29-30). Christian prayers for “the peace of Jerusalem”, with all that is involved in those few simple words, remain as vital as ever in these dangerous times. (Psalm 122.6),

We know from God’s Word where these current scenes fit into the Lord’s gracious unfolding of His dealings with His original covenant people, the Jews. Throughout what is for us now the Old Testament, we see one central recurring pattern: His people’s obedience leading to God’s blessings; their disobedience, (for instance over their abuse of God’s Name, His temple and Sabbaths, and their constant idolatries), leading to God’s warnings and judgments; and then their eventual return in repentance to receive forgiveness and restoration.

Then of course came the Jews’ greatest sin - their rejection of the Lord God’s greatest gift, His only Son, Yeshua, their Messiah, summed up in those awful shouts that morning: “His blood be upon us and upon our children ... Crucify Him ... We have no king but Caesar” (Matthew 27.25 / Luke 23.21 / John 19.15). The mob’s murder of Stephen a few months’ later, in response to Stephen’s witness (Acts 7), finally caused God the Father to act in judgment, by setting His covenant people firmly aside for a period. During this period, the Gospel of grace, under the New Covenant in Christ, has been entrusted to “the Church”, a wholly new and unexpected entity, hence termed “a mystery” by the Holy Spirit through Paul (eg., Ephesians 3.1-12), and, after its earliest years, largely consisting only of Gentile believers in “Jesus Christ is Lord”.

But that Church period was not, and is not, to be limitless, for we have those two crucial “untils” from the Lord in His Word which we occasionally come across in these Reflections: Jerusalem “shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21.24); and, concerning the Jews currently being “some of the branches broken off” from the “good olive tree” (Romans 11.17a; 24mid), KJV), “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved ...” (11.25b-26a).

What do we now see before us? The Jews are back in their land, and Jerusalem, now under Jewish ownership, is no longer “trodden down of the Gentiles”. That ownership is of course hotly disputed by the invented people “the Palestinians”, who turn out to have no sound claim on the city at all, but this contrived anger over Jerusalem does suggest something more: that Satan behind the scenes recognises how important the city is, both for God’s plans for His people and for Jesus’ Kingdom soon to be established on earth, with Jerusalem at its centre (eg., Zechariah 14).

These realities over the land and Jerusalem, coupled with the increasingly dangerous state of the world, point to the imminent ending of “the Church Age”. As we know, this ending will involve the removal of the true believing Church, (comprising the physically dead who are “sleeping in Jesus”, along with those “in Christ” still physically alive and drawn from within the denominations), to “meet the Lord in the air” (I Thessalonians 4.17). What a prospect we look forward to! - “So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (vv.17b-18).

When the true Church has thus been removed, left behind there will be an apostate church, the Jews and the Gentile nations, to face God’s just judgment over their rejection of Jesus as Messiah and Lord. This is the dreadful 7-year “tribulation”, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30.7), involving Satan on the loose, with antichrist, the “mark of the beast” and so on, as explained in Revelation Chapters 6-18. We would not wish anyone to undergo this terrible time, which makes our holding-forth of the saving Gospel of Christ so urgent, for both Jew and Gentile.

At the end of the tribulation, and as so often before, the Jews will once again cry out to the Lord in repentance, pleading for His mercy. In response Yeshua their Messiah will indeed come to their rescue (eg., Zechariah Chapters 12-14 / Matthew 24.29-31), and those great promises of Romans 11.25-36 will come to pass!

Meanwhile we stand doubly prepared - for the Lord to come soon, or not to come soon! – sensibly covering both possibilities for, until “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ...” (from I Thessalonians 4.16), there remains the Lord’s vital Gospel work to be done.

