

## 561 A Peculiar People

Sure enough, the pendulum of world opinion, having swung strongly if briefly in Israel's favour in the immediate aftermath of the foul deeds of Hamas on 7<sup>th</sup> October, has steadily swung back to its usual position of instinctive hostility towards Israel and angry anguish for the people of Gaza. That anguish is well-justified over what the people of Gaza are experiencing, but we remember that the initiators of these latest horrors are the members of Hamas.

Hamas leaders, the governors of Gaza, clearly care little for the safety and well-being of their people, and admit to using them as human shields in the face of the Israeli onslaughts. We hear mention in the media of "the rules of war" concerning civilians in war zones, but Hamas evidently recognises no such rules: the jihadist obligations in the Qur'an to kill the infidels, notably the Jews, are all the justification they seem to need in their vile actions against Israel. So the Hamas' "gloves are off", obliging Israel's "gloves" to be off too, for her own survival – and so inevitably the horrors unfold.

But, thanks be to God, scripturally we know that Israel remains precious to the Lord, "whose mercy [endureth] for ever" (Psalm 136, KJV). For the Jews, uniquely, remain a divinely-chosen, divinely-formed "peculiar people" (the Hebrew word translated as "peculiar" has to do with closely-guarded treasure). The choosing begins in Genesis 12.1-3, with those crucial words in verse 3 about blessing and cursing remaining fully in force (see also for example Matthew 25.31-46, when the Jewish Messiah, the Son of man, the King, will judge the nations on precisely those terms).

Then, (Moses speaking from the Lord) – "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ... a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (from Exodus 19.5-6); "For thou [art] an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that [are] upon the earth / And the Lord hath avouched (that is, guaranteed) thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he has promised thee, and that [thou] shouldest keep all his commandments, And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken / For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, [and] Israel for his peculiar treasure" (Deuteronomy 14.2; 26.18-19 / Psalm 135.4).

In what is for us the Old Testament, we then have the record of the variable covenant out-workings of this “peculiar people” – ranging between their obedience and disobedience, and thus between the Lord’s blessings and punishings upon them. Supremely, they then rejected God’s only Son, their Messiah – “We have no king but Caesar!” (John 19.15). The Lord took them at their word, scattering them as homeless wanderers for nigh on two thousand years of this “Church Age”, during which forgiveness and salvation are granted from the God the Father by simple faith in Jesus Christ His Son (eg., Romans 3.20-30). Now, Gentile Christians, “ordinaries”, like us! – are being “purified unto the Lord” as “a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (from Titus 2.14b, (quoting Exodus 19.5); and - “But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (from I Peter 2.9, quoting from Deuteronomy 26.19: we see the way that Christian believers, through faith in Christ, have inherited the original Jewish blessings, and will share these blessings with believing Jews in God’s good time (eg., Romans 11.25-32).

We are well aware that world events are moving towards their promised scriptural fulfilments, including the extraordinary existence of one tiny, noisily-hated Jewish nation existing since 1948 on part of their Promised Land. Meanwhile Satan and his agents remain intent on snuffing out God’s Words and God’s two covenant peoples, the Jews and the Christians, the latter graciously drawn in Christ from both Jew and Gentile (eg., Ephesians 2.13-22).

Before long thousands more are likely to be dead on both sides of this Satan-fostered conflict between Hamas and Israel. Even if militarily defeated this time, Hamas, with its visceral hatred of the Jews, will grow again and will try again, and again. However, their Qur’anic instructions to destroy the Jews remain no substitute for the Word of God, in which are revealed to us God’s many faithful promises concerning the Jews, His original and precious “peculiar people”. So in Christ’s Name we continue to pray earnestly, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven ...”.