

## 548 An Anchor for the Soul

We are all aware of the numerous problems now present in God's fallen world, which stretch right through the alphabet from Artificial Intelligence to Net Zero. Jesus' words in Luke Chapter 21 are all too relevant – "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven will be shaken" (Luke 21.25-26, KJV).

Also relevant are Jesus' words given to us in the previous verse concerning the fate of the Jews – "they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21.24). Against all human odds the Jewish state of Israel was reborn in 1948, and has survived and thrived since. Jerusalem is now under Jewish control, though as yet still with Gentile, Islamic, Jordanian control of the Temple Mount by Israel's allowance.

Scripturally therefore the "fig tree", representing Israel and her people, has been "shooting forth" for a good many years by now, so we can rightfully assume that "summer is now nigh at hand" (from Luke 24.29-30). The stage is set for Christ's seizing-away of the true Church (I Thessalonians 4.13-18) followed by "the seventieth week" of Daniel 9.27 involving a 7-year period of "great tribulation" for the Jews, the Gentile nations and the apostate church, and culminating in the public return of Christ in glory and judgment (see Matthew 24.1-42 and parallels, and Revelation Chapters 4-19).

In reaction to the many present-day woes around us, we start by guarding against letting our own hearts "fail us for fear", for the Lord has given us abundant assurances concerning these probable "end-times" and what still lies ahead. One such assurance comes in Hebrews Chapters 5-7, where the Holy Spirit shows us that Christ, our ultimate high priest "after the order of Melchisedec", far excels the Aaronic priests of the former, now superseded, covenant. Those priests were sinners themselves, who repeatedly had to offer up animal blood for the forgiveness of the sins of themselves and of others, and who eventually died. But Jesus is the sinless Lamb of God, who has entered, once, with His own innocent blood, "through the veil into the most holy place" on our behalf and as a forerunner for the rest of us to follow. Crucially, Jesus' high priesthood lasts for ever (egs., Hebrews 5.8-10; 6.19b-20;

7.1-3,11-28). It is this precious role, of Jesus being our eternal High Priest and Mediator, that lies at the very heart of the Christian Gospel (egs., John 14.6 / I Timothy 2.5-6).

Hence we read in Hebrews Chapter 6 for example that, by God's oath (vv.13-18a), those in Christ have "a strong consolation", and "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (v.18b). This laid-hold-upon hope is nothing wishy-washy, but acts as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast ..." (v.19).

So in Christ right now we possess a strong consolation and a hope acting as a solid anchor. Each of us needs that anchor to keep us safely in Christ, and to guard us from drifting away into the shoals, reefs and rocks around us these days, some of them being just a few mouse-clicks away on the internet. The world in its folly of course spurns God's gracious oaths grounded in Christ, and thus relies for any consolation or hope upon human abilities alone, some of which abilities have got us into the current deep mess in the first place! Truly, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ..." (Romans 1.22 / see also Psalms 2.1-6; 14.1-3).

This precious Gospel of grace "... was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith: to God only wise, [be] glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen". So ends the mighty Epistle to the Romans (Romans 16.25b-27, KJV).

The Lord is reminding us here through Paul's words of our Gospel responsibilities. This Gospel of grace, given by God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, is not to be kept hidden by "a fortunate few", but steadily held forth in these wild times "to all nations for the obedience of the faith", whenever and wherever appropriate. Through Christ may there still be a rich harvest of souls, with each of us continuing to play our part, be that small or great, in bringing that harvest safely home. For in our Christ-won, Christ-based hope, praise God, "we have an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast ...".

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