

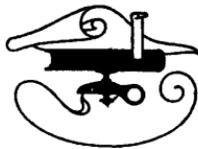


F. C. Gilbert

# **THE JEWISH PROBLEM**

# The Jewish Problem

By F. C. Gilbert



REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION  
TAKOMA PARK, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Printed in U.S.A.

Copyright, 1940, by the  
Review and Herald Publishing Association

## CONTENTS

Foreword	7
I. The Origin of the Jewish Race	9
II. Three Terms Applied to the Jewish People	14
III. What Gave the Patriarchs Such Prominence?	23
IV. A New Nation Planned	29
V. The Growth, Slavery, and Deliverance of the Hebrew People	35
VI. The Hebrew Race a Distinct People	43
VII. Possessing the Promised Land	50
VIII. The Israelitish Nation Reaches Its Zenith of Power and Glory	61
IX. The Nation Divided	69
X. Jerusalem the Center of the Worship of the True God	77
XI. Seven Decades of Desolation	86
XII. Return and Restoration of the Exiles	93
XIII. Israel Passes Through a Critical Era	102
XIV. The Long-Looked-For Hour Arrives	111
XV. Messiah Fulfills His Mission to Israel	123
XVI. The Favored City to Become Desolate	133
XVII. Will God Fulfill His Promises to the Fathers?	143
XVIII. Further Appeals to the Nation	150
XIX. The Gospel Preached to Abraham and His Seed	160
XX. A Never-to-Be-Forgotten Prayer	169
XXI. Is Modern Zionism a Fulfillment of Scripture Prophecy?	177



## FOREWORD

**T**HE world is indebted to the descendants of the patriarchs. To them were committed the oracles of God. Since the days when they were organized into a nation, they have preserved the sacred teachings which were given by inspiration to their forefathers. The Scriptures, the Old Testament and the New, were delivered to them by prophet, priest, bard, and historian. Multitudes have forfeited their lives in order to guard the sacred treasures of God's word.

Through their entire history these people have met with suffering, persecution, and abuse. From the days when Ishmael persecuted his brother Isaac until the present generation, they have been derided, harassed, and maligned. There were times when their suffering was cruel and unjust. At other times they received punishment for their misdeeds, because they failed to follow the counsel of God.

Nevertheless, the Lord still manifests His mercy and kindness toward them, for they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. While they have been wanderers on the face of the earth during the last twenty centuries, a kind Providence has watched over them, even amid their most unfortunate trials and difficulties.

There have been periods when they have not known what to do. Like the dove which Noah sent forth from the ark, they have found no place to rest the sole of their foot. During the past decade an unusual storm of wrath has been let loose upon the Jews, until it has been most perplexing to them to find a shelter or haven of rest.

Through the good offices of the British Empire, a door of hope has been opened to them, and they have been invited to make a homeland in Palestine. Thither during the last

two decades they have gone by the tens of thousands. The constant stream of immigration into Palestine has been at times so phenomenal that the question has arisen whether there may be divine foresight which has foretold this peculiar development. The queries have often been raised, "Does this large inflow of tens of thousands of the Jewish people back to the land of their forefathers constitute a fulfillment of God's promise to them? Can it be that, after almost twenty centuries of being scattered among the nations, the time has come, in accord with prophetic forecast, for these people to be gathered to the ancient land of Palestine?"

Does this present situation indicate to the student of Scripture that the services which engaged the life of their predecessors in temple and in sanctuary are again to flourish? Do we find in the teachings of the Saviour that such a repetition of former days will be experienced?

"The Jewish Problem," for such it is, commands the attention at present not only of the follower of the Bible and of the Christian religion, but also of the nations of earth. The attention of the world is focused upon the ancient land of Israel, and upon the Jewish people. Is there again to be set up in Palestine an independent nation controlled by the literal descendants of the patriarchs, and is it so expressed by prophet, by the Saviour, and by the apostles? What are the teachings of Scripture in regard to the future of this people? What part may they yet share in God's plan for them? What has been recorded of their future? Does the Bible clarify these questions?

In the preparation of the following pages, the author has endeavored, after almost half a century of study and research of the Old and the New Testament, after personally visiting the Holy Land, and after interesting interviews with responsible people of the Zionist movement at home and abroad, to present what he believes is the complete Scriptural teaching concerning the past, the present, and the future of the Jewish people.

F. C. GILBERT.

## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGIN OF THE JEWISH RACE

**T**HE Jewish people have an ancient and an honorable ancestry. It is possible for them to follow a definite outline of their genealogy for upwards of forty centuries. No other people have so distinct and continuous a history as have the descendants of the patriarchs. The records of this people are so interwoven with the annals of Holy Writ that the Scriptures are a testimony to the history of the race.

The father of the Jewish people was the patriarch Abram. Abram was a descendant of Noah, the preacher in the antediluvian era, through his youngest son, Shem. Although the genealogical record of Noah's three sons usually gives Shem the first mention, the Scriptures state that Shem was his youngest son. Gen. 5:32; 10:1, 21. From Shem to Abram are ten generations. Gen. 11:10-26. The father of Abram was Terah. Terah's ancestors were idolaters. They worshiped false deities.

Says the Scripture: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." Joshua 24:2.

Terah decided to abandon this false worship. With his son Abram, and his grandson Lot, he left his home in Ur of the Chaldees, and removed to Haran. The family were en route to the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran, where Terah died at the age of two hundred and five years. Gen. 11:31, 32.

#### The Call of Abram

After the death of Terah, the following call came to Abram: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out

of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: . . . 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." Gen. 12:1-3.

The prospect was large with hope and promise. Abram was married when this heavenly call came to him, although at the time he had no children. The patriarch was seventy-five years of age, and the other members of the family who joined him in travel were his nephew, Lot, and his wife.

Abram's attitude toward this heavenly invitation is expressed in the following language: "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." Gen. 12:5. To Abram then came this promise: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Gen. 12:7.

Two promises were couched in these words—a posterity and a possession. However, shortly after he received this bright promise, there was a famine in the land of Canaan; so Abram with his relatives moved into the land of Egypt. They returned to Canaan when the famine ended. When later there arose difficulties between Abram's servants and those of his nephew which resulted in a separation of the families, the Lord renewed His promise.

"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." Gen. 13:14-17.

This assurance was an extension and an elaboration of

the former promise which God had given to the patriarch; yet Abram had no children.

Some years later, the promise of a posterity and of a possession was again reiterated to Abram. This time the Lord promised Abram that his seed should be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Abram accepted the assurance, and of his acceptance of this remarkable promise, the record says: "He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." Gen. 15:6.

Then there followed a most unusual prediction. Abram was informed that his seed should be treated as a race of slaves, that they would be in bondage to an alien nation for four centuries, but at the end of the fourth generation they would be delivered from their servitude, and they then would be possessors of the land which was promised to him.

At this time the territorial boundaries of the land of promise which his posterity should possess, were described in the following language: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." Gen. 15:18-21.

### Abram Receives a Change of Name

Twenty-four years after his original call, Abram was again visited by the Lord. The patriarch was now informed that he would become a father of many nations. As a token of the certainty of this promise, Abram's name was changed to Abraham, which latter was interpreted to mean, "father of a multitude of nations." His wife's name also was changed from Sarai to Sarah, or "princess." At the time of this vision to Abraham, the Lord introduced the rite of circumcision, and Abraham was commanded that upon all his

male posterity, at the age of eight days, this rite should be performed. This ordinance was a token of the covenant between God and Abraham. Gen. 17:1-17.

The Lord began to fulfill His promise to the century-old patriarch by giving him a son, whom he named Isaac. Gen. 21:1-4. What a delight and joy it must have been to this centenarian to see the first sign of even a partial fulfillment of the promise that he should have posterity. But when Isaac reached young manhood, Abraham was commanded of God to offer up the lad as a sacrifice. Even under ordinary conditions such a request would stagger a person. But in Isaac Abraham had a tangible evidence of the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise which Heaven had repeatedly made, that his seed would be as the stars of heaven. Yet Abraham had such unbounded faith in the assurance of God that "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." Rom. 4:20, 21.

At the moment when Abraham was to make the sacrifice, the call from heaven came that he should not lay his hand upon the child. God now recognized the absolute faith Abraham had in Heaven's assurances. Again the promise was reiterated: "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." Gen. 22:16-18.

This test of faith was the last of its kind brought to bear upon this servant of God, the father of the Jewish race. He lived to see his son Isaac married, and he died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five, when his grandchildren, Jacob and Esau, were fifteen years old. Gen. 25:7, 20, 26.

The experiences through which this man of God passed

eminently fitted him to become the founder of this race, and the father of the faithful. He is held in high esteem by Heaven; and the leading religions of the world, after several millenniums, regard this man as the outstanding example of true devotion to God. The descendants of Abraham have indeed a worthy progenitor. The Scriptures declare that the Lord made an everlasting friendship with Abraham. The seers who followed this holy man through the centuries, commend him for his devotion and his loyalty to the God of heaven. The Master Himself declared that Abraham would have a prominent position in the future kingdom of God. Abraham's life of faith and loyalty offered to his posterity a fine example of what they might become if they walked in the footsteps of their ancestor.

The full benefit of the promises made to this founder of the Jewish race he never realized; for it is written of him at the close of his career: "These all died, . . . not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Heb. 11:13.

## CHAPTER II

### THREE TERMS APPLIED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

**F**OR almost twenty centuries the descendants of Abraham have been wanderers upon the face of the earth. Various titles have been applied to the Jewish race in different sections of the world. They are called by one name in the Orient, while different terms are applied to them in the Occident. Three outstanding names, however, are used to designate the Jewish people. These are Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew. The first two have been in long standing. These have been in use for more than three millenniums; the third name has been the peculiar designation most popularly recognized during the Christian Era.

#### Origin of the Name "Hebrew"

Just when the term "Hebrew" originated is not quite certain. Its first use may be traced during the lifetime of the founder of the race. Abraham's nephew, Lot, settled with his family in a garden spot of the East, in the city of Sodom.

Soon after, a number of kings invaded the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the war that followed, Lot and his family were taken captives. The victors fled with the people and the spoil. The Sacred Record states: "There came one that had escaped, and told Abraham the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol." Gen. 14:13.

It is undecided by scholars how Abraham came by this name, "Hebrew." There are various views expressed regarding the possibility of its origin. The prominent theory

## Terms Applied to the Jewish People 15

is that the term "Hebrew," *ay-ver*, means "passing over." It is claimed that because Abraham passed over from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan, and since the Hebrew word *ay-ver* means to pass over, this appellation was applied to the father of the Jewish race. That this Hebrew word *ay-ver* means "to pass over" is clear from its usage in other portions of Scripture.

For instance, in Joshua 1:11 we read: "Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it." The words "pass through" and "pass over" are derived from the same Hebrew word, *ay-ver*. This identical word is used in Joshua 4:22, 23, where it is recorded: "Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea." In both these verses the word *ay-ver* is rendered "came over" and "passed over."

We find that the word "Hebrew" is frequently used in ancient times to designate the posterity of Abraham. Of the young man Joseph, great-grandson of Abraham, Potiphar's wife said: "See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us." "She spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me." Gen. 39:14, 17.

Joseph told the chief butler of Pharaoh, who was incarcerated in the prison under Joseph's charge, that he "was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews." Gen. 40:15.

The butler who was reinstated in his position with Pharaoh said to the Egyptian king, when he sought for an interpreter of the dreams which troubled him, "There was there with us a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard." Gen. 41:12.

That this term "Hebrew" was a well-established name for

the descendants of Abraham among the nations, must be accepted in the light of the following facts:

Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt. His brethren came to the land of the Pharaohs to purchase food for themselves and their families. Joseph recognized his brethren, though they did not know him. The prime minister had decided to fete his brothers, now that the younger brother Benjamin had come with them. It was essential that Joseph maintain court usages; he was obliged to recognize national customs. The record says: "They set on for him [Joseph] by himself, and for them [his brothers] by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians." Gen. 43:32. Egypt followed a caste system. It is evident that the name "Hebrew" was a well-known appellation for Jacob's descendants among the Egyptians.

When that people were firmly established in the land of the Pharaohs, this term was commonly applied by the Egyptians to both the men and the women. (See Ex. 1:15, 16, 19.) From the descriptions of Scripture we would conclude that there were certain facial characteristics which distinctly pointed them out as descendants of the patriarchs. At the time when Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket in which Jochebed had hidden the child Moses, the royal princess said to her servants: "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Ex. 2:6. She quickly recognized the features of this three months' child as of Hebrew extraction. When Miriam, Moses' sister, offered to secure a nurse for the babe, Miriam said to the princess: "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women?" Ex. 2:7.

### Deliverance of the Hebrews

When Moses was commanded to present to Pharaoh Heaven's request for the release of that people from their Egyptian servitude, he said to the Egyptian monarch: "The

Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us." Ex. 3:18; 5:3.

Again came the word to Pharaoh: "The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness." Ex. 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3. When Pharaoh asked Moses how he expected the Hebrews to be released from Egypt, Moses replied: "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." Ex. 10:9.

The day arrived when the Hebrew people were to be given their permanent freedom from their centuries of affliction. The Lord said to Moses: "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether." Ex. 11:1.

Repeatedly the Lord said to Pharaoh through Moses that He was the God of the Hebrews, and the Lord called them His people. This name was continued in use among them for many centuries. The code of laws given through Moses was enjoined upon the Hebrew people. (See Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12; Jer. 34:9, 14; 1 Sam. 4:6, 9; 13:7; 14:11.)

Even in New Testament times this name was frequently used. The apostle Paul speaks of himself as a Hebrew. 2 Cor. 11:22. He even styles himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." To this day in certain sections of the Orient the term "Hebrew" is commonly and frequently used.

### The Hebrew Language

According to the Scriptures, these people had their own language. The Hebrew language must have been of ancient origin; for the record states that when Joseph talked to his brethren at the time they came to Egypt to purchase corn for their families, and before he made himself known to them, he talked to them through an interpreter. Gen. 42:23. If the language of the Egyptians had been the same as that of

the descendants of Jacob, there would have been no need of interpretation.

The title written over the cross when our Lord was crucified "was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin." John 19:20. This Hebrew language must have been in common usage among the people, for the record states that when the apostle Paul presented his defense to his brethren, "when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence." Acts 22:2.

Furthermore, Paul declares that when the Saviour met him on that memorable day of his journey to Damascus, and presented Himself to that prejudiced persecutor, he "heard a voice speaking unto" him, "and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Acts 26:14.

At the time our Lord visited the aged prophet John on the barren rock of Patmos, the seer was told: "They had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." Rev. 9:11. We have the two ancient languages, Hebrew and Greek, contrasted.

### The Name "Israel"

In a most singular and remarkable manner, the name "Israel" originated. Abraham's grandson Jacob had lived with his uncle Laban in Padanaram for two decades. He had a family of eleven sons and one daughter. He had not seen his father for a score of years, and in the meantime his mother had died. More than twenty years before, Jacob had deceived his father, and had taken away the birthright which Esau his brother thought belonged to him. It rightfully belonged to Jacob, for the former sold this inestimable gift to his brother for a mess of pottage.

On his return to his father's tents, Jacob sent a message to his brother of his home-coming. He hoped Esau had forgotten the episode of twoscore years back, and would be happy to welcome his long-absent kin. But he learned that Esau

was on his way to meet him with four hundred men. Esau evidently was bent on revenge. Jacob at once realized that he faced a serious situation. He now sensed that he must have assurance that he was clear of guilt before God. He realized that he must gain the victory over his deceptive nature, and have help from God to face his brother.

Jacob separated his family into two divisions, and he himself remained over the brook Jabbok to spend the night alone with God. While here in his solitude, there wrestled a Man with him. Of this experience Jacob encountered with this Man, and the results which followed, we read the following:

“There wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name. And He said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name? And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Gen. 32:24-30.

Jacob was now a victor. He had been wrestling with an angel from heaven. The Lord had forgiven his sin, and he felt that he was able to face his brother. He knew that God would be his defender and protector. In place of his birth name “Jacob,” which means “supplanter,” he was given the name “Israel,” which means a prevailer with, or a prince of, God. The Lord brought to Jacob a new experience. He changed his name in harmony with this new experience. Israel was now the new name of this patriarch.

Some time later in a vision, God appeared unto Jacob, and said to him: "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel." Gen. 35:10.

From this time and onward, Israel became the family name of this grandson of Abraham. For many centuries, and during the period when his twelve sons were known as the twelve tribes of Israel, Israel was the usual name of the descendants of Jacob. It is conceded that all through the history of the posterity of Jacob, wherever these people found themselves, they were known as Israelites. From the book of Genesis throughout the entire Old Testament and in the New Testament, clear through to the last book, the Revelation, we constantly find mention of Israel and the Israelites.

In the New Testament, however, the term "Israel" takes on added significance. Says the Scripture: "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." Gal. 6:16.

Inspiration declares that those who walk according to a divinely measured rule are called "the Israel of God." In regard to this heavenly measure, we have the following testimony: "There was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." Rev. 11:1.

The broader spiritual New Testament definition of an Israelite is a person who worships the true God and His Son the Lord Jesus, and whose devotion is in accord with the temple of God.

### The Term "Jew"

We first encounter the word "Jew" in 2 Kings 16:6. The record says: "At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day." Rezin, king of Syria, reigned at the same time that Ahaz

was king of Judah, about the year 742 B.C. At this time the prophet Isaiah was delivering his messages to the people of Judah. Several prophets had been sent with their warnings to the ten northern tribes of Israel. The hour was approaching when the northern kingdom was to be dispersed among the peoples of Assyria and the Medes. Such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Amos, and others, had appealed most earnestly to the kings and people of these tribes to turn unto the Lord from their heathen idolatrous ways, and worship the true God. But these earnest entreaties seemed to produce little fruitage; finally the king of Assyria took Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes, and carried the inhabitants into Assyria, and placed them by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (See 2 Kings 17:6-23.)

For upwards of a century Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others earnestly warned the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, to wholly follow the word of God, and to hearken to the voice of God speaking through the prophets. Otherwise they would be sent into captivity. Judah failed to heed the heavenly warnings, and the two tribes were sent into Babylonian exile for seventy years.

From the time of the Babylonian captivity, we more frequently come in contact with the word "Jew" in the Sacred Scriptures. The term "Jew" is derived from the Hebrew word *Ye-hu-dah*, which is the name of the fourth son of Jacob, Judah. In fact, Jew and Judah have a common origin in the Hebrew language.

The nations who came in contact with these descendants of Jacob, beginning with the Chaldeans, use the name "Jew" almost entirely when referring to this people. Hence in the Old Testament books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther where these people are brought into prominence with the Medes, the Persians, the Samaritans, the word "Jew" abounds. Those of the ten tribes who availed themselves of the decrees issued by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia, to return to the land of Palestine were included among the Jews. By

the time we reach the days of our Lord and the apostles, the use of the word "Jew" was very common among the Greeks and the Romans, and among the literal descendants of Abraham. The apostle John in the fourth Gospel mentions this term more than does any other of the writers of the New Testament, although, in the book of Acts, we observe the use of the word very frequently by both Jew and non-Jew.

### The Destruction of the Temple

At the time of the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. by the Roman general Titus, upwards of a million Jews were destroyed, and more than eleven hundred thousand were taken captives, many of whom were dragged to Rome. For nearly two centuries following, the Jews were not allowed to enter the sacred city, Jerusalem. These people became wanderers upon the face of the earth. They sought refuge in the lands of Europe, although the rabbis for a time set up headquarters for the Jewish people in Asia Minor and in Babylon. In the centuries following, wherever they found a city of refuge, peoples of all nations and tongues knew these descendants of the patriarchs as Jews. This name has closely followed them for more than nineteen centuries.

During the Middle Ages they were cruelly abused by various nations, and it seemed repeatedly that they would be obliterated from the face of the earth. Despite the cruel and abusive treatment they received, they have increased numerically during the centuries, until at the present time their statistics reveal that there are more than seventeen million Jews scattered in various parts of the world.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT GAVE THE PATRIARCHS SUCH PROMINENCE?

**T**HE Jewish people have produced many eminent men. They have given the world prophets, legislators, jurists, organizers, poets, musicians, historians, lawyers, generals, and men of prominence in every walk of life. But the most outstanding characters of sacred history, the most revered names in the Biblical hall of fame, are those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The seers of the ages not only give these persons honorable mention; they also record the fact that these patriarchs have an unusual standing in this life, and they are to be given a prominent position in the life to come.

God Himself, in speaking through His inspired messengers, expresses a relationship between heaven and these forefathers of the Jewish race which is most interesting. When Moses was called at the burning bush of Horeb to become God's special messenger to interview the king of Egypt in behalf of the release of the Hebrew people, the Lord said to him: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Ex. 3:6.

On inquiring of the Lord what answer he should give the Israelites, were they to ask him who authorized his commission, he was told: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations." Ex. 3:15.

To quiet his fears should his authority be challenged when he approached the leaders of Israel, the Lord gave to him certain unusual signs (Ex. 4:1-4), "that they may believe

that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." Ex. 4:5.

### The God of Their Fathers

This relationship between the Lord and the patriarchs had become so well established in the minds of their descendants that it had been generally accepted that the God of heaven was the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Prophets and messengers repeatedly declare that Jehovah is the God of the patriarchs, and the Scriptures abound with the expression that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even in the New Testament, where apostles and disciples exalt the Saviour as the Son of the living God, they refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the fathers, and to Jehovah as the God of the patriarchs. Luke 1:55, 72; Acts 3:13, 25; 7:32.

The Saviour made honorable mention of these saints of God, and spoke of their exalted position in the future glorious kingdom. Our Lord said: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 8:11.

There had been embedded in the hearts of the descendants of the patriarchs such a firm and perennial assurance of God's promises to their ancestors, that they could never question the important position which God conferred upon these three men.

Just prior to his death, Joseph, the prime minister of Egypt, who could have been buried in Egypt amid the greatest pomp and royal splendor which the Pharaohs were able to bestow, bequeathed this legacy to his brethren.

He said: "I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Gen. 50:24, 25.

## What Gave the Patriarchs Prominence? 25

### Some Reasons for Their Being Honored

The psalmist reminds the children of the patriarchs of what God had done for them, and he gives some of the reasons why He honored their ancestors. David says:

“O ye seed of Abraham His servant, ye children of Jacob His chosen. He is the Lord our God: . . . He hath remembered His covenant forever, . . . which covenant He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: . . . when they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reproveth kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” Ps. 105:6-15.

God had made a covenant with the fathers of the Jewish race. He made this covenant with them because they so highly honored Him. They were so loyal and devoted, they so harmonized with His will, that He assured them He would never forget or fail them.

In explaining to the Israelites why they were regarded with such favor before God, Moses writes: “The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” Deut. 7:7, 8.

The record declares that when the Lord made choice of Abraham and counseled him to abandon idolatry and forsake his home environs and family influences, “then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, He removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet

He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." Acts 7:4, 5. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Heb. 11:8.

### God Appreciates Faithfulness

The Lord greatly appreciated this prompt response on the part of Abraham. This unwavering act of faith greatly honored the Lord, and He honored His servant for obeying the call. Repeatedly this senior of the three patriarchs promptly heeded the call of God, until Heaven had proved that Abraham was trustworthy. This confidence in the patriarch was fully manifest at the time when the divine messengers were on their way to destroy the cities of the plain. Before they put into effect their errand of destruction, the Lord said to the celestial beings who accompanied Him: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Gen. 18:17-19.

Then it was that the patriarch stood before the Lord and pleaded for the inhabitants of those wicked cities. Abraham was assured that for his sake those wicked centers would not be destroyed if there could be found ten righteous persons in them. Gen. 18:23-32. To such an extent does God honor men who are loyal and true to His call.

When Isaac was about to enter Egypt, to follow in the footsteps of his father, who previously had gone to the land of the Pharaohs at a time of famine, this word of the Lord came to him: "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with

## What Gave the Patriarchs Prominence? 27

thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Gen. 26:1-5.

Isaac heeded the command of God. He did not enter the land of Egypt. He remained in Gerar. He followed the path of obedience which his forefather had trodden. He learned the lesson of obedience early in life. If he had not early been taught to respect his father's commands, how could Abraham have undertaken to offer Isaac upon the altar of sacrifice? If the young man had refused to permit his father to lay him on the altar, what could the aged patriarch have done? Isaac learned to respect his father's wishes; he also recognized his obligations to God. The Lord was greatly pleased with this attitude of Isaac. God greatly honored him for this faith.

### Jacob Is Given Assurance

When Jacob was on his way to his uncle Laban, the Lord visited him in the night season, and said to Jacob in a dream: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Gen. 28:13-15.

At the time when the famine raged throughout Canaan and in other countries, and Joseph sent for his father to come

to Egypt, where he would care for him and for the rest of the family, then "God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again." Gen. 46:2-4.

Jacob implicitly obeyed God's instruction. He entered Egypt with his family, as he was commanded. Jacob did not hesitate or falter. Although he was anxious to see his long-lost son, Joseph, Jacob desired divine assurance that God was with him. He was willing to make the journey, though he knew that Isaac was warned not to go to Egypt. God commanded him to go; he would not fail to obey the Lord's word to him.

These three men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, greatly honored their God in responding to His commands. It is true they had their weaknesses as other men have; but they were men of faith, they were men who quickly responded to the wishes of Heaven. By so doing, they manifested their faith and confidence in God at a time when all about them idolatry and heathenism were in the ascendancy. They made the God of heaven their counselor, and the Lord entered into a covenant relationship with them which will be binding throughout eternity.

Of this relationship between God and Abraham, it is written: "But thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend." Isa. 41:8. "Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever?" 2 Chron. 20:7.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob became the progenitors of the faithful of all times. These holy men of God, because of their devotion and loyalty to the God of heaven, are recognized as the fathers of prophets, apostles, Jews, Christians, saints, and martyrs of all ages.

## CHAPTER IV

### A NEW NATION PLANNED

**I**N making choice of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as national founders, the Lord was planning a new type of nation. When the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, the Lord created one man and one woman. God did not create in the beginning a multitude of men and women. He did not originate nations at the birth of the world. The Creator desired man to understand his personal and individual responsibility.

After sin entered this planet, mankind became degenerate in so short a period of time that the Lord decided, for the good of man himself, that the human race should be wiped out of existence. Of the depth of this degeneracy, the Sacred Record states "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6:5.

Man had reached such a state in his evil tendencies that "the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Gen. 6:11-13.

The deluge destroyed from off the earth every living being, with the exception of righteous Noah, his family, and the creatures which were with him in the ark.

#### After the Flood

After the flood, Noah was commanded to replenish the earth. Gen. 9:1. The patriarch was assured that a flood

would never again destroy the earth. To certify to Noah and to his posterity this faithful promise, God placed in the heavens the bow of promise. Gen. 9:8-17.

By the descendants of Noah the earth was divided, and nations originated. Of the division of territories among these people, the record says: "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood." Gen. 10:32.

Despite the immutable promises of God to the children of men following the deluge, the nations at an early date forgot God and His kindness; and idolatry soon took possession of the people. They abandoned their Creator and preserver, and yielded themselves to vile heathenism. Joshua 24:1, 2.

After Abraham had accepted the call from heaven to be God's servant, for many years he was childless. To him had been repeated the promise that he should possess the land, and he was assured he should have posterity. But the patriarch replied to the Lord: "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." Gen. 15:2, 3.

It was difficult for this man of faith to grasp the meaning of the promise which had been repeated to him of possessing both country and posterity, when thus far he had no children of his own. Abraham did not question God's promises; but how could those assurances come to pass under such seemingly hopeless circumstances?

Many times the promise was repeated to him that he should become the father of many nations. Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17. When the Lord revealed Himself to the patriarch, reiterating the assurance that he should have a multitude of posterity who should inherit the land, the latter appealed to God that the child of Hagar might be the promised heir.

Abraham said: "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!

“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.” Gen. 17:18, 19. The promise to Abraham that he should have a son of his own, when he was now almost a century old, caused him to laugh; for it is written: “Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?” Gen. 17:17.

Yet the Lord assured Abraham in regard to Ishmael: “I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.” Gen. 17:20.

However, not from Ishmael or Eliezer, or from any other person connected with Abraham’s household, did God expect to fulfill the promise to His servant in regard to the inheritance and seed, except through the child of his own which should be born of Sarah. It is written: “But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.” Gen. 17:21.

### The Birth of Isaac

Once again the patriarch was visited by the Lord Himself, and he was again assured that a child should be born to Sarah. On this occasion his wife Sarah laughed at the remarkable promise of God. “Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, . . . shall I of a surety bear a child?” Gen. 18:12, 13. It was then that the Lord declared: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Gen. 18:14.

The words “too hard” in the foregoing verse are translated from the Hebrew word *haa-yee-pou-lay*, which means, “too wonderful.” The Lord inquired of these aged people whether there was anything too wonderful for God to perform. Abraham knew that the Lord created the first man,

Adam, from the dust of the ground; he also knew that the Lord made Eve from the side of the man; and cannot God fulfill the promise He made to these people, though they were advanced in years? God desired Abraham to understand that the descendants of this child, Isaac, were not to harmonize with other people in their attitudes toward God.

Of the purpose of God toward the posterity of Isaac, it is written: "Ye are the children . . . of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." Acts 3:25.

Through the child Isaac the Lord was making preparation for a new nation. The people who were to descend from the patriarchs were not to be like the nations about them. God made a covenant with the three patriarchs, and their posterity were to be known as the children of the covenant. The descendants of Noah had forgotten the true God. It is true that a nation here and there did have a measure of the fear of God with them. (See Gen. 20:4-11.) But the nations generally had given themselves up to idolatry.

### God's Promise of a Deliverer

Upon the entrance of sin, the Lord promised to man a Saviour and a Restorer. That the statement in Genesis 3:15 contained the promise of a Saviour is evident from the fact that the first family offered sacrifices to the Lord. (See Gen. 4:3, margin.) They manifested faith in a sacrifice to come. It was essential that this promise of God to the first parents should meet its fulfillment. During the fifteen centuries following creation, the human race became so wicked that the Lord felt compelled to destroy man.

The posterity of Noah through his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, did not worship the true God. Of the descendants of Noah the Lord called Abraham, whom He found willing to serve the true God, and He decided to preserve a posterity through Abraham from whom should come forth the Deliverer and Redeemer.

That this Deliverer must descend from the child Isaac is clear from the following statements of Scripture: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." "For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son." Rom. 9:7, 9.

"The Scripture . . . preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. 3:8, 16.

In regard to the children of Isaac, we are told: "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob." Mal. 1:2. "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; . . . it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Rom. 9:10-13.

To the patriarch Jacob, the Lord said: "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation." Gen. 46:3.

The nation the Lord was preparing through the seed of the patriarchs was to be of a different order from the nations which were then in existence. This nation would derive its prestige, its success, its prosperity, and its authority from the God of the patriarchs. No territory was as yet possessed by the patriarchs, when the Lord called them to follow Him; for of the three men Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob it is written:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Heb. 11:8, 9.

**Abraham Burying Sarah**

When Abraham's wife, Sarah, died, he sought a place for her burial. Abraham himself acknowledged: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Gen. 23:4.

From the children of Heth, Abraham purchased a field in which to bury Sarah. Abraham also is buried in that same field, with the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob. Gen. 49:29-32.

The new nation was not yet born. Its future was in preparation. Its territory was sure, but it was not yet needed. The promise to Abraham that his son Isaac would become a great and a mighty people must be fulfilled. God would not fail the patriarchs in the promise He had made them. A people must come, descendants of Isaac, who would be children of the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through this people would be given to the world the great Deliverer.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GROWTH, SLAVERY, AND DELIVER- ANCE OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE

**I**T was the famine in the land of Canaan which led the patriarch Jacob to enter the country of the Pharaohs. At the time he wended his way with his family into Egypt to be nourished by his son Joseph, prime minister of the country, more than two hundred years had passed since the original call came to Abraham that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. Abraham was seventy-five years of age when he received the call from God to leave home and friends. Gen. 12:4. This man was a century old when his son Isaac was born. Gen. 21:5. The latter was sixty years of age when Rebekah gave birth to Jacob and Esau. Gen. 25:26. When Jacob entered Egypt and was introduced to the king by Joseph, the patriarch told Pharaoh he was one hundred and thirty years old. Gen. 47:9. Two hundred and fifteen years had come and gone from the call of Abraham to the time when his grandson, with his family, arrived in Egypt.

During these two centuries and more, the descendants of the patriarchs had not greatly increased in numbers. For says the Sacred Record: "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, . . . were threescore and six; and the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten." Gen. 46:26, 27.

The Lord had promised the three patriarchs that their posterity should be as numerous as the sand of the sea, and should multiply as the stars of heaven. Gen. 22:17; 26:4.

Furthermore the promise was made most emphatic to Abraham that in the fourth generation his posterity should be a freed people from the land of their slavery. Gen. 15:16. But after two hundred and fifteen years had elapsed, there were only seventy persons who entered the land of the Pharaohs.

### The Hebrew People Are Enslaved

The Egyptian king who made Joseph prime minister was kind and gracious to Joseph's relatives. They were given a productive portion of land in Egypt where they were to settle; here they had ample opportunity for development; they were supplied with every need for growth and advancement. For says the Scripture: "Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell." "And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families." Gen. 47:5, 6, 11, 12.

Joseph had been a deliverer to Pharaoh; and to all the peoples of Egypt. This fact the Egyptian king recognized, and he expressed his appreciation for all that Joseph had done for him, for his people, and for his country. During the seven years of the famine, Joseph had manifested fine administrative ability in behalf of Egypt. Before the famine ended, the people had been cared for, and the entire country became the possession of the crown.

It would seem that Joseph's benefactions toward Egypt should have been held in high esteem by successive rulers of the Pharaohs after the death of Joseph; but such was not the case. The Scripture states: "And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and

waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." Ex. 1:6-8.

This new king failed to recognize or appreciate the devotion and faithfulness of Joseph toward Egypt. This monarch was severe and stern toward Joseph's relatives, and he undertook a cruel program. Says the record: "He said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." Ex. 1:9-11.

The Israelites had become fruitful in the land, and the population greatly increased. Instead of cooperating with them, the new king decided to enslave them, and he placed taskmasters over them. The Israelites became a race of serfs under the Egyptian monarch. In the era which followed, the treatment of the Israelites was harsh and abusive. It is written: "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor." Ex. 1:13, 14.

Without doubt, it was Pharaoh's plan in forcing these people into a state of slavery to diminish their numbers, in order that they might become a weak minority. The king wanted to crush the race, and eventually to destroy them. But God had planned otherwise. The record declares: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel." Ex. 1:12.

A plan for their extermination was then devised by the Egyptian king. Pharaoh decided that extreme and stern

measures must be followed, if he were to succeed in putting these people out of existence. The king ordered the Hebrew midwives to put every male child to death at its birth; but these women feared God. These godly women knew that a day of deliverance was ahead of them. They understood the promises which God had made to their ancestors that they should become a mighty nation. Instead of heeding the counsel of the king, they maintained their faith in the living God.

Pharaoh became furious in his purpose to kill off the male Hebrew children. He then gave strict orders to the Egyptians, "saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." Ex. 1:22. But even this cruel system was not successful. The Lord overruled by His providence all these devices of the king, and the children of Israel prospered and grew.

### The Israelites Cry to God

This cruel Egyptian king died. Ex. 2:23. In the meantime the Lord preserved alive the child Moses, who was reared in the palace of the king of Egypt. Moses became well acquainted with the ways and customs of the Egyptian people. The Israelites now cried to the Lord for deliverance. They knew that their ancestors had assured them they would be delivered from the land of Egypt, and the hard labor of these poor slaves had well-nigh broken their spirit. They began to wonder whether the promises of deliverance by the God of heaven left them by their forefathers would ever be fulfilled. The Scripture says: "Their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." Ex. 2:23, 24.

God does not forget. He always remembers the promises He has made. When the time arrives for the fulfillment of His prediction, the Lord is always prepared to meet the obligation.

The time was drawing near when these slaves were to

leave the land of their serfdom, and, despite all that the Egyptians undertook for their destruction, "when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt." Acts 7:17.

In response to the appeals of the people for help and deliverance, the Lord called Moses to interview Pharaoh, and to demand of the king that he release the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

First Moses met the leaders of the Israelites, and encouraged them to believe that God was about to visit them, and to fulfill the promises that He made to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This information brought hope and joy to the hearts of these poor downtrodden serfs, and they rejoiced that the day of deliverance was nigh at hand. The Israelites had also been assured that when they left the country, they would go with the wealth and property of the Egyptians; for the Lord had said to Moses: "I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall borrow [Hebrew, solicit] of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment." Ex. 3:21, 22.

### **Pharaoh Increases His Severity Toward the People**

When Moses presented the Lord's demands to the Egyptian king, instead of promising to release the people from their slavery, Pharaoh increased their labor and his cruelty toward them. The king said to Moses: "Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens." Ex. 5:5.

The Israelites during the years of their hard labor in Egypt had largely lost the knowledge of the true God and of His worship. Moses informed the leaders of the Israelites that they must return to the service of the true God. The elders of Israel encouraged the people to observe God's holy day, the true Sabbath of the Lord. The taskmasters appointed

over the Israelites reported to Pharaoh that the people were refusing to labor on the seventh day. This made the king angry. He commanded the taskmasters, saying: "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words." Ex. 5:7-9.

With the increase of hardship now laid upon the poor Israelites, they felt that the coming of Moses to them with the promise of deliverance increased their labor and their slavery. Their hearts fainted. They accused Moses of putting a sword in the hand of Pharaoh to slay them. Ex. 5:20, 21. Moses returned unto the Lord with a most pathetic appeal from the burdened Israelites, and told Him that the condition of the people had been made worse since his errand to Pharaoh.

### God Plagues the Egyptians

Then Moses was assured that the Lord had not deserted His people. God was giving Pharaoh an opportunity to save himself and the Egyptians a great deal of perplexity and sorrow, if they only would hearken to the voice of God through Moses. The Lord told His servant: "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." Ex. 6:1.

The Lord assured Moses that He appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Almighty God, and He was now to exert this might in behalf of their posterity as He had assured them. Ex. 6:2, 3. Repeatedly Moses went to Pharaoh with the command to let the Israelites leave Egypt. But the monarch insistently refused. His impertinence he expressed in these words: "Who is the Lord, that I should

obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Ex. 5:2.

Following this insult by the king against the God of heaven, Egypt was repeatedly plagued, until the hosts of Egypt begged the king to release the Israelites and let them go free. The record says: "Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" Ex. 10:7.

The Lord wanted His people while in Egypt to learn His care over them. He desired them to understand that He had a tender regard toward them, while He was plaguing their enemies. The Scripture says that the plagues which fell upon the Egyptians did not come upon the Israelites, or upon that portion of Egypt where they dwelt. Ex. 8:22.

The time had about arrived when the Israelites were to leave the country. For this event they were to prepare by the observance of the Passover. Exodus 12. One more plague was to be poured upon Egypt; then the people would be released, and the Egyptians would insist that they leave the country immediately. God wrought marvelously for His people. When the death angel passed over the houses of the Egyptians and left the first-born dead in every home, from the palace of the king to the humblest hovel of the poorest peasant, and in the stables of the cattle, there was a united cry that reached heaven from the whole of the Egyptians. There was one name on the lips of all the people, and that name was "Moses."

"Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses, . . . and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that

they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men." Ex. 12:30-33.

God's promise was literally fulfilled. He assured Moses that the time would come when the Egyptians would drive the people out of their land. The very time when the people should be delivered from their slavery as the Lord had promised Abraham, met its actual fulfillment; for it is written: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Ex. 12:40, 41.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HEBREW RACE A DISTINCT PEOPLE

**I**N making bare His arm for the deliverance of the Israelites from the land of their serfdom, it was God's plan that this people should be an entirely different nation from any then in existence. A particular mark of distinction was evident when they were commanded to observe the Passover annually. This feast was to be commemorated by their posterity. It must be preserved from generation to generation. Father must always tell the son the meaning of this service; and in this way the race would ever keep alive this most outstanding ceremony.

The chief feature of the Passover was the slain lamb, whose blood must be sprinkled on the lintel and on the doorposts of the houses. Because of this procedure, the generations to come would ever remember the purpose of God in instituting this feast. Exodus 13.

Immediately following their deliverance from Egypt, the Lord indicated His attitude toward them by leading them day and night in a miraculous manner. The pillar of cloud was their guide by day, and the pillar of fire illumined their journeys by night. There was never an hour, either by day or by night, when the people were left without a visible token of the presence of God with them. They had every indication that they were especially cared for by the One who delivered them from the land of their slavery. Ex. 13:20-22. The Red Sea was miraculously divided for them, in order that they might escape from their cruel taskmasters for the last time. Moses said to the Israelites, just before the path into the Red Sea was opened for them to pass through dryshod, "The Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them

again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Ex. 14:13, 14.

### The National Distinction

At the encampment before Sinai, Moses was commanded of God to explain to the people the marks of distinction of their nationality. The record says: "Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak ~~upon~~ <sup>unto</sup> the children of Israel." Ex. 19:3-6.

Let it be noted that the Lord did not say to them that they would be a nation of wealth, or a nation of warriors, or a nation of statesmen, or a political nation. They were neither called nor set aside for any such purposes; they were chosen to be a holy nation. The Israelites were to be a kingdom of holy people, they were to be a nation who especially were to be obedient to God's requirements. They were commanded to listen to the voice of God. If they would heed the words of God and would follow implicitly His requirements, then they would be a holy nation. In no other sense were the descendants of Abraham chosen as a nation. Their distinction as a race was to be marked by their loyalty to the commands of God.

### Israel's Response

After Moses had explained to the congregation the words of the Lord, the people responded: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Ex. 19:8.

God had not yet told them what He demanded of them,

nor had He explained to them His voice; but they claimed to be so in harmony with His will that they unitedly placed themselves on record that whatever the Lord would require of them they were ready to do.

The people were then commanded to prepare to hear the voice of God. They were to understand what was involved in the statement made by the Lord to Moses, "If ye will obey My voice indeed." Jehovah came down upon Mt. Sinai, and declared in the hearing of all the people His immutable decalogue, the ten commandments. This occasion of giving the law of God to the Israelites from the summit of Sinai is said to be the second-greatest event in the history of the world. Says the Scripture: "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" Deut. 4:32, 33.

The people feared and trembled as Jehovah spake to them His divine and unchangeable law. They begged Moses to ask God to refrain from speaking further to them. They appealed to their visible leader to talk with them. Ex. 20:18-20. But Moses had not chosen them as *his* nation; the Lord had. They promised to hear the voice of God; the Lord now was testing them; He was placing before them what was involved in their response that they would do all that the Lord commanded to them.

### The People Confirmed in Their Nationality

Following the giving of the ten commandments, Moses was again called to be with the Lord. During this period of communion with God, many statutes and judgments were given to Moses to be passed on to the Israelites. These further instructions were also included in the demand that they obey His voice and keep His covenant.

When Moses told the people all these additional words of the Lord, they "answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Ex. 24:3.

Moses then undertook to confirm the people as God's distinct nation, in the following manner: "Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Ex. 24:6-8.

Israel now had become God's distinct nation. They had accepted God's terms of being His people. They were confirmed in this nationality by the blood sprinkled on them. They now were the chosen generation, the royal people, the holy nation. The covenant between them and God had been ratified. They had placed themselves on record as being willing to heed all that the Lord demanded of them. They promised to be an obedient nation, assuring God of their purpose to do His will, whatever the Lord asked of them.

God did not make many demands upon them. The Israelites were not asked to perform some great feat, in order to be assured of the continued favor of God. They were promised by the Lord that He would especially favor them; they would be His peculiar treasure, and they were to take heed, and carry out whatever He demanded of them.

### Feasts and Ceremonies

To further encourage them in the choice they had made of following the Lord and of being His special people, they were given a series of festivals and ceremonies, in addition to the Passover service inaugurated at the time of their deliverance from Egypt. These feasts were not given to other nations and peoples. They were especially given to the descendants of the patriarchs. In offering this people these

particular services—the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, the Blowing of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles—the Lord was not showing partiality; for He had included in His instruction to this people the following:

“There shall no stranger eat thereof: but every man’s servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. . . . And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.” Ex. 12:43-49. (See also Num. 15:13-16.)

Persons of other nations and peoples were permitted to join themselves to this nation, provided they, too, would follow the instruction given to the Israelites. The Lord desired to have a special, distinct, and peculiar nation who would give heed to His instructions and counsels; and it was such a people that God expected the descendants of Abraham to be.

That the outstanding demand of God from this people was their loyalty to His commands is plainly stated by a later prophet, many centuries after, in the following language: “I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” Jer. 7:22, 23.

#### Promises Made to the Israelites

If that people would only take heed to the commands of God, they were given many outstanding promises of greatness, of wisdom, of wealth, and of influence. For it is written:

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even

as the Lord my God commanded me. . . . Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Deut. 4:5-8.

"For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Deut. 7:6-8.

"It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee. . . . Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. . . . And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath." Deut. 28:1-13.

All these national promises were based on the idea of the people's obedience. These assurances were not given unconditionally. The Lord would not fail to fulfill His word, if the nation harmonized with the conditions; but if the people failed to heed the voice of God, they had no reason to believe that the Lord would everlastingly grant them heaven's choicest gifts, as will be observed from the following guiding principles: "Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O

house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." Jer. 18:5-10.

It is true the Lord is long-suffering, kind, gracious, merciful, and full of compassion and pity. If the people depart from Him, He will continue to call after them, appeal unto them, and seek to encourage them to obey His voice. If, however, they persist in not listening to His word and continue to depart from His sacred precepts, He is compelled to carry out His word, and give to the people the results of their own career. They must eat of the fruit of their own doings.

## CHAPTER VII

### POSSESSING THE PROMISED LAND

**T**HE patriarch Abraham was told that when his descendants were delivered from the land of slavery, they would become inheritors of the land which was promised to him. Gen. 15:18-21. At the time of the call of Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he was informed that the people were to inherit the land of Canaan. Here is the word of the Lord: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Ex. 3:7, 8.

In reviewing their history in later years, Moses, when referring to their experience of deliverance from the Egyptians, reminded the Israelites: "The Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He sware unto our fathers." Deut. 6:22, 23.

#### Journeying to the Land of Canaan

According to the statistics recorded in the book of Numbers, after the first census of the Israelites was taken in the early days of the wilderness sojournings, there were 603,550 male adults over twenty years of age who came forth from the land of Egypt, besides some 22,000 Levites. (See Num. 1:44-46, 47-49; 3:14-16, 39.)

The journey from Rameses in Egypt to Kadesh-barnea,

the border of the Promised Land, was not such an extremely long one. Num. 33:3, 5; Deut. 1:19-21. The distance could have been covered, by a straight route, in about three weeks. (See Deut. 1:2.) The Lord did not lead them by the shortest route, but He directed their course by a circuitous one, as may be seen from the following statement:

“It came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.” Ex. 13:17, 18.

With their flocks and their herds the journey necessarily would be a slow one; yet it could have been accomplished in less than a month.

The people had not traveled far when they began murmuring against the Lord and against Moses. Ex. 16:1-3. The Lord listened to their cries, and gave them bread and water. But the Israelites continued to express their complaints, until Moses asked them why they blamed him and his brother, Aaron. Ex. 16:8. The murmurings and complaints increased. Instead of the people being grateful that the Lord was with them, they constantly murmured and complained until they reached a crisis in their experience. Ten times during their brief journeyings in the wilderness they rebelled and complained against God's leading, until they reached the climax of their rebellings. Num. 14:22, 23.

The people had arrived at the border of the Promised Land. Moses told them they had better now take possession of the land. Deut. 1:19-21. Instead of following this counsel, they demanded that a commission be sent to investigate the conditions of the country and bring back a report to them before they proceeded. In view of their previous experiences in the wilderness, it was not wise to send such a delegation. They were controlled by a dissatisfied disposition

against the Lord and against His leadership; under such conditions to send a delegation to make investigations of the country was not advisable.

The Lord had already promised them that He would drive out the giants from the country. God knew that the people would have trouble reaching those Anakim with their means of warfare. So He told them He had other means whereby He would expel those giants from their forts and their caves. The Lord said unto them: "I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." Ex. 23:27-30.

They need not have entertained any fears of conquering the country, in view of such assurances given them; nevertheless they demanded that an investigation committee be appointed to spy out the land. Moses responded to their request at the command of God. Deut. 1:22; Num. 13:1-3. The commission was gone forty days, but they returned with a divided report. The majority report was a most discouraging and disheartening one; it was an evil report. They had brought of the fruit of the land, and the fruit was beautiful. The committee admitted that it was a wonderful land, and that all that had been told of it was true—it was a land flowing with milk and honey. But they reported that they saw giants. These giants evidently frightened them, for they said the children of Israel were unable to possess the land. As they described the kind of people they saw, and their strongholds, the hearts of the congregation melted; and they at once became frightened and discouraged.

The minority, Caleb and Joshua, stilled the people. They

told the audience that the land could be conquered. They said they were well able to go up and possess the land, for the Lord God was with them. They remembered the promises made to them some time previous, that the Lord had hornets stored away to drive out the Canaanites from their haunts, and they advised that the people make immediate preparations to go and take possession of the land. A most singular scene now took place. Says the Scripture: "All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night." Num. 14:1.

The Israelites were so rebellious at heart that, in view of the majority report, they were ready to stone the two who presented so favorable a report. The people did not want to go to the Promised Land. A rebellion at once broke out in the camp, and confusion and excitement followed. Num. 14:4, 9. Joshua and Caleb appealed to the people not to give credence to the majority report, for the Canaanites were defenseless, they said; God was with His people. Nevertheless the report of the ten spies prevailed, and the people refused to listen to Moses, or to Joshua and Caleb.

The congregation was about ready to stone Joshua and Caleb for bringing such encouraging words. And now the Lord Himself appeared and manifested His glory. He announced to Moses that the people could not and would not enter that land, for they had despised the words of the Lord. The Lord would have destroyed the entire congregation had not Moses appealed to Him to have mercy upon them, and for His own sake save the nation. Moses reminded the Lord of His former expression of long-suffering and patience. Most pathetically did Moses pray that for His own name's sake the Lord would forgive the people for this terrible sin.

The Lord heard this prayer of Moses', and He told him that although He had pardoned the sin, that generation would not be permitted to enter the Promised Land. God had journeyed with them a long time. They had murmured and rebelled against Him ten times. Inasmuch as they insisted

that they did not want to enter the Promised Land, God said their request would be granted them.

Said the Lord to Moses: "Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." Num. 14:28-31.

God gave to them their hearts' desire. They reaped the fruit of their own course. The Lord was eager to bring them into the land. He made every possible provision for their success; but they failed to accept His word, and they refused to heed His voice.

In speaking of this very experience, the psalmist says: "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness." Ps. 106:24-26.

### **Their Posterity Possess the Land**

The Lord said that the course the nation took compelled Him to break His promise. The Scripture declares: "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise." Num. 14:34.

However, God would not fail to fulfill the promise He had made to the patriarchs that their posterity would possess the land. The Lord planned that this people who were delivered from the land of Egyptian slavery should inherit the

land; but they insisted that they did not want the country. The Lord could not force them to enter. But their posterity, which the murmurers said would fall a prey to the heathen in Canaan, were to inherit the land. (See Num. 14:31-33.)

For thirty-eight years following this experience, the nation wandered in the wilderness. They kept moving from place to place. One sin followed another. Rebellion followed rebellion. Their apostasy and their sins led to their destruction by thousands and tens of thousands, until the entire generation passed off the stage of action. Just before the death of Moses, the leader was commanded to take a second census of the people. He and Eleazar, Aaron's third son, took this second census, and their report is as follows: "These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." Num. 26:63-65.

Moses had to die in the wilderness, because he failed to honor God at the time when he was commanded to speak to the rock, and bring forth water for the people. Instead of speaking to the rock, he smote it twice, and he was told that because of his failure to glorify God, he, too, must die in the wilderness. Num. 20:12; 27:12-14.

After the death of Moses, the Lord appeared to Joshua, who was appointed to succeed Moses, and He said to him: "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all

the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." Joshua 1:2-4.

Here again the Lord describes to Moses' successor the territory He has given to the children of Israel. Joshua now must lead the forces to inherit the country. At once the new commander sends word to the officers of the nation: "Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land." Joshua 1:11.

The people make preparation, and they are told that as God wrought wonders for their ancestors, so the Lord would work wonders for them. It is written: "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Joshua 3:5.

When the Israelites murmured in the wilderness, and failed to enter the Promised Land, they separated themselves from being God's people. They had promised the Lord that they would listen to all that He had to say to them. But they did not listen. So for thirty-eight years in the wilderness neither circumcision, the sign of the covenant, or the Pass-over, the outstanding memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, was observed. Before the present generation could enter the Promised Land, their covenant relationship with God must be recognized and observed. Hence we read: "At that time [after the people crossed the Jordan] the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. . . . And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war . . . were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord. . . .

And their children, whom He raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. . . . And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month." Joshua 5:2-10.

### Joshua Heeds the Command of God

Joshua entered upon the campaign of securing for the Israelites the Promised Land. This warrior, the new leader of Israel, was commanded to follow carefully and closely the instructions the Lord had given to Moses. He was told not to turn to the right hand or to the left. If he expected success, he must carry out in detail what the Lord had commanded Moses. Joshua 1:5-9. As long as Joshua followed this counsel, it went well with him. Num. 27:18-22. On one occasion he failed to heed the instruction given him of God through Moses, and as a result he brought difficulty and perplexity to the whole camp. Joshua 9:3-14. However, it is evident that it was Joshua's purpose to be true to God and faithful to the instructions left him by Moses; for we often meet with such expressions during the career of Joshua: "As the Lord commanded Moses His servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." Joshua 11:15.

The people gave Joshua good cooperation in the carrying out of the instruction of the Lord; but Joshua aged, and the land was not all conquered. Hence we read:

"The Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." "Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh." Joshua 13:1, 7. "And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, . . . distributed for inheritance to them. By lot was their inheritance, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses, for the

nine tribes, and for the half tribe. For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and a half tribe on the other side Jordan. . . . As the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land." Joshua 14:1-5. "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. . . . There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." Joshua 21:43-45.

When the land was finally divided, it was the work of the tribes to expel the heathen from the territory, and occupy the Promised Land for themselves. Joshua then called a conference of the nation, and he laid before them the work they must do, in order to complete the task.

Joshua said: "Ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is He that hath fought for you. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward. And the Lord your God, He shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you. Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: but cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day. For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day." Joshua 23:3-9.

Joshua then reminded the people what would happen to them if they did not heed the counsel from God which he gave to them: "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves,

that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you." Joshua 23:11-13.

Then Joshua again reminded them of God's faithfulness in fulfilling all He had promised. Joshua said: "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Joshua 23:14.

A final conference was convened by the aged warrior, and the parting word before his death was left with the nation.

Joshua said: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, . . . I took your father Abraham, . . . and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed. . . . And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, . . . and I delivered them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you; . . . but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them. . . . Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity. . . .

"And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, . . . and the Lord drave out from before us all the people; . . . therefore will we also serve the Lord; for He is our God. . . .

"And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses

against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance." Joshua 24 :2-28.

#### **A United Testimony That God Had Fulfilled His Promise**

From these words of Scripture it is evident that Joshua and all the people recognized that all the Lord had promised regarding giving them the land of Canaan as a possession in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, He had actually fulfilled. The entire nation testified that not one word of all which had been promised had failed. Joshua 21:45. The land which had not yet been conquered from the enemy nations was divided to the tribes. It devolved upon the people to carry out the instruction God had given to them; then their enemies would be destroyed. The Israelites came into possession of the land. It would have been an easy task to become masters of all the country, if only they had heeded the instruction left with them from the mouth of the Lord.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ISRAELITISH NATION REACHES ITS ZENITH OF POWER AND GLORY

**F**OR a period after the death of Joshua, the nation gave heed to the warnings and admonitions left with them, and they enjoyed the fruits of their possession. The record says: "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel." Joshua 24:31.

The tribes decided to complete their victory over their enemies. It is written: "Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand." Judges 1:1, 2.

The people were blessed and prospered. The Lord gave them great victories, as long as they continued to follow His instruction. Tens of thousands of the heathen peoples were destroyed, and the Israelites took possession of their lands. For the record says: "The Lord was with Judah." "And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the Lord was with them." Judges 1:19, 22.

#### The People Backslide

Not many years later, however, a change came over the people. We read: "An angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your

fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed My voice: why have ye done this?" Judges 2:1, 2.

A spirit of backsliding had taken possession of the people. They had become unmindful of the commands of God, and failed to continue to heed His word. The record says: "And Joshua the son of Nun . . . died. . . . And they buried him in the border of his inheritance. . . . And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel." Judges 2:8-10.

What then happened unto the people is stated as follows: "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them." Judges 2:11-14.

Joshua, before his death, had warned the people: "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good." Joshua 24:20.

Because the people had forsaken the Lord, and had given themselves up to the worship of heathen deities, the angel of the Lord said unto them: "Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you." Judges 2:3.

From this time and onward, it was a much more difficult task for the Israelites to overcome their enemies, and to drive them out of the country. For four centuries the nation had a decidedly checkered career. When the land was taken from

them by the heathen, because of their evil ways, they cried unto the Lord, and God was merciful to them. He would raise up a deliverer. For a time, as long as the deliverer was among them, the people would serve the Lord. As soon as the deliverer was dead, they again turned to the vanities and follies of heathen worship. The nation had fallen into a state of apostasy and degradation. Evil customs had so possessed them that an entire tribe was well-nigh obliterated from among them.

### **The Spirit of Prophecy Restored to the Nation**

While, during these centuries of apostasy, the nation was visited by angels, messengers, and judges, the prophetic gift, as it was exercised in the days of Moses, had not been with the Israelites for several centuries. In mercy the Lord again raised up a prophet. The Scripture states:

“Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.” 1 Sam. 3:19-21.

The prophet Samuel decided to institute reforms in the nation, in order to bring about a revival and a reformation among the people, if possible. He was particularly interested in the rising generation, and he hoped by establishing schools and religious centers, to influence the younger members of the nation to worship the Lord in deed and in truth. 1 Sam. 7:15-17. The nation had for so long a time been steeped in apostasy and worldliness, that they had largely partaken of the spirit of the heathen nations. Finally the leaders of Israel came to the prophet with a most unusual demand. They said: “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And

the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." 1 Sam. 8:5-7.

Their ancestors had been instructed by Moses that the nation of Israel were a separated people; they were to be unlike the nations about them. God was their ruler. Ex. 33:16; Num. 23:9; Deut. 32:9, 12. This demand that a king rule over them, in order that they might be like the nations around them, was a denial of their divine leadership. Such a demand meant a rejection of God's rule and authority. The Israelites were promised possession and retention of the land of Canaan, on the condition that they would obey the voice of the Lord. Now the nation, through its elders, demanded that another form of government be instituted among them. By this request, they decided to discard the divine plan of government. No doubt this seed of rejection of their God, planted by the elders of Israel, bore fruit for their posterity when, more than a thousand years later, the Sanhedrin refused to have their true King and Messiah reign over them. Luke 19:14, 27.

God did not cast the nation away for demanding a king; but He said to the prophet: "Hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. . . . Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city." 1 Sam. 8:9-22.

## Israel's First King

The Lord chose the first king for them. The Israelites soon discovered that the prophet's predictions of what the king would demand of them were literally fulfilled. Their monarch was arbitrary, disobedient, and domineering. Saul was willing to put his own son to death because the victories wrought by the Lord through Jonathan were not to his liking. Saul was envious, of a sulky disposition, and finally rejected the word of the Lord. He eventually committed suicide. Thus ended the rule of the nation under the first king.

Saul's successor, David, was a different type of man. He was more willing to heed the voice of God in leading the people. He was a man of war. He wrested much of the land of Canaan from the hands of Israel's enemies, and restored it to the people. God greatly prospered David in leading the armies of the nation against the invaders of the country. He added great wealth to the nation; he increased its territorial possessions; he reorganized the priesthood, and brought the Israelites to the place where the nations around them greatly respected them and had confidence in them. He chose a site for the worship of God, so that the nation might have a central place of religious assembly, where the people might carry on their devotions without disturbance.

David greatly loved God, and His service. He determined to make every provision whereby the Israelites might serve the Lord. He decided to erect a most magnificent temple for the worship of God, and to impress upon the Israelites that the service of the true God was greatly superior to that of the heathen nations about them. It was David's plan that the Israelites should be so attracted to the worship of Jehovah, that they would lose all interest in the heathen about them.

David's motives in furthering the service of God, and in arranging for a place of worship for the Most High, were very pleasing to the Lord. 2 Sam. 7:5-17. The Lord sent a message to the king by the mouth of Nathan the prophet, which greatly encouraged David. The heart of David was

thrilled, as the prophet revealed to him what the Lord planned to do for him and for his posterity, if they only would be obedient to the voice of the Lord. To this message of the prophet, David responded. 2 Sam. 7:18-29.

The affections of the king were centered upon the magnificent temple he proposed to erect for the King of heaven. However, the following heavenly word came to David from the Lord: "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight." 1 Chron. 22:8.

### Preparation for the Building of the Temple

The king was in no wise discouraged because the Lord did not permit him to build the temple. The Lord told David that a successor would sit on his throne who should build this temple. David therefore made most elaborate preparation for the erection of this beautiful edifice. We read of David's plans: "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel. . . . And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight. . . . And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death." 1 Chron. 22:1-5.

David prepared in gold and silver alone, according to our currency, almost five billion dollars. In addition to this fabulous sum, David contributed many millions more. The king said: "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things . . . of gold, and the silver for things of silver, . . . the iron, . . . and wood; . . . onyx stones, . . . glistening stones, . . . all manner of precious stones, and marble stones. . . . Moreover, because I have set

my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, . . . and seven thousand talents of refined silver." 1 Chron. 29:2-4.

These last two items mentioned by David amount to upwards of twenty million dollars. The king was so enamored of this house of God that he encouraged the leaders of the people also to contribute.

These great stores of wealth and material David turned over to his son Solomon, and instructed him to add to the amount. The king called upon all the leaders and the congregation to dedicate themselves to the service of God. It was in the heart of the king to place the nation on vantage ground. He was anxious to have the nation turn to the worship of the true God. He desired that Israel should remain a permanent and a stable, holy people. He prayed in part: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee." 1 Chron. 29:18.

### Israel Reaches the Zenith of Its Glory

At the time of David's death, Israel had become the head, and not the tail, of the nations of Canaan. Of the reign of David's son Solomon, the record says:

"Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of King David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel." 1 Chron. 29:23-25.

"Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.

And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life." "For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphseh even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him." "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." 1 Kings 4:20, 21, 24, 34.

"All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year." 2 Chron. 9:23, 24.

Israel now had reached the zenith of her glory. All the land which had been promised the race was in her possession. She sat as a queen among the nations, and she was in a position to influence the heathen nations to the worship of the true God. Public announcement and confession was made that every promise given to the nation had been fulfilled. King Solomon said in his dedicatory prayer of the temple: "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses His servant." 1 Kings 8:56.

The nation was assured that if they heeded the voice of God, it would be well with them. The kingdom was to remain forever, if only God's commands were followed. But the Lord added in His promise: "If ye shall at all turn from following Me, ye or your children, and will not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for My name, will I cast out of My sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people." 1 Kings 9:6, 7.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE NATION DIVIDED

**O**N the accession to the throne of Solomon, the Lord greatly honored the nation through the king. On two occasions the monarch was visited by the Lord, and to him and to the people was promised perpetual nationality, if only the commands and the statutes of the Lord were strictly followed. Said the Lord to the king: "If thou wilt walk before Me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, . . . to do according to all that I have commanded thee: . . . then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel." 1 Kings 9:4, 5.

This assurance should have been a great stimulant to the crown and to the nation, to adhere strictly and closely to the directions of God. A perpetual nation, with an unbroken line of kings, was promised them. The permanency of the magnificent temple would be a constant testimony to the surrounding nations of the blessing of obedience to the God of heaven. Of this beautiful structure, the Lord had said: "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." 1 Kings 9:3.

God furthermore told the king: "But if ye shall at all turn from following Me, ye or your children, and will not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for My name, will I cast out of My sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people." 1 Kings 9:6, 7.

Solomon brought great prosperity to the nation. The people were wonderfully blessed, and civil and religious freedom was enjoyed. Industry and thrift abounded; there was created a large navy, and the ships went to distant lands and ports. An abundance of gold was brought into the country, and the wealth of the nation abundantly increased. Kings, queens, and potentates of many nations visited Jerusalem, and the beautiful temple was much admired by the heathen people. The Scripture says: "So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart." 1 Kings 10:23, 24.

### Solomon Departs From God

But the king did not remain true to his God, for "King Solomon loved many strange women, . . . of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites." 1 Kings 11:1. The result was that "when Solomon was old, . . . his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father." 1 Kings 11:4-6.

This course which Solomon took greatly displeased the Lord. Not only did the king turn away from following the Lord, but his influence also affected the entire nation. The effect of this heathen worship was felt among all the tribes, and apostasy from the worship of the true God soon spread among the people. Of his departure from the right way, the Scripture says: "The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods:

but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." 1 Kings 11:9-11.

This apostasy on the part of the king did result in the division of the nation. Without doubt Solomon had planted the seed of apostasy which inevitably led to the ruin and downfall of the race. Nevertheless the punishment was not meted out at once. The Lord said to him: "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." 1 Kings 11:12, 13.

This once kindhearted, wise, wealthy, and influential king became tyrannical toward his people. This man whom God so graciously visited and endowed with such unusual sagacity and understanding, became a slave to the vile worship of the heathen gods. If we may judge by the teachings recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon doubtless retraced his steps and repented of the evil career he had pursued. But his influence could not be destroyed.

Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam came to the throne. The nation appealed for release from the burdens Solomon placed upon them. Jeroboam waited upon the new king to ask that the burdens be lifted from the people. Rehoboam demanded that he be given three days to consider the proposals. The new king did not follow the advice of the older men, to institute reforms in the nation, but he answered the people roughly, and gave heed to the counsels of the younger administrators of his kingdom. Rehoboam's reply led ten tribes to revolt from the kingdom, and there were left to Rehoboam only two tribes, namely, Judah and Benjamin.

Rehoboam sought to bring back the rebellious tribes by force of arms; but the word of the Lord came to Rehoboam by the prophet: "Speak unto Rehoboam, . . . king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord." 1 Kings 12:23, 24.

### Jeroboam Becomes the First King of the Ten Tribes

The prophet Ahijah, at the command of God, ordained Jeroboam the first king of the ten tribes. God promised Jeroboam that if he would obey the commands of the Lord, he would be given the kingdom of Israel. But Jeroboam discarded the word of the Lord, and immediately plunged the ten tribes into idolatry. Says the Scripture: "The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." 1 Kings 12:28-31.

With one effort, Jeroboam set aside the worship of the true God, and turned all Israel to the worship of heathenism. Israel was now on the road to apostasy and ruin. This first king of the ten tribes set the pace for idol worship, and their descendants for upwards of two centuries continued in departure from God. Idolatrous worship became so prevalent among the people that each succeeding king added to the evil of his predecessor, until in the days of Ahab it was said:

“Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.” 1 Kings 16:33. “There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.” 1 Kings 21:25, 26.

### Samaria Becomes the Capital of the Ten Tribes

When Jeroboam became the king of the ten tribes, he made Shechem the capital of the kingdom; afterward the capital was transferred to Samaria. 1 Kings 15:25; 16:23, 24.

For more than two hundred years the northern kingdom carried on. Their wickedness in the sight of the Lord was so great that many prophets were sent to them with powerful messages from God. The Lord wrought mightily through these seers to bring Israel back to the worship of the true God. In the days of Ahab, the prophet Elijah was sent to him with the announcement that there should be famine and drouth for three years. When the crisis came, Elijah by a miracle proved to the tribes that the Lord is the true God. It seemed that the people would return to the worship of the Lord. But in a short time, they again turned to idolatry. Elijah, Amos, and many other prophets repeatedly called on the king and the people to heed the voice of the Lord, and to cast away their idols. Many promises did the Lord make to Israel of forgiveness and pardon, if they only would seek and serve Him with all their heart.

The ten tribes were threatened with captivity and destruction if they did not return unto the Lord; yet the mercy of God was so great that He repeatedly put off the day of punishment. Finally, there came the last appeal of the prophets, but all to no avail. The Scripture records:

“Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, . . . and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger: for they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

“Yet the Lord testified against Israel, . . . by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them. . . . And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, . . . and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry

with Israel, and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only." 2 Kings 17:5-18.

The ten tribes followed the feasts and customs of the heathen. They carried on exactly the same as did the heathen. There was nothing more the Lord could do with them. They refused to hear His voice. They insisted on doing those things which were abominable in His sight, and they refused to give attention to the words of the Lord. They were now reaping the results of their disobedience. These tribes were carried away by the Assyrian king, and thus came to an end the northern kingdom of Israel. The ten tribes which revolted in the days of King Rehoboam were no more. They rejected their God and identified themselves with the heathen. The Scripture says: "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." 2 Kings 17:22, 23.

Only two now remained of the twelve tribes of Israel, namely, Judah and Benjamin. The Lord cast out the heathen tribes from Canaan and gave the land to Israel. The reason these nations were dispossessed of their land was their vile, abominable practices. The Lord told the Israelites in the wilderness: "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: . . . (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) that the land spew not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep Mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God." Lev. 18:24-30.

These tribes by their acts cut themselves off from being God's people. They were no more entitled to the land than were those nations who were formerly dispossessed. The ten tribes had no further claim upon the land. They rejected the commands of the Lord, and the land spewed them out as it had the former heathen peoples.

## CHAPTER X

### JERUSALEM THE CENTER OF THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD

**T**HE forty years' wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness was no part of the original plan for that people. The Lord told Moses that He purposed to bring the Israelites out of their bondage from Egypt, and bring them into the land that He had promised their ancestors. Ex. 3:8. That generation, in refusing to enter the land of Canaan, created a situation which needed emergency treatment. The Lord is prepared for any and every emergency. So He wrought a daily miracle for them by feeding them with manna, the bread of heaven, and by giving them plenty of water to drink out of the rock which had to be smitten for them. The wilderness in which they spent the four decades of wandering, could furnish them neither food nor drink.

Says the Scripture of that desert land: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, . . . and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know." "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drouth, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint." Deut. 8:2, 3, 15.

#### A Central Place of Worship

While the nation was commanded in the wilderness to carry out the instruction in the observance of the feasts and fasts, it was the Lord's intention to have a special place of worship, where all these services could rightly be conducted.

Moses repeatedly instructed the Israelites in regard to this matter. He said:

“Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.” Deut. 5:1. “Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it.” Deut. 6:1. “Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks. . . . For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you.

“But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you. . . . Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes. . . . Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine; . . . but thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.” Deut. 12:5, 6-18.

“Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover of the Lord thy God.” “Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee: but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.” Deut. 16:1, 5, 6.

Very little is said in the book of Joshua in regard to a

central place of worship for the people of God, before they were through fighting their wars. The record says: "The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" Joshua 18:1-3.

While the people assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle in this place, they had not yet gained complete victory over all their enemies. The land was not yet conquered. It is true that for several centuries Shiloh was the place where the people gathered to worship the Lord, but this was not the central location which Moses commanded the people they were to have; for the Lord Himself was to choose the place. The Lord did meet with His people in Shiloh; for the sanctuary and the ark were here located.

### Jerusalem the City of God's Choice

In sending a message to David through Nathan, the Lord told the prophet to tell the king: "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime." 2 Sam. 7:10.

Of this place which the Lord said He would appoint for His people, we read: "Unto his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a light alway before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen Me to put My name there." 1 Kings 11:36.

Even before the twelve tribes were divided into two kingdoms, the Lord told Jeroboam, whom He had chosen to rule the ten tribes, in regard to His attitude toward Solomon's son Rehoboam: "He shall have one tribe for My servant David's

sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel." 1 Kings 11:32.

Jerusalem originally belonged to the Jebusites, one of the seven nations which the Lord told Moses He would drive out from Canaan, and give their land to Israel. Of the conquering of this tribe by David we read: "The king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David." 2 Sam. 5:6, 7.

Of the building of the temple by Solomon, we read: "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mt. Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." 2 Chron. 3:1.

Of this experience of David, the record says: "God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and He repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces." 1 Chron. 21:15, 16.

David had numbered the people, which he should not have done. When he completed the census, his conscience smote him. He realized that he had disobeyed God. 1 Chron. 21:7, 8. The prophet Gad came to David with a message. "Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. . . . David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the

hand of man. So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men." 1 Chron. 21: 10-14.

David pleaded with the Lord not to destroy the people because of the sin which he had committed, but asked that the plague might fall upon him and upon his family.

The following command came to David: "Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the Lord." "And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the Lord commanded the angel; and he put his sword again into the sheath thereof. At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there." "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel." 1 Chron. 21:18, 19, 26-28; 22:1.

He was impressed that this was the place the Lord had chosen to place His name there. It was then that David decided to erect the temple of the Lord at this place.

However, it should be remembered that there were other hallowed associations of Mt. Moriah. More than eight centuries prior to this experience, the Lord said to Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Gen. 22:2.

It was in this very place that Abraham, in obedience to the command of God, undertook to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. The Lord remembered the spirit of sacrifice of His servant Abraham, as well as the willingness of His servant David to offer unto the Lord what cost him something.

Ornan the Jebusite had offered David the space on which to erect this altar to the Lord without cost. David replied: "I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost." 1 Chron. 21:24.

Because of these hallowed experiences, the Lord chose Jerusalem as the permanent city where His name was to be placed.

### Jerusalem Must Be a Perpetual City

In choosing the city of Jerusalem as a central place of worship, it was the Lord's plan that it should always remain. This place was to be a perpetual center of worship. Says the word of the Lord: "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime." 2 Sam. 7:10.

Shortly after Solomon erected the temple, peoples of all nations flocked to Jerusalem. The city and the temple received world fame, and representatives from the ends of the earth came to this city. Miracles and wonders were wrought for the glory of God among God's people, and the city of Jerusalem became established as the outstanding center of worship of the true God.

To Jeremiah the prophet came this message from the Lord in regard to Jerusalem: "It shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto Me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever." Jer. 17:24, 25.

The false worship introduced by the first king of the

northern kingdom so influenced the ten tribes that the Israelites who followed the apostate leaders never attended worship or offered sacrifices in Jerusalem. After the capital of the ten tribes was established in Samaria, idol worship was conducted, and the law of the true God and His service were well-nigh obliterated from the minds of the people.

Long did God bear with the people in their continued apostasy against the worship of God, in the city which the Lord had chosen. By prophet and by chosen messenger did the Lord send warnings and solemn appeals to His people. When the Lord sent Elijah to bring about a revival and a reformation, the prophet prayed: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." 1 Kings 18:37.

But even then the people did not interest themselves in attending the feasts and the sacrifices in the city of God's choice. Some of the kings of Judah put forth most earnest effort to encourage their brethren of Samaria to worship the Lord at Jerusalem. We read of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah: "Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to Mt. Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers." 2 Chron. 19:4.

Just before the ten tribes were completely captured by the Assyrian king, Hezekiah, king of Judah, put forth a determined effort to encourage the northern tribes to worship the Lord at Jerusalem. It is written: "Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel. . . . And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation. So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long

time in such sort as it was written. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, . . . which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into His sanctuary, which He hath sanctified forever. . . . For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful. . . . So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem." 2 Chron. 30:1-11.

The captivity of the ten tribes soon was completed, and they were scattered throughout the lands of the Assyrians and the Medes.

But Judah also failed to worship the Lord properly in His sacred city. Jerusalem had become very corrupt. The two remaining tribes did not regard sacredly the service of God at Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah warned the people that their dealings with their fellows made void the value of the whole sacrificial system which they offered in Jerusalem. Said the Lord through His prophet: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? . . . I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs. . . . When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me. . . . Your new moons and

your appointed feasts My soul hateth. . . . Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isa. 1:11-17.

Through the prophet Ezekiel came this message, concerning the evils existing in this city: "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." Eze. 16:2. The weeping prophet says of the city: "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned." Lam. 1:8.

To Jeremiah finally came this message, in regard to the future of Jerusalem: "If ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." Jer. 17:27.

The Lord intended to make Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth. Ps. 48:1, 2. He wanted to establish her forever. Jer. 17:25. He planned that she should ever be the city of the great King. Matt. 5:35.

## CHAPTER XI

### SEVEN DECADES OF DESOLATION

**W**HEN the descendants of Abraham were chosen by the Lord as a peculiar people and a holy nation, they were given wise counsels and helpful admonitions. They were assured that if they only heeded these heavenly instructions, they would maintain their holy and sacred relation to the God of heaven. They were repeatedly told that they would ever be an outstanding and a wise people; they were to become a light to enlighten the nations; they were called to be a chosen generation.

This was the word of the Lord to them: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sitteth in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Deut. 6:5-9.

The temple which had been erected, and in which was conducted the true services of God, was accepted of the Lord, and the people were assured: "Now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever: and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." 2 Chron. 7:16.

#### Not to Mingle With the Heathen

In order that the nation might maintain its holy character, and constantly demonstrate before the heathen people

about them that the commands they had received from the Lord were far in advance of the teaching of all other nations, they were repeatedly advised to have nothing in common with the nations about them. They were not to treat their neighboring nations in an unkind manner. But they were not to mingle with them in their social relations. The Lord had said: "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." Lev. 19:33, 34.

The seven nations of Canaan, the Israelites were commanded to destroy utterly. They were instructed to obliterate all forms of heathen worship when they conquered their enemies. Moses said unto the people: "When ye are passed over Jordan, . . . then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places. . . . But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell." Num. 33:51-55.

Under no circumstances were the Israelites to make mixed marriages with the heathen, nor were they permitted to join in any of the heathen festivities. No difficulties would be allowed to perplex the nation if only they would follow closely the instructions the Lord had given to them. For the Lord had said: "If ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, . . . the Lord thy God . . . will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, . . . of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine. . . . Thou shalt be blessed above all people. . . . And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness." Deut. 7:12-15.

If they intermarried with the heathen, the results would be disastrous. "For they will turn away thy son from follow-

ing Me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you." Deut. 7:4.

Because of the mixed marriages among the kings of Israel, the ten tribes became so terribly steeped in idolatry that they were permitted by the Lord to be taken captives. King Ahab's idolatrous relatives intermarried with the kings of Judah, and as a result some of these kings were led into heathenism. The Lord dealt mercifully with Judah and Benjamin. He repeatedly sent messages by the prophets, appealing to the people of Judah to put away heathen worship, and turn to the Lord with all their heart. Some of the kings of Judah heeded the counsel, and sought to lead the people back to the worship of God. Kings Jehoshaphat, Josiah, and Hezekiah introduced reforms to cleanse the temple of the filth and vileness of heathen worship that had been introduced by other kings, but when these kings passed away, idolatry was again instituted. The Scripture says of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, that he "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen; whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." 2 Chron. 33:2.

King Manasseh even went beyond heathen forms of worship; for it is written: "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken." 2 Chron. 33:9, 10.

Yet when the king was in affliction, "he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. . . . And He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom." 2 Chron. 33:12, 13.

The kings who followed Manasseh continued in the worship of the heathen. The prophet Jeremiah made most earnest appeals to the monarchs to turn from their evil ways, or otherwise fearful judgments from the Lord would come

upon the nation. The prophet said to King Zedekiah: "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the Lord hath showed me: and, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes. . . . Thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire." Jer. 38:20-23.

### Heathenism Reaches Its Climax

The entire people had become so steeped in idolatry that through the prophet Ezekiel the Lord said:

"Thus saith the Lord God: This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. And she hath changed My judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and My statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused My judgments and My statutes, they have not walked in them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in My statutes, neither have kept My judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

"And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord God: Surely, because thou hast defiled My sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine

abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall Mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity." Eze. 5:5-11.

Sad indeed was the tragedy which finally overtook the two tribes. Their acts were so shocking that there was no help for them. The Lord seemed unable to encourage them to abandon the false worship of the heathen, and to yield themselves to the God of their fathers. Judah and Benjamin well understood what had overtaken their brothers, the ten tribes; nevertheless they failed to be admonished. They hardened their neck in sin, and refused to heed the voice of the prophets. As a result, terrible punishments were finally meted out to them. It is written: "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." 2 Chron. 36:14-16.

The Lord used every method possible to bring the people back. He was sorry for the course they pursued. He repeatedly urged them to repent, and He assured them that He would fully and freely forgive them. If Judah and Benjamin only would turn their back on idolatry, and again accept the service of God by acknowledging their sins and repenting, the Lord would gladly and willingly pardon and accept them. But Heaven's appeal seemed useless. The nation was bent on backsliding; they were determined to carry out their own will rather than to follow the word of the Lord. They preferred to offer their incense to the sun, moon, and stars, rather than to serve the living God. The Lord was forced to announce that there was nothing more He could do to heal their evil ways. Isa. 5:4.

**Destruction Overtakes the Two Tribes**

“Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand. . . . And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon. . . . To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.” 2 Chron. 36:17-21.

The destruction which overtook the people was terrible. The prophet Jeremiah, in the book of Lamentations, describes what happened to his people:

“Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers’ bosom. What thing shall I take to witness for thee? . . . for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee? . . . The Lord hath done that which He had devised; He hath fulfilled His word that He had commanded in the days of old: He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied. . . . Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward Him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street. Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom Thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long?” Lam. 2:11-20.

The two tribes went into captivity. The people of God, once the chosen nation, were without the worship of the God

of heaven. The sanctuary was no more; sacrifices had been abolished; there was no holy fire; the priests were enslaved; the land had all gone into captivity.

The prophet laments: "He hath violently taken away His tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: He hath destroyed His places of the assembly: the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of His anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off His altar, He hath abhorred His sanctuary." Lam. 2:6, 7.

If the Lord had not promised the people a restoration, this would have been the end of the entire nation. But the prophet had given the tribes assurance, before they were overtaken by the captivity, that at the end of threescore and ten years they again would be visited by the Lord, and would be permitted to return and to conduct their worship in Jerusalem.

During the seventy years in Babylon, the people were unable to sing the songs of Zion. They could not observe their feasts or their festivals. They were unable to carry on the worship of the Lord, as it was their privilege to do when they were in their own land. The Holy Land was desolate; all the palaces were destroyed. The people reaped what they had sown.

## CHAPTER XII

### RETURN AND RESTORATION OF THE EXILES

**B**Y promise, prophecy, and allegory the tribes were assured that they would be freed from their captivity, Jerusalem would be restored, and they would once more be permitted to return to the land of their fathers. Israel, as well as Judah, was promised restoration, as may be seen from the following predictions:

“Lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” Jer. 30:3.

“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.” Jer. 32:37, 38.

“Thus saith the Lord: Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast. . . . Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord.” Jer. 32:42-44.

To Judah and Benjamin was given the particular time

when the exile should terminate. Through Jeremiah the Lord said to that people: "Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." Jer. 29:10.

In the meanwhile the people in their captivity were told to build houses, to plant gardens, to marry, and to pray for the peace of the cities whither they were in captivity. Jer. 29:5-7.

### **An Attempt to Nullify Jeremiah's Prophecy**

Some self-appointed leaders of Judah and Benjamin, who were not in harmony with the word of the Lord, undertook to nullify the message the Lord sent through the prophet Jeremiah. Hananiah, the son of Azur the prophet, declared that he had a message from the Lord which said: "Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place . . . all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon." Jer. 28:3, 4.

This prediction was made in the presence of Jeremiah. However, the testimony of this man in no wise affected the messages which had come to the people through the prophet of the Lord. Jeremiah himself said, "Amen," when Hananiah completed his testimony. Jeremiah wished this prediction might come to pass, if it were true.

"Nevertheless," said Jeremiah, "hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people: the prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him." Jer. 28:7-9.

To emphasize the truthfulness of his message, which Hananiah had delivered in the presence of the prophet Jeremiah and all the people, that in two years from that time the captives would be delivered from Babylon instead of in seven decades as predicted by Jeremiah, Hananiah took from off Jeremiah's neck the yoke he had been wearing, and broke it. He then said: "Thus saith the Lord: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years." Jer. 28:11.

Doubtless this testimony of Hananiah made a deep impression upon the minds of those who heard him. It is doubtful whether Jeremiah was affected by his message. But Hananiah went his way.

Shortly after, came this message to the prophet Jeremiah from the Lord: "Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord: Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him. . . .

"Then saith the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah, . . . Hear now, . . . The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord." Jer. 28:13-17.

Hananiah predicted a speedy deliverance from the captivity in the fifth month, and in the seventh month of the same year he died. Jer. 28:17.

### The Time of Deliverance Arrives

Not only were the people told that their exile would cover seventy years, but the prophet also stated what would take place at the expiration of the seven decades. The Lord pointed out to them through Jeremiah His attitude of pity

and compassion toward the exiles. He desired the people to understand that His heart longed to have them return to the land of their forefathers. The Lord said: "Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." Jer. 29:12-14.

Jeremiah the prophet had predicted the overthrow of Babylon at the end of the seventy years of their exile. God had said through him: "It shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations." Jer. 25:12, 13.

The Scripture says that after Daniel the prophet had interpreted the handwriting on the wall for King Belshazzar, "in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." Dan. 5:30, 31.

Daniel was made prime minister of the Medo-Persian Empire. Soon after King Darius took rule of that empire, the prophet Daniel wrote: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Dan. 9:1, 2.

Daniel had studied the writings of Jeremiah, and he

had there found that the prediction of the seventy years of captivity would end when Babylon should be overthrown. The prophet Daniel also read in Jeremiah's writings that when the period of the exile should terminate, the people would seek the Lord with all their heart. If they would do so, the Lord would be found of them. As soon as Daniel read those words of Jeremiah's prophecy, he at once decided to comply with the instruction, as may be noted from the following: "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Dan. 9:3.

It was customary, in ancient times, for those who sought the Lord with all their heart to fast, and to clothe themselves with sackcloth. Neh. 9:1; Ps. 35:13. Daniel sought the Lord most earnestly that He would remember the Holy City, and would again grant to the people the favor He had promised them. Daniel prayed: "O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us." Dan. 9:16.

Heaven heard this powerful appeal of the prophet Daniel, and in answer to his prayer the angel Gabriel was sent to this man of God. He assured him that he was dearly beloved in heaven.

### **Kings Fulfill God's Word**

Darius the Mede reigned only two years. He was succeeded in the kingdom by Cyrus. There was then brought to the king's attention the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah that named him and pointed him out as God's chosen agent many years before his birth. Here is the prophecy which stated that Cyrus would issue a decree for the restoration of the exiled captives of Israel: "That saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying

to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." Isa. 44:28.

Cyrus was moved to fulfill the will of God. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." Ezra 1:1-4.

In response to this royal decree, tens of thousands of Israelites with their servants left the land of the exile, and started toward their homeland, Palestine. Ezra 2:1-63. The number of people who responded to this decree of restoration was "forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore." Ezra 2:64. Besides these were "seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven" servants and maids, among whom were "two hundred singing men and singing women." Ezra 2:65.

In addition to this decree of restoration of Israel issued by Cyrus, was another issued by King Darius, and a third by King Artaxerxes. The decree of Darius may be found in Ezra 6:1-12; that of Artaxerxes is recorded in Ezra 7:11-26.

These three decrees constitute the fulfillment of the promise of God to restore to the people of Israel and Judah the land of their forefathers, as may be seen by the following scripture: "They builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the

commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." Ezra 6:14.

The kingdoms and dominions under Medo-Persia at this time included all the territory to which the ten tribes and the two tribes had been exiled. Of the captivity of the northern kingdom, the ten tribes, we read: "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." "So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." 2 Kings 17:6, 23.

In the book of Esther we read that the kingdom of Ahasuerus extended "from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces." Esther 1:1.

Of the captivity of Judah and Benjamin, the Lord said through Jeremiah: "So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: and I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them." Jer. 24:8, 9.

The decrees of the three Persian kings for the restoration of the exiles of the entire nation, included all the people in every country to which they had been banished in their captivity. Ample opportunity was fully offered the tribes of Israel and Judah to return to the land of their forefathers. The promise of the Lord to deliver them from all the lands whither they had been driven, and again to place them in the land of their forefathers, was fully accomplished in the commands of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.

### **God Acknowledges the Fulfillment of His Promise**

After the decrees had been issued by Cyrus and Darius, many of the people responded by returning to Jerusalem and Palestine. About this time the prophet Zechariah was called

of God to exercise the gift of prophecy. In vision he was commanded: "Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem." Zech. 1:14-17.

"Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord: I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. . . . Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast. . . . But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . As I thought to punish you, . . . so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not." Zech. 8:1-15.

From the foregoing scriptures it is evident that the Lord acknowledged that He had returned to the land of Israel. He recognized the laying of the foundation of the temple.

## Return and Restoration of the Exiles 101

He restored to the people the gift of prophecy. He planned to do the people a great deal of good. Jerusalem and Palestine would greatly prosper, if the people would only carry out the instruction the Lord had given through the prophets.

In the testimony given by Haggai the prophet, who prophesied at the same time as did Zechariah, the Lord said that the people were not as earnest as they ought to be in the building of the temple. Said the prophet: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" Haggai 1:2-4.

The Lord felt it necessary to scatter the people's prosperity, after He had assured them that He would greatly bless them if they only would attend to His work. Haggai 1:5-11.

The Lord had fulfilled His promises through the prophets in granting the tribes of Israel the privilege of returning to their own land at the close of the seventy years of captivity. Not one word of God's predictions had failed of complete fulfillment. Man does not always appreciate the preciousness of the sure word of God. All the Lord promises He most surely brings to pass. All the tribes of the nation which had been sent into captivity had the opportunity offered them to return to the land of their fathers, if they only would avail themselves of the provision which the Lord made for the restoration. Royal commands were given for the rebuilding of the Holy City and the temple of God, through these decrees issued by the kings of Persia.

## CHAPTER XIII

# ISRAEL PASSES THROUGH A CRITICAL ERA

**I**N view of the promises made to the Israelites upon their return to the Holy Land, a glowing future was ahead of that people. The Lord assured them that He would build them up, increase their posterity, give them a heart to serve Him, and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

There would be no more kings over Israel. With the captivity of Zedekiah and his sons, the monarchy ceased. The prophet Ezekiel said: "Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him." Eze. 21:25-27.

Of the captivity of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah and Benjamin, the Lord says: "So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass." 2 Kings 25:6, 7.

During the captivity and following the restoration, the nation was not abandoned by the Lord. The prophets Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied during the seventy years of exile, and immediately upon the restoration, the Lord raised up several prophets in Israel, among whom were Haggai and Zechariah. The people had now returned to the same rela-

## Israel Passes Through a Critical Era 103

tionship to the Lord that they had enjoyed before the monarchy was introduced in the days of King Saul.

### **The Prophets Encourage the People**

In the rebuilding of the temple and in the reconstruction of the country, the prophets greatly encouraged the people. Messages of cheer and counsel were constantly given, and strong appeals to the returned exiles were made, in order that they might give close attention to the warnings of the prophets. In addition to the prophets, the Lord raised up noble, God-fearing men, whose influence added strength to the work of God. These men were Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and others. The seers, and these devoted leaders, called the attention of the Israelites to the word of God, and to the necessity that reforms should be instituted among the nation. The importance of proper Sabbathkeeping, tithing, and the giving of offerings was emphasized and stressed, and much added divine instruction was presented, in order to prepare the Israelites for the great blessings which the Lord desired to pour upon them.

The sacrificial system and the observance of the feasts at the proper time and in the right manner were given prominence. The priesthood was again honored with due sacredness. During the exile the priests had performed no actual service. No sacrifices were offered during the seventy years' captivity; for the Lord had commanded that no sacrifices should be offered, except in the place He had chosen. This place was Jerusalem.

For about one hundred and fifty years following the decrees of the Persian kings, the prophets were with the people, delivering to them the counsels from the Lord. These messages not only assured the nation of the great prosperity which would be theirs if they obeyed the voice of the Lord, but they also encouraged the people to look forward to the not distant period when Messiah would come. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi united in instructing the people about

the coming of the Lord. If Israel would only heed the divine admonitions, there would be more of the Lord's glory connected with the second temple than there had been with Solomon's temple. Haggai 2:7. The Lord Himself would come to this temple, and He in whom they delighted would appear in person. Mal. 3:1, 2.

### Danger Was Already Apparent

The reformer Ezra had given the nation strong counsel and wise instruction in regard to their future. He saw the possibility of Israel's being again swerved from the path of rectitude. He said in his prayer to God, for the benefit of the people:

"Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth forever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this: should we again break Thy commandments, . . . wouldst not Thou be angry with us till Thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" Ezra 9:12-14.

Before the prophet Malachi passed off the stage of action, the Lord complained that the people did not give Him the honor that belonged to Him and to His service. The sanctuary ministry was being corrupted, the priests were doing despite to the work of God, and they had come to regard the work of the Lord as despicable. Mal. 1:6-8. Everything connected with the service of God had in a measure become commercialized, and spirituality was at a low ebb. The worship of God had become stereotyped, and there was a great lack of earnest and consecrated worship. The blessings which the Lord had planned to shower upon them were to be turned

## Israel Passes Through a Critical Era 105

into curses, because formality was becoming so prevalent. The priests were losing their influence with the people, and the Lord was frowning upon the priesthood.

There seemed to be so great a departure from the will of God, that the services they rendered were a weariness to the Lord. Much deception was being carried on under the guise of religion, and the whole sanctuary ministry had become corrupt. The Lord declared that He would cause His name to be great among the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles would honor Him and His worship.

Following the death of Malachi, the gift of prophecy was withdrawn. The spirituality of the nation had not improved before the decease of the last Old Testament prophet, and the people were getting farther and farther away from God. It was feared by some that idolatry might again find its way into the nation, but this was to be made impossible. Among the final sayings of Malachi was the admonition to remember the law of Moses. He closed his testimony by assuring the people that Elijah would appear before the coming of the Messiah.

### **Rabbinical Higher Education**

An attempt was made to encourage the nation to adhere strictly to the teachings of Moses. A certain class of men took it upon themselves to define the laws of Moses, with the statutes and judgments. Little by little, as the years passed, an ecclesiastical leadership developed which had for its purpose the defining of the teaching of Moses. It was the hope of the leaders that the people would become more inclined to the obedience of God's law.

When the Jewish people came under the rule of the Greeks, the latter sought to encourage the Jews to accept Greek culture and scholasticism. The ancient men of Israel were fearful of such an influence. They remembered the admonition of Ezra and others regarding what would happen to the nation if the people again followed heathen ways.

Many of the younger men of Israel made contact with Greek learning, and these returned to Palestine to teach the youth of Israel. In the early part of the third century before Christ there came into existence among the Jews a synod known as "the Great Synagogue." The leaders of this council introduced certain innovations into the teaching of Israel, which did not help the masses to a simple understanding of the writings of Moses and the prophets. The great burden of these ecclesiastics was to "make a fence for the law." The law referred to was the law of Moses. The "fence" they made consisted of explanations of the teachings of Moses. These teachers placed great stress upon human endeavor, human scholarship, external forms of worship, and upon the wisdom of these men. One of these scholars advocated the following educational program for the child and youth:

"At five study the Bible; at ten the Mishna [scholarly comments on the writings of Moses]; at thirteen the precepts; at fifteen the Gemara [comments on the commentaries]; at eighteen enter into wedlock; at twenty pursue the study of the law [this meant chiefly rabbinical law]; at thirty, full strength. [At this age the student must be qualified to teach all the traditions of the fathers.]"—"*Ethics of the Fathers*," chap. 5.

Religion dwindled into a round of formalism. The more these men trained the rising generation, the less spirituality was manifest. Godliness was dying in Israel. The spiritual vitals of the nation were being drained. The Scriptures were read and studied, but they must be understood only in the light of the expositors. The words of Moses and the prophets were made to mean whatever these leaders defined them to mean. Scripture might be interpreted in many ways. The inspiration of the Scripture meant little. The people were taught to regard the words of the scribes as of greater value than the word of God. They taught that the Scripture was like water; the wise men's writings like wine. They added to the word of God when they saw fit, while on other occasions

they diminished from the authority of God's book. They claimed that the rabbi must be feared as one would fear God. The rabbi was greater than the parent. The parent gave birth to the child in this world; the rabbi gives the child hope for the future world.

### Traditions Increase

Each generation added to the traditions, and the sayings of men were piling up. The numberless traditions imposed upon the people had become a yoke—a tremendous burden upon the rank and file of the nation. Only graduates of rabbinical schools were acknowledged as authoritative teachers. A line of demarcation had developed between the literate and the illiterate. True and undefiled religion was at a low ebb; the nation was passing through a trying era.

The following teaching had become accepted as law among the masses: "Moses received the law from Sinai, and delivered it to Joshua; and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets; and the prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue."—"*Ethics of the Fathers*," chap. 1.

Following the era of the Great Synagogue leadership, the Sanhedrin came into existence. This synod had full control of the nation. There was the Great Sanhedrin, and the lesser Sanhedrin; these leaders had complete charge of the religion of the people, wherever the Jews were found. Their word was law. Their Scriptural interpretations were final. If they said the right hand is the left, and the left hand is the right, their decision must be accepted. There was no higher tribunal. They were the last appeal.

In order that the Sanhedrin might clothe their teaching with divine authority, there was introduced a spurious spirit of prophecy called *bathkol*, the daughter of a voice. The leaders felt that they needed an authoritative voice, which would give assurance that they were chosen for their task by a divine power; so this innovation of *bathkol* was introduced.

Alexander McCaul, D.D., of London, England, in his

valuable work entitled, "The Old Paths," gives an illustration of this *bathkol* as noted in the Talmud, attributed to the learned Rabbi Jose. Doctor McCaul writes of this rabbi:

"He says, that he once went into one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray, and that whilst he was engaged in prayer, the prophet Elijah came to the entrance of the ruin, and very civilly waited for him until he had concluded, when they had some conversation together. Amongst other particulars, Rabbi Jose relates as follows:

" 'And he (Elias) said to me, What sort of a voice didst thou hear in the ruin? I said to him, I heard a *bathkol* cooing like a dove, and saying, Woe is me that I have desolated my house, and burnt my sanctuary, and sent my children into captivity amongst the nations. And he said unto me, As thou livest, and thy head liveth, it is not at this hour only, but three times every day the voice says these words.' "

—1846 ed., pp. 445, 446.

When this seductive and false teaching originated, there is no written record. Many strange doctrines were introduced among the children of Abraham during the first and second centuries before Christ, but there were no written statements recorded till during the second century of the Christian Era.

### Religious Schools Increase

With the hope that devotion and piety among the Jews would increase, many educational institutions in and about Palestine were developed. There were the Beth Ha-med-rosh (the house of the learned), the Talmud Torah (teaching of the law), the Chay-der, the religious school, and other centers of learning. These centers were located in the towns and in the cities. But spirituality diminished, true piety dwindled, godliness waned, the fear of the Lord was replaced by the fear of man. The rabbi, the *cha-cham* (wise man), the *ta-na* (the scholar), and other titled leaders were everywhere hailed as the depositaries of Israel's religion.

## Israel Passes Through a Critical Era 109

Vital godliness and spiritual power seemed to be on the downgrade, as institutional piety gained ascendancy. The understanding of the writings of Moses and the prophets went far afield. There developed endless interpretations of the Sacred Writings, and the rabbinate became a law unto itself.

Any explanation of Scripture must be accepted if it was introduced by a graduate of a recognized rabbinical institution standardized by Sanhedrin authority.

Upon the rank and file of the *am-ha-ratzim* (illiterate), were placed burdens and regulations which became unbearable. The people sighed and cried, because of the load they were compelled to carry, but there was no way of escape. There was no prophet in Israel to whom the unlearned might go for counsel and instruction. The least deviation from the words of the scribe was met with stern correction. *Maa-kas mar-dous* (the flogging of the rebellious—thirty-nine lashes on the bare back) was greatly feared. The slavery of the intellect was well-nigh perfected. Poor Israel groaned under the burden. They had innumerable rabbinical taskmasters who held the lash over them. Many longed for freedom and deliverance, but where might these be found?

Each year the scrolls of the Pentateuch were unrolled, and read in the synagogue, and in the Sabbath temple service, but the Scriptures were rolled up again. The priests and the Levites were replaced by scribes and Pharisees. Many longed for a voice which would proclaim liberty to the captives, but there was no appeal from the authority of the rabbi. Israel had formerly been slaves to the Pharaohs for more than two hundred years, but the slavery of the rabbinical taskmasters became unbearable. Many in Israel yearned for spirituality and for godliness. The people were assured that the day would come when they would be freed from the Roman yoke, but there was a longing in many a heart for the freedom and vital piety spoken of by Isaiah and others of the prophets. O that a deliverer might come, as had been

prophesied by Moses, the leader of Israel. (See Deut. 18:15-18.) Since the voice of a prophet had not been heard for centuries, there arose in many a heart the prayer that God would come and visit His people.

Such was the spiritual condition of Israel, as the time drew nigh for the prophecies in regard to the advent of Messiah to meet their fulfillment.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LONG-LOOKED-FOR HOUR ARRIVES

**F**OR well-nigh four centuries the voice of a true prophet of God had not been heard in the land of Israel. Only once before during the many centuries of Israel's covenant relation with God had there been so long a period when Israel heard not the voice of the seer. The words of the psalmist doubtless were in the minds of many of the people: "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." Ps. 74:9.

The self-appointed leaders of Israel were busy discussing technicalities of Scripture. They gave much thought and study to the writings of Moses, not so much to follow his teachings, as to avoid what he taught. They discussed the Sabbath, the tithe, the feasts, the sacrifices, and other subjects upon which instructions had been given the nation through the great prophet; but the purpose of these discussions was to add to or diminish from them, rather than to obey them. Nevertheless, they were bent on being disciples of Moses. Many of the teachers claimed that Moses should have instructed their forebears in counsel that he left unspoken; they often inserted what to them were the omissions. Those teachings which they considered not clear, they amplified and exaggerated, until the original instruction given their ancestors by the prophets of Israel was darkened and well-nigh obliterated.

The teachings of the prophets were interpreted variously. Some of the wise men asserted that the prophecies must not be considered literally; they were allegorical, they were parabolic, they were mystical, they were visionary. The real meaning of the prophets' forecast depended upon the scholarly

ability of the expositor. Nevertheless, there were hundreds in Israel who had faith to believe that the teaching of the seers should be literally understood.

### The Coming of the Messiah

Certain outstanding men advocated that Messiah would come as predicted by the prophets. However, other teachers maintained that the interpretation of many of those Messianic prophecies was applicable only to the Jews. The people of Israel would benefit by His advent. The Gentiles, or heathen, would have no share in the glory which Messiah would bring to Israel; for the prophet Isaiah had written: "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." Isa. 60:21.

Said the rabbi: Israel was God's people. The Lord chose no other nation but the descendants of Abraham; therefore when Messiah came, all the glory and the manifestation of His power were for the children of the covenant. Rome would be destroyed; the heathen would bow down to Israel; the land of Israel would be the glorious resting place for the sons of the covenant; and never again would they be removed out of the land.

The people were told that in the writings of the prophet Daniel were described most glorious delights awaiting those who would share in the kingdom when Messiah appeared. While Daniel's writings were not stressed and valued as they should have been, the rabbis insisted that the joy of those predictions would be the lot of the children of Abraham. Many believed that the time of Messiah's coming was at hand, and they hoped and prayed for the day of deliverance.

But the rank and file of Israel were not rightly prepared for the coming of Messiah. The rabbis described Messiah as a glorious person who would suddenly appear in the effulgence of majesty and magnificence. His personality was not made clear to the multitude; for the rabbis had presented mixed

and confused ideas of Him; the masses did not know whom to expect, or how to know Him when He appeared. (See John 7:25-27, 31, 40-43.)

Such was the state of mind of the multitude when the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, appeared. It is true that both the birth of John and the birth of Jesus were unusual. It had been a long time since Israel had seen such a great miracle as was the birth of John. But the effect of these notable wonders soon passed away; and not until John presented himself with his message in the wilderness of Judea did the leaders of Israel give consideration to his mission. The Baptist's message was based on prophecy; but prophecy to the leaders was not specific. John called attention to such features of the word of God as applied to his work, and to the coming of Messiah, but Israel's self-appointed leaders held a different view of those Scriptures. They did not consider that John's message bore any significance to the nation.

### John's Message Creates a Sensation

The news of John's work spread far and wide. Many a man previously had presented to Israel his claim as a messenger, but the Jordan valley and Jerusalem had not been so stirred as they were at the Baptist's pointed message. The Sanhedrin were impressed that the work of John must be investigated. They felt compelled to make official inquiry.

"This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." John 1:19-23.

When this commission delegated by ecclesiastical au-

thority inquired of John whether he were "that prophet," they meant the prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. The Sanhedrin did not consider that the prophet like unto Moses meant the Messiah. They thought that this prophet would be an outstanding personage, but not the Messiah. When John answered that he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," the committee decided that he was not the forerunner of Messiah; for the prophet Malachi left a testimony in his closing message that before Messiah should come, Elijah the prophet must appear. Mal. 4:5, 6. The rabbis claimed that the Elijah mentioned by the prophet Malachi was the identical man who was on earth in the days of King Ahab, and who was taken up bodily into heaven. They still insist that Messiah could not have come, for Elijah, the prophet of Gilead, has not yet appeared.

The Sanhedrin commission returned to the council, and stated that this man John admitted that he was neither Elijah nor Messiah; therefore he could not be the forerunner of Messiah. However, John told this committee that there was One among them who was before him. John 1:26, 27. This statement of John's rather confused the commission, as well as the Sanhedrin. Had the leaders of Israel been as familiar as they should have been with the prophecies concerning Messiah, they would not have been so confused.

John had not been preaching a great while before Jesus appeared at the Jordan. He asked John the Baptist to baptize him. Matt. 3:13-15. Following the Saviour's baptism, and His experience in the wilderness during the forty days' temptation, our Lord made a public statement which doubtless made a deep impression on the minds of the people. Jesus said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:15.

#### What Time Did Jesus Mean?

While the rabbis quoted certain teachings of Moses and the prophets as applying to the Messiah, there was only one

place in all Sacred Scripture which foretold the time of Messiah's coming. This time is mentioned by the prophet Daniel.

The words of this prophecy in the ninth chapter of Daniel are so plain and specific that no mistake can be made in regard to their application. The angel Gabriel gave the prophet Daniel a clear statement of the time of the advent of the Messiah. Said he: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks. . . . And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; . . . and He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." Dan. 9:25-27.

Gabriel said that the beginning of the period to reach to Messiah was the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. However, there were three commands issued for the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem. (See Ezra 6:14; 1:1-4; 6:1-12; 7:11-26.) To leave neither the prophet Daniel, nor those who would live at the time when the prophecy met its fulfillment, in a doubtful mood, with respect to the starting of the sixty-nine weeks which were to reach to Messiah, the angel Gabriel said: "From the going forth of the commandment to *restore and to build Jerusalem.*" Dan. 9:25. The two Hebrew expressions covering the words, "to restore and to build," are *lay-hau-shiv vay-liv-nous*, which mean, "to give complete restoration and full building up." The reckoning of the prophetic weeks began from the time the command was given to the people for power and authority to carry forward their work in Jerusalem, similar to what they had before they entered into captivity. Neither Cyrus's nor Darius's decree covered such complete power. Only the decree of Artaxerxes contained such plenary authority. This

decree of King Artaxerxes was issued in the seventh year of his reign, in the year 457 B.C. (See Ezra 7:11-26.) Nothing was lacking in this decree of Artaxerxes, which called for complete and full restoration, and building up of the religious system of the Israelites, such as they enjoyed before they entered the exile of seventy years in Babylon.

Again: It should be remembered that when the angel said to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined," he spoke to the prophet in the Hebrew tongue. These words in the Hebrew language, "seventy weeks are determined," are, *sh-vou-im sh-iv-im nech-tach*. Hebrew scholars claim that the words *sh-vou-im sh-iv-im* signify seventy times the period of seven years. The entire vision given to the prophet Daniel in chapter eight is symbolic. The first four symbols of the vision are interpreted by the angel Gabriel, for only to this angel was given the commission to make the prophet understand the vision. (See Dan. 8:13-16, 20-25.) All the symbols of the vision have been explained by the heavenly visitor to the seer, except the time recorded in verse fourteen. When the angel returns to the prophet, to clarify to him the explanation of verse fourteen, Gabriel's interpretation is in accord with the explanation of the other parts of the vision. That Hebrew writers did so understand the meaning of the words *sha-vou-im sh-iv-im nech-tach*, may be seen from the following:

The word *sh-iv-im* is "seventy," but the word *sh-vou-im* is understood to mean "a period of seven years." All devout orthodox commentators translate this word *sh-vou-im*—*shmi-tous*. A *sh-mi-ta* (singular of *shmi-tous*) is "a period of seven years." While the English translations of the Hebrew Old Testament render the words *sh-vou-im sh-iv-im* "seventy weeks," it is clear that these weeks are prophetic rather than weeks of seven literal days. (See Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6.)

Rabbi Isaac Leeser, who translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew into English, is in accord with this prophetic

interpretation of *sha-vou-im sh-iv-im*. This rabbi says: "Ancient Jewish writers thought that the second temple stood four hundred and twenty years, which, with the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity, make 490 years."—*Note 47, Leeser's Comments on His Old Testament Translation*. These words of Rabbi Leeser indicate that Jewish writers believe the year-day method to be the correct way to reckon the seventy weeks, but they failed to take note of the angel's words that the period "to Messiah the Prince" is to be reckoned "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Dan. 9:25. The command to restore and to build Jerusalem went forth in 457 B.C., and at that time began the seventy weeks.

The Hebrew word for "are determined" in this twenty-fourth verse of Daniel 9 is *nech-tach*. *Nech-tach* means "to cut quickly," "to decree." The outstanding Jewish commentator, Rashi, acknowledged as the ablest and one of the most scholarly of Jewish commentators, offers the following comment on the Hebrew word *nech-tach*: "These years are decreed ones, in the sense of being cut off."

To clarify still further the force of this word *nech-tach*, Rashi introduces as a parallel word to *nech-tach*, the Hebrew word *ko-ras*, which means "to cut," "to cut round." *Ko-ras* is an expressive term in the Hebrew Scriptures, meaning "to cut," "to cut off." (See Lev. 23:29, last clause.) The Hebrew word for "was cut off" is *nich-ras*, from the same word, *ko-ras*.

When Gabriel told Daniel that "seventy weeks are determined," as rendered in our version, the prophet understood that the Hebrew words *sh-vou-im sh-iv-im nech-tach* meant "seventy times seven years were cut off."

### Messiah Came at the Proper Time

From the foregoing consideration of the Scriptures interpreted by the angel Gabriel, we conclude that when the

Saviour made the pronouncement recorded in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 1:15, He gave the leaders and lay people to understand that the time of Messiah's arrival was fulfilled. On the basis of the Scriptures of truth as predicted by the heavenly messenger, there could be no future expectation of the advent of the true Messiah. Messiah had already appeared; He had come in harmony with the Sacred Writings which were entrusted to the Israelites.

That many people in that day believed Messiah already had come, is evident from the following testimony borne by witnesses in Israel:

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." John 1:40, 41. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." John 1:45.

Eminent Jewish writers have repeatedly stated that the time for the arrival of Messiah is long overdue. These writers admit that Messiah must already have come if their faith in the Scriptures still holds. The eminent Rabbi Rav, as stated in one of the ancient Talmudic works, says: "The appointed times are long since past." ("Sanhedrin," fol. 97, col. 2.)

The Hebrew word for "times," expressed by this outstanding rabbi, is *kaitz*. This word *kaitz* is the same word used in the book of Daniel, chapter 12:6-13, in connection with the word "end." "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" "But go thou thy way till the end be." Dan. 12:6, 13.

In the Prayer Book used by Orthodox Jews the world around, the child is taught the following prayer, which is recited every day in the week: "He will send at the *end* of the days our Messiah."

The word "end" in this prayer is the same word, *kaitz*,

as used by the great Rabbi Rav, when he says that "the appointed times are long since past."

In this same Talmudic volume, "Sanhedrin," ancient men of Israel recorded the following: "Tradition of the school of Elijah: the world is to stand six thousand years, two thousand, confusion; two thousand, the law; two thousand, the days of Messiah."—"*Sanhedrin*," fol. 97, col. 1.

From the above we must conclude that the leaders of Israel believed and still profess to believe that Messiah should have come at the close of the first four thousand years of the world's history. The above rabbinical testimonies are in accord with the testimony expressed by the Saviour recorded in Mark 1:15, and witnessed by those who lived at the time when our Lord was on earth.

### Who Is Messiah?

Since it has been found, according to the Sacred Oracles entrusted to the children of Abraham, that the Messiah appeared at the proper time, it is pertinent to inquire, "Who is the Messiah of Israel?" That the hope of the advent of Messiah was one of long standing among the children of Abraham, is evident from a prediction made by the patriarch Jacob. When blessing his son Judah, Jacob made the following forecast: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Gen. 49:10.

From the days when the Great Synagogue existed, at least two or three centuries before the coming of the Saviour, and during the centuries which have elapsed since, the most outstanding and pious leaders of Israel have applied this text to Messiah. The Targums of Jonathan and Onkelos, the scholarly Kimchi, Ben Ganach, and innumerable other satellites, join in stating that this person mentioned by the patriarch Jacob is the Messiah of Israel.

On one occasion, after the Saviour had been discoursing with His disciples, Jesus asked His followers this question:

“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matt. 16:13-16.

Peter, however, did not base his faith in Jesus as Messiah on popular opinion; this disciple’s testimony was based on verity. On another occasion, when many professed disciples of Jesus abandoned Him, our Lord put this question to His closest followers:

“Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John 6:67-69.

Years later, this same apostle, Peter, in assuring the believers of the return of our Lord, offered his reason for his faith that Jesus is Messiah, in these words: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1:19.

The apostle knew well that man’s senses cannot be relied upon for accuracy and certainty, and that the unerring positiveness of the prophetic gift can be relied upon. The Holy Ghost speaks through men, when they are under the inspiration of God. That which men speak under such spiritual influence is sure, positive, certain. Peter was sure that Jesus is Messiah, Son of the living God, because prophecy had so foretold.

Many more witnesses, who lived when Jesus was on earth, testified that they knew, they were certain, they were absolutely sure that Jesus is Messiah.

In view of the strained relationship existing between Samaritan and Jew, how valuable is the testimony of a Samaritan that Jesus is Messiah, Israel’s promised Deliverer.

In talking to Jesus at Jacob's well in Shechem, the Samaritan woman said: "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ [Messiah]?" John 4:25, 28, 29.

John the beloved, in bearing testimony of the divinity of the Saviour, makes this observation: "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man." John 2:24, 25.

His disciples likewise bore this testimony of Jesus: "Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God." John 16:30.

Jesus Himself bears this testimony to His Messiahship: "I that speak unto thee am He." John 4:26. These words of the Saviour were spoken to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus made acknowledgment that He is Messiah. This testimony of the Saviour is of inestimable value, and it should have been to the Jewish people.

When the Saviour was on trial before the Sanhedrin, just preceding His crucifixion, He was asked this question by the high priest: "Art Thou the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:61, 62.

Our Lord told the leaders of Israel: "If ye believe not that I am He [Messiah], ye shall die in your sins." John 8:24.

Nearly twenty centuries have come and gone since these words were spoken to the seed of Abraham by the Messiah. Annually, on the Day of Atonement, in the synagogue service, the Jewish minister and congregation make this public confession: "And because of the abundance of our sins, we

have nothing." This yearly announcement, made by the millions of Jews in all the world, witnesses that Messiah of Israel is Jesus of Nazareth. They annually confess that they die in their sins. They acknowledge their helplessness; they have no deliverer.

If they had only accepted the testimony of their Messiah, the long-looked-for Deliverer, what a different record they might have left. What a precious experience would have come to Israel had the leaders followed the influence of the Holy Spirit directing their minds to those Scriptures which foretold the coming of Messiah at the long-looked-for hour. With the angels they might have united in singing the beautiful hymn:

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ [Messiah] the Lord." Luke 2:11.

## CHAPTER XV

### MESSIAH FULFILLS HIS MISSION TO ISRAEL

**A**MONG the many predictions which the prophets of Israel made regarding the coming of the Messiah, and the ministry He was to perform, are found the following:

“The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.” Isa. 59:20.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Zech. 9:9.

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.” Zech. 2:10.

Of the origin of Zion, we read: “David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither. . . . Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David. . . . So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David.” 2 Sam. 5:4-9.

“Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, . . . unto King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion.” 1 Kings 8:1.

Ever since those days when King David captured the city of the Jebusites, Jerusalem has been known as Zion, the city of David. To that city, Messiah must come.

### King Messiah Must Ride Upon the Ass

The prophet declared in his prophecy that Jerusalem's King must ride upon an ass. How wonderfully Jesus fulfilled this prediction! Says the record of that remarkable event: "When He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Luke 19:37-40.

Another witness to that event describes the occasion in these words: "When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto Me. . . . All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Matt. 21:1-5.

Why did the Messiah make such a reply to the Pharisees when they asked Him to quiet the multitude who cried: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest"? Because that prediction, made by the prophet Zechariah more than five centuries before, must meet its fulfillment. Israel's Messiah must ride the royal animal to Jerusalem, as the prophet predicted. For when the Saviour entered the Holy City at this

particular time, "all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Matt. 21:10, 11.

### The Messiah Labors Among His People Israel

At this particular time Jerusalem was the great gathering place of worship for the sons of Israel. While the Lord is no respecter of persons, His mission on earth had a special significance to the descendants of Abraham. In choosing His first disciples, Jesus selected only Israelites. When He ordained them, and sent them forth to proclaim the good tidings of salvation, He said to them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 10:5, 6.

On another occasion, when a poor Canaanitish woman sought relief from diabolism for her daughter, the Saviour did not deny her request, but He did tell her His mission: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 15:24.

The apostle Peter, in harmony with this position of Jesus, said to the people in Jerusalem after the day of Pentecost: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:25, 26. This statement of the apostle Peter is in full harmony with the prophecy made by Isaiah, as recorded in the beginning of this chapter.

Many years later, the great apostle to the Gentiles wrote in a similar strain to his brethren who lived in the city of Rome: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Rom. 15:8.

### Messiah Makes Public Announcement of His Ministry in Israel

It was in the city of Nazareth, in His home town, that Jesus announced one of the outstanding reasons for His mission as Messiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18, 19. (See also Isa. 61:1, 2.)

The prophet Malachi wrote the following concerning the advent of Messiah: "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant." Mal. 3:1.

See the Messiah, while attending a feast in Jerusalem, approach the pool called Bethesda (meaning "the house of mercy"), where lay many sick and diseased people. This pool was located quite close to the temple. The record says of this occasion: "A certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. . . . Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked." John 5:5-9.

On another occasion, when Jesus visited the temple to cleanse the sacred edifice of the money-changers, how the crowd did gather about Him. Of that experience the record says: "The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them." Matt. 21:12-14.

What a thrilling event that must have been to the sick, the sorrowing, the suffering, the blind, to those parents whose

children had been so greatly blessed. It is written: "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased." Matt. 21:15.

How manifold were the blessings that Messiah brought to the children of Israel, when He healed their various sicknesses, freed those who were bound, and proclaimed to them the great tidings of liberty and forgiveness.

### **Not a Single Person Turned Away Empty**

Whether the Saviour was in the temple or in the synagogue, in Jerusalem or in Galilee, in the mount or in Tyre and Sidon, in whatever place the Messiah was found, whoever came to Him for help, He never turned one person away disappointed. If it was the dead to be raised, if it was the diseased of the palsy, if it was the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the halt, or the blind to be restored, if the demand was urgent by day or by night, if it was the poorest or the richest, the Messiah immediately responded to that need, and He never demanded a shekel or a talent in return for His ministry. He gave liberally and freely.

Never did the Messiah offer a word of condemnation to such a soul. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in order to fulfill the mission which was given Him to perform. John 6:38.

What a thrill those disciples must have experienced when the Messiah said to them: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Matt. 13:16, 17.

If only those prophets who in holy vision foretold the coming of Christ and the mighty works He would perform

among men, could have seen with their eyes or heard with their ears what those descendants of Abraham saw and heard, how they would have rejoiced! It is not surprising to read that the Saviour wept when He thought of the loss which was sustained by those who did not appreciate their day of opportunity. Jesus said: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. . . . Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke 19:42-44.

Those who were blessed by His ministry made this public confession: "He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." Mark 7:37.

### Messiah's Final Efforts

In order fully to carry out His mission for the lost sheep of Israel, so that neither leader nor layman could have excuse for not accepting Him as the Saviour and Redeemer, the Lord put forth every effort to win them to God and to His promise of deliverance. Abraham was assured that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him, and in his seed; it was the divine plan that his literal seed should meet this expectation. The Lord desired that the world should be blessed through this people; they were to be the light bearers, the salt of the earth. No gift was too great to bestow upon them, if they only would work in harmony with the will of Heaven.

The following parable explains the Lord's devotion and love toward them: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke 13:6-9.

How tender and compassionate was the Saviour toward

them! How like similar appeals the Lord made to their ancestors is this effort of Messiah! Says the prophet Hosea: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" Hosea 11:8.

This supreme effort of Messiah was God's final endeavor to save the nation, as the following parable will show: "A certain man planted a vineyard, . . . and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. . . . And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?" Mark 12:1-9.

From this parable, we understand that in order that the nation might be saved, Heaven's final effort was put forth in sending God's Son, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. What more could be done for them that He had not done?

Many centuries before, in His endeavor to bring deliverance to their ancestors, "the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." 2 Chron. 36:15, 16.

The official national attitude toward the Son, the following parable clarifies: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated

him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." Luke 19:12-14.

### The Only Thing the Lord Could Have Done

In view of the Saviour's constant appeals to the nation to accept the deliverance which they refused, what could Messiah do for them? During His last year of labor among them, the Messiah did everything possible for them, in order that they might sense His love and His kindness toward them. The Lord raised their dead. He manifested unusual kindness and benevolence! He opened the eyes of one blind from birth. It was publicly acknowledged that a similar miracle had never before happened since the world began. John 9:32. The Lord Himself testified of that people: "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." John 15:24.

Since they determined to take His life, and absolutely refused to accept Him as their deliverer and Saviour, the Messiah said to them: "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Matt. 21:42-44.

### Action of the Sanhedrin

When Pontius Pilate endeavored to release the Messiah, for the governor knew that the accusations brought against Him were unfounded, the leaders of the nation in their official and administrative capacity demanded that the Roman governor sign His death warrant.

The national authority and power at this time were vested in the Great Sanhedrin, otherwise known as *Beth Din*

*ha-Go-doul* (the great house of judgment), as may be seen from the following:

“The Great Council in Jerusalem is the foundation stone of the oral law, and the pillars of the doctrine: and from them the statute and the judgment goes forth to *all Israel*. . . . Everyone who believes in Moses, our master, and in his law, is bound to rest the practice of the law on them, and to lean on them.”—“*Hilchoth Mamrim*,” c. i. 1.

“How many councils ought to be established in Israel, and of how many members ought they to consist? *Answer*.—The Great Council in the temple called the Great Sanhedrin, ought to be established first, and the number of its members ought to be seventy-one.”—“*Hilchoth Sanhedrin*,” c. i. 2.

“A king is not to be appointed except by the decision of the Great Council of seventy-one. The minor councils through the tribes and towns are not to be established except by the council of seventy-one. Judgment is not to be passed on a tribe that has been entirely led away, nor upon a false prophet, nor upon a high priest in capital cases, except by the Great Council.”—“*Hilchoth Sanhedrin*,” c. v. 1.

The Roman official asked the council, “Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.” John 19:15.

With such determination and persistent obstinacy manifest by the national administration against their King, what further manifestation could Messiah offer to them? They had sent up earnest petitions to heaven for freedom from the Roman yoke, even as their ancestors had cried to the Lord for deliverance from the slavery of the Egyptian king. God heard their prayers, and He sent to them their own Messiah and Deliverer, to bring them freedom from the slavery and bondage of sin. If they had accepted this Messiah, Jesus, their freedom from sin would have been an earnest of a greater deliverance which eventually would be theirs, when Messiah returned in glory and power as King of kings, and Lord of lords. They then would have enjoyed

everlasting liberty in the eternal kingdom of God, and they would forever have been freed from the galling yoke of earthly powers. They would have become Heaven's ambassadors and light bearers to the world. In them the nations of earth would have been blessed, as the Lord promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FAVORED CITY TO BECOME DESOLATE

**B**Y the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia, the promise of God to restore the nation of Israel to her former home in Palestine with Jerusalem as the capital, became effective. (See Dan. 9:25; Ezra 6:14.) Tens of thousands of exiles who had served the kings of Babylon for seventy years, and many other thousands of the ten tribes who had been in captivity to other kings of Assyria and Persia in the land of the Medes, were privileged to return to their home country.

Although the enemies of the Jews undertook to hinder them in the work of reconstructing the Holy City and the land of Palestine, the builders were determined to see that their homeland was once again placed on vantage ground. Prophets and governors joined in building up the city of Jerusalem until the wall of the city was completed, and large numbers of Jews were again making their home in the Land of Promise.

#### The Lord's Promise Gives Encouragement

Israel was assured that the Lord Himself had returned to the Holy City. Cities would be built, a house for God would again be constructed. Said the prophet: "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Zech. 1:16, 17; 8:3-5.

The prophets of God were again delivering to the nation encouraging counsel from the Lord. The people were in-

structed that more glorious prospects were ahead of them, if only they would heed the admonitions of the Lord.

Soon after the gift of prophecy was restored, words of counsel came from the Lord to the nation that the temple of God should be built. There was a response to this call. Eventually a most magnificent edifice was constructed, which took forty-six years in building, and upon which the wealth of the Herods and the gifts of the nation had been lavished.

This structure had become of inestimable value in the eyes of the people. The gold of the temple was considered of greater value than the service it rendered, and the sacred city had again departed from the Lord. Matt. 23:16-22. Sacrifices and offerings had become commercialized. The ministry of the priesthood had lost much of its sacredness. Barter and money exchange were conducted in the house of God, and true worship was almost obliterated.

### Cleansing the Temple

On two occasions the Saviour was compelled to enter the temple and cleanse it from the defilement which contaminated the sacred edifice, for God was greatly dishonored by the conduct of its devotees. John 2:13-17; Mark 11:15-17. The Saviour's endeavor to reform the services in the temple, and to encourage the people to worship God in spirit and in truth, did not meet with much encouragement.

The Lord deemed it necessary to testify that this holy house had become a den of thieves. The Saviour's attitude toward this house of worship greatly angered the scribes and Pharisees, and these men trailed the Master constantly with the hope of ensnaring Him. Mark 11:18.

Events were shaping which indicated that the temple and the city would not continue endlessly, unless great changes in the people's conduct should take place. Many of the influential men and religious leaders had no desire to see reforms brought about. Honesty in business, fair dealing one with another, love one to another in social life, were set aside.

## The Favored City to Become Desolate 135

Corruptions in the city were constantly increasing. The Saviour said to the multitude: "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers." Mark 12:38-40.

At one time the Pharisees undertook to compel the Master to leave the city. "There came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get Thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill Thee. And He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Luke 13:31-33.

In order that the people might understand the conditions which really existed in the Holy City, the Saviour recited an experience which must have greatly impressed them. The record says: "There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:1-5.

### Warnings of Danger Ahead

The Jews refused to allow the Samaritans to have any part in the temple service, or in the worship conducted in Jerusalem. There was great rivalry between the two peoples in regard to which city was the most hallowed, Jerusalem or Samaria. While in conversation with the Messiah at Jacob's well, the Samaritan woman called the Master's attention to

the boasting of the Jews of their worship in the Holy City above the worship of God in Samaria. Jesus answered the woman: "Believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." John 4:21.

What a surprise this statement must have been to the Samaritan woman! It did not seem possible to her that a Jew would say the time was coming when the worship of the true God would not be conducted in the city of Jerusalem. This conversation occurred before Jesus acknowledged His Messiahship to this Samaritan; but it must have been a jolt to her to hear a Jew talk disparagingly of the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem.

Jesus knew what would happen to the sacred city, unless she mended her ways. The Lord foresaw what would become of her, unless moral conditions in Jerusalem changed for the better. The Scripture records that during the Saviour's ministry, there were times when He wept. Without doubt the Lord shed many tears during His earthly ministry; for He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The Scripture says that He wept at the grave of Lazarus; He wept during the hours He was in Gethsemane. John 11:35; Heb. 5:7.

He wept over Jerusalem. "When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke 19:41-44.

This language is pathetic; this statement foreshadowed that a sorrowful future awaited Jerusalem. These words of the Master foreboded no glorious prospects awaiting the Holy

## The Favored City to Become Desolate 137

City. However, a still stronger statement was yet to be heard from the lips of the Master concerning the future of Jerusalem.

### The Astonished Disciples

The hour arrived when the Saviour felt it necessary to make bare the inner life of the scribes and Pharisees. These self-appointed leaders professed to be models of piety and the devout of the nation. These men were looked upon by the multitude with great awe and deep reverence; everywhere they went they were received as messengers of the Lord. They taught the populace: "The fear of thy rabbi is as the fear of God."

It was with a definite purpose that the Saviour said to the multitude: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ." Matt. 23:8-10.

The Saviour did not discourage respect for parents; He desired the people not to look upon the Pharisees as their spiritual fathers, even though they professed to be such. The Master pronounced a series of woes upon the scribes and Pharisees, which must have startled the disciples. In closing His denunciations against these self-constituted leaders, the Saviour said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." Matt. 23:37-39; 24:1.

These words of the Master astonished the disciples. Could it be possible that they understood the import of His words?

Did the Saviour mean to convey the idea that the temple, this magnificent structure, which cost so much money in building, and which took well-nigh half a century to erect, was to be entirely destroyed? Were this temple and the Holy City to be forever desolate? What did the Lord mean by this remark in regard to the temple and the city?

The disciples had a council among themselves, and they appointed a commission of their own men to wait on the Lord and to ascertain further, if possible, the meaning of His statement, "Your house is left unto you desolate."

The record says: "As He sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Mark 13:3, 4.

After the Saviour departed from the temple, the disciples came to Him and showed Him the buildings. These disciples were Jews; they cherished the future of the temple and the city. They were anxious to learn the future of both; so they called His attention to the magnificent buildings. Jesus said to them: "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matt. 24:2.

The disciples could not now misunderstand the Master. The language He used was plain and simple. Jesus then proceeded to forecast the future of the Christian Era. He also dwelt specifically upon the desolation of the temple and the Holy City. He said: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." Matt. 24:15.

The Lord called the attention of His disciples to the writings of the prophet Daniel. In this book, the angel Gabriel foretold the destruction of the city and the temple, after the death of the Messiah. The angel said: "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for

## The Favored City to Become Desolate 139

Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Dan. 9:26, 27.

### The Overthrow of the City and the Temple

The heavenly visitor declared that Messiah would be cut off, but not for Himself. When Messiah was cut off, the prince would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary. When the Messiah was cut off, sacrifices and offerings should cease. Then there would be the overspreading of the abominations which would make desolate, until the consummation.

The city and the sanctuary would be destroyed after Messiah was cut off. Jesus had foretold His death. Repeatedly He told the disciples that He would go to Jerusalem, and there He would be put to death. Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23; 20:17-19. These predictions met a literal fulfillment. To further clarify to the disciples what was meant by the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, the Saviour said: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Luke 21:20-22.

The Roman armies were to destroy the sanctuary and the city. The Roman power is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. The Saviour declared that Rome would destroy the Holy City and the magnificent temple. What a future then awaited the city of Jerusalem.

The Sanhedrin rejected the Messiah in favor of Caesar. The Saviour told them that Caesar would overthrow their city and their sanctuary. The council declared that they had no king but Caesar. Jesus said that Caesar would not be their salvation; he would be their desolation. The king they clamored for instead of their Saviour would be their ruin and their overthrow.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians about 58 A.D., the city was not yet overthrown; for the apostle then said of Jerusalem: "For this Agar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Gal. 4:25.

In his first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, the same apostle wrote of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." 1 Thess. 2:14-16.

It was in the spring of 70 A.D. that Titus, commanding general of the Roman armies, captured Jerusalem after a bitter siege. The temple was then destroyed, although Titus endeavored to save the sacred edifice. At this time the entire city was razed to the ground. History says that at that time almost a million Jews were killed, and nearly eleven hundred thousand were taken captives. Many of these were dragged to the city of Rome, and were made slaves. Jerusalem ceased to exist. For about sixty years following the destruction, no mention is made of the city. In the year 132 A.D. a revolution broke out in the city of Bither, about ten miles from Jerusalem, under the leadership of a man of the name of Barcocheba. This Barcocheba claimed to be the Messiah. An eminent rabbi, Rabbi Akiba, anointed this man as the Mes-

## The Favored City to Become Desolate 141

siah, and pronounced himself as the forerunner. With an army this soldier messiah led his forces toward Rome. The Roman camp at Jerusalem was captured. Eventually Rome again conquered the Jews, and this pseudo messiah was killed with hundreds of thousands of Jews, including Rabbi Akiba.

The Roman emperor Hadrian decided to stamp out the very name of the Jewish city. He changed its name to Aelia Capitolina. A new Roman city was then built upon the ruins of Jerusalem, with Roman buildings and pagan temples. No Jew was permitted to enter the city. Not until the year 350 A.D. were Jews again allowed to enter Jerusalem.

History tells us that since the destruction of the temple and the city, as foretold by the Messiah, Jerusalem has changed hands no less than nineteen times. Never since 70 A.D. has it been in the possession of the Jews.

### The Future of Jerusalem

As to the permanent future of this city, the Saviour declared: "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.

Does the Bible hold out a future for the restoration of this city to the Jewish people? During the last nineteen centuries, since its overthrow by Rome, it has been held by the Gentile people. The Jews have become scattered among all the nations, exactly as the Saviour forecast. Almost every land and clime have housed the literal seed of Abraham. They may be found in nearly every part of the world. Even in the isles of the sea these descendants of the patriarchs make their abode. Is there any hope recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, that this city will again some time in the future be the possession of this people? Not a word is found in the New Testament of a restoration of Palestine or of Jerusalem to the literal seed of the Jewish race. Their forebears unfortunately refused their own Messiah, and they lost their home-

land. When they failed to receive their Lord, the country given to them by the promise of God passed out of their hands. Messiah declared that Jerusalem would be captured by the Romans; this prophecy came to pass. The Saviour also declared that this city would remain in the hands of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.

In the same twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, in which the Saviour foretold the desolation of the Holy City, He also declared that when the gospel is preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, the end would come. Matt. 24:14. When the good news of the Saviour and His return is proclaimed to all the nations of earth, the Lord will then return to gather His own. The end of the world in its present state will then come. Jerusalem can never again be possessed by the seed of Abraham. The land never was theirs by right of conquest. The Holy City and the land of Palestine were given them by virtue of God's promise to their ancestors. It was God's country, promised to the seed of Abraham if they would continually obey His commands. They forfeited their right to the possession of it when they failed to receive their own Messiah. When they said they would not have Him to reign over them, He told them that their city would be destroyed, and it would pass into the hands of the Gentiles. What a literal fulfillment this prophecy made by the Lord Jesus has met.

## CHAPTER XVII

### WILL GOD FULFILL HIS PROMISES TO THE FATHERS?

**B**Y rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel, the Jewish people lost their national existence; they also lost their homeland. The Saviour told them that the kingdom of God would be taken from them, and the capital city, Jerusalem, would be destroyed by the Roman armies. The Saviour predicted that they would be scattered among the nations of earth, and they would never again possess the land which He promised their fathers. During the last nineteen centuries and more, the Jews have wandered from land to land, from one nation to another, and from one country to another. They are a people without a country; they sojourn in whatever land opens its doors to them. They are citizens of many countries.

#### The Promise Made to the Patriarchs

To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the Lord made definite promises of a perpetual country, of an everlasting homeland. The Lord said to Abraham: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." Gen. 13:14-17.

Of this promise made to the patriarch, the Scripture said:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Heb. 11:8, 9, 13.

In speaking of the promise of the inheritance to Abraham, the martyr Stephen said to the Sanhedrin in his apology before the council: “He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.” Acts 7:5.

The territory mapped out to Abraham which his seed should receive, was finally occupied for many centuries by his literal posterity. For more than fourteen hundred years the Israelites occupied the Land of Promise; but this country has not been in the possession of Abraham’s literal seed for almost twenty centuries. There is no promise that they will again occupy that territory as their own possession. Will the Lord fail to fulfill the promise He made to those faithful patriarchs?

The Scriptures repeatedly declare that not a single promise which the Lord has made, has failed, or can fail. Joshua 21:44, 45; 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56; Isa. 55:10, 11. The apostle Paul declares of God’s promises: “All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” 2 Cor. 1:20.

It is evident from the inspired testimonies of God’s faithful word that the promise of the inheritance to be possessed by Abraham and his seed included more than the territory of the land of Canaan. Says the apostle: “The promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to

his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Rom. 4:13.

When the Lord told Abraham to look north, south, east, and west, the vision He gave of his possession comprehended more than the local territory of Palestine. The four points of the compass, to which the Lord called Abraham's attention, included the entire world. Of the gathering of the saints at His second advent, the Saviour said: "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matt. 24:31.

### The Territory Abraham Expected

It is evident from what the apostle Paul states of Abraham's expectation, that the patriarchs looked forward to a heavenly, an eternal, inheritance. For says the Scripture: "If they [the patriarchs] had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a *heavenly*: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11:15, 16.

That Isaac and Jacob had the same expectation as did Abraham, is evident from the scripture which says: "By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Heb. 11:9.

Abraham looked for a city as well as a country. The country he looked for was a heavenly one. Of the city he expected to receive, the record says: "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10.

This city, the apostle Paul describes as follows: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." Heb. 12:22.

From the foregoing it is clear that the patriarchs looked for a heavenly country and a heavenly city.

The apostle John, in describing this heavenly country and heavenly city, writes: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . . And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Rev. 21:1-10.

This is the city whose builder and maker is God. It is true that the Lord is Creator of all things. This earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. Ps. 24:1. But the patriarchs looked forward to a country and a city of heavenly origin as their everlasting possession.

Had the literal seed of Abraham proved true to God and His plans for them, the Land of Promise might have been an earnest of what the Lord would have done for them with the whole earth.

#### The Land Given to the Children of Abraham

Of the land which God gave the Israelites, we read: "The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." Lev. 25:23.

That the people recognized that the land was the Lord's is evident from the following: "Lord, Thou hast been favorable unto *Thy land*: Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." Ps. 85:1.

Following the dedicatory prayer of the temple offered by King Solomon, the Lord appeared unto the king with this assurance: "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication. . . . I have hallowed this house, . . . to put My name there *forever*; and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there *perpetually*. And if thou wilt walk before Me, . . . in

integrity of heart, . . . then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel *forever*." 1 Kings 9:3-5.

"But if ye turn away, and forsake My statutes and My commandments, which I have set before you, . . . then will I pluck them up by the roots out of *My land* which I have given them." 2 Chron. 7:19, 20.

The Lord had promised David: "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and *move no more*." "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established *forever* before thee: thy throne shall be established *forever*." 2 Sam. 7:10, 16.

Concerning the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom, the Lord said through the prophet Jeremiah:

"If ye diligently hearken unto Me, saith the Lord, . . . then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, . . . and this city shall remain *forever*." Jer. 17:24, 25.

From the foregoing scripture, it is clear that the land which the Lord gave to the seed of Abraham was His land; He wanted them to enjoy it *forever*. If they would obey Him, He intended that they should remain permanently in that territory; the city of Jerusalem would remain *forever*.

When the Saviour delivered the sermon on the mount, His inaugural address, He recognized that Jerusalem still was "the city of the great King." Matt. 5:35.

But when the leaders of the nation rejected their own King, and refused to accept Him as their Saviour and Messiah, they disconnected themselves from God, and placed their hope and their national future in the hands of the Roman Caesars. The land was not Caesar's; it was God's. The Lord gave it to the Israelites in the promise He made to their ancestors. The Jews placed themselves where they did not desire God's rulership, they prevented Him from continuing His favor toward the land. They severed themselves from His favor.

However, the Lord could not fail to fulfill His promises to those faithful patriarchs, even though their literal seed rejected their God and Deliverer. He would be true to the assurances He had given to those faithful men.

### The True Seed of Abraham

The apostle Paul, however, makes very clear God's promise to the patriarchs and the failure of the literal seed. The apostle writes: "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. . . . That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Rom. 9:6-8.

The seed of Abraham, in its fullest intent, is expressed by the apostle Paul as follows: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is *Christ*." Gal. 3:16. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:29.

The Saviour recognized the Jews of His day as the seed of Abraham, when they said to Him: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." John 8:33.

Jesus answered: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill Me, because My word hath no place in you. . . . If ye were Abraham's *children*, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. . . . If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8:37-44.

Their earthly ancestry was from Abraham; their conduct was from Satan. Inasmuch as they acted contrary to the

spirit of the patriarch Abraham, they were not recognized as Abraham's true seed.

This people were literal descendants of the fathers, the patriarchs. Says the apostle Paul, of his kinsmen according to the flesh: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Rom. 9:4, 5.

They were to give the Messiah to the world, but though "He came unto His own, . . . His own received Him not." John 1:11.

The eventual fulfillment of the promise to Abraham of a seed, is Christ. In Christ the patriarchs will surely receive to the fullest extent the precious heritage which the Lord repeatedly assured His faithful servants. The literal seed failed; the true Seed succeeded. In Him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

The Lord did everything in His power to make it possible for the literal seed to enjoy all that was intended for Abraham and his seed. The Lord made public acknowledgment that He had exhausted His resources in His endeavor to make of the literal seed the light of the world. The prophet Isaiah spoke for God. He said: "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Isa. 5:4, 7.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FURTHER APPEALS TO THE NATION

**A**LTHOUGH boundless mercy and endless grace were lavished upon the Israelites by the Messiah during the three and one-half years of His ministry, further opportunities were to be extended to them through the everlasting kindness of the God of their fathers. It would seem as though the Lord by some means would enable that people to understand that His purpose for the nation was to freely and abundantly fulfill to them the assurances He had given the patriarchs, which He would accomplish through their seed.

Nationally the Sanhedrin, the administrators, had renounced their Messiah and their King. They publicly repudiated their Lord in the presence of their enemies. They had chosen their bitter and relentless foes as their deliverers. The Lord recognized that these national officials did not sense the course they had pursued. While the Saviour was suffering for them, while He was drinking to the dregs the cup of their sins, while they were treating Him so cruelly and maliciously, He offered to the Father in heaven in their behalf this most wonderful appeal: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34.

That these officials of the nation did not realize what they were doing is further evidenced by what the apostles declared. Says the apostle Peter: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."

“And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” Acts 3:13-15, 17.

The apostle Paul also records: “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” 1 Cor. 2:8.

### They Were to Be Visited Again

Just after pronouncing upon the scribes and Pharisees the woes that would come upon them and upon the nation because of their rejection of Him, the Saviour said: “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes.” Matt. 23:34.

Luke records the Saviour’s testimony in these words: “Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles.” Luke 11:49.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He informed the disciples: “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” Matt. 28:18, 19.

The Saviour specified how this work must be done, and in what order: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” “And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Luke 24:46, 47, 49. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

In the Judean cities and provinces, the towns and villages where the seed of Abraham made their abode, the apostles of Messiah were to be heard. It is true that what the nation had done to Jesus fulfilled prophecy concerning the Messiah. They made effective “whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.” Acts 4:28.

But God held no grievance against them. The Saviour was ready to forgive them. The apostle Peter told them: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:25, 26.

When this same apostle was asked by the multitudes in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost how to respond to his appeal, he answered: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38, 39.

#### Confirming the Saviour's Testimony

As the apostles were to go forth among the people, they were commanded by the Saviour to teach them "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. 28:20.

The Saviour told them: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5:17, 18.

The sacrificial system had met its fulfillment. There was no further need to offer the sacrifices of the slain beasts. These services had accomplished their mission. When the Saviour died on Calvary's tree, an invisible hand rent the veil of the temple which separated the holy from the most holy place, making it possible for everyone to observe the interior of the most sacred apartment of the temple. Under no conditions was any person permitted to see the interior of the most holy apartment of the temple, except the high priest, and he could enter only on the most sacred Day of Atonement.

When Christ died on Calvary's tree, an unseen divine hand tore apart the separating veil, and by this act it was indicated that the service of the sanctuary and temple which had been conducted for almost fifteen centuries had come to an end, had met its fulfillment. The Great Sacrifice, the promised Messiah, had been offered for the sins of Israel, and for all mankind.

The sacrificial ministry had not been overthrown. Indeed not; this was not possible, as long as mankind was in need of an atonement. But the prophets predicted that the time would come when the sacrifice for man would be a divine one, and the priestly services in man's behalf would be carried forward in heaven. Said the prophet Isaiah of this heavenly Sacrifice: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken." Isa. 53:4, 5, 8.

This substitutionary sacrifice, after He died, must be raised from the dead, as Isaiah said: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Isa. 53:10.

This offering for man must eventually become a High Priest, and His priestly ministry must be carried on in heaven. Says the psalmist: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Ps. 110:1.

The Israelites, from time immemorial, have taught and believed that this scripture applied only to the Messiah, the Son of David. The psalmist says further of this same Person:

“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Ps. 110:4.

Of this same individual, the prophet Zechariah wrote: “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zech. 6:12, 13.

The ancient Hebrew writers and commentators testify that the “BRANCH” of David, the “BRANCH” of the Lord, is the Messiah. There is no dissonance among them on this point. The same view is also taught by the Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages. It is the Messiah who is to be the high priest in the temple of the Lord, and who will sit upon His throne as high priest.

There is only one place where the Messiah can be a priest upon the throne. He could not be a priest on a throne on earth; for the priesthood on earth was given to the tribe of Levi. The Messiah must come forth from the seed of David, and King David came from the tribe of Judah. Heb. 7:14.

When Uzziah, king of Judah, at one time undertook to carry forth the priest’s office in the temple, by offering up the incense, this king was smitten with leprosy. 2 Chron. 26:16-21. For many years he was a leper, and he remained in a separate house as a leper until the day of his death.

#### **Peter’s Announcement of Messiah’s Position in Heaven**

It was on *She-vu-oth*, the day of Pentecost, that the apostle Peter told the seed of Abraham who were gathered in the sacred city to celebrate this Feast of Weeks: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not

ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:32-36.

### The Apostle Paul's Testimony

That Jesus the Messiah has become man's high priest in heaven, and that the temple service has therefore been transferred from earth to heaven in fulfillment of God's promise to the seed of Abraham, is also clearly taught by another of the seed of Abraham, the apostle Paul.

This apostle bears the following testimony of himself to his Jewish brethren:

"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." Acts 22:3.

"For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." Rom. 11:1.

"Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I." 2 Cor. 11:22.

"Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion. . . . I . . . profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." Gal. 1:13, 14.

"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee." Phil. 3:5.

This learned and devout Jew says of our Lord Jesus' priesthood in heaven: "Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." Heb. 2:17.

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” Heb. 4:14.

“So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Heb. 5:5, 6.

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Heb. 8:1, 2.

In view of the High Priest that we now have in the heavens, and in view of the ministry of the true sanctuary which has been transferred from the earth to the heavens, this same apostle writes to his Jewish brethren: “The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.” Heb. 9:6, 7.

The people to whom the apostle was writing well understood the meaning and the value of these services during their national existence. The apostle desires his Jewish brethren now to understand the full import of the sanctuary ministry. He says: “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a *figure* for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, . . . which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and cardinal ordinances, imposed on them until *the time of reformation*. But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle.” Heb. 9: 8-11.

The Lord Jesus, having fulfilled all those predictions in regard to the advent of the Messiah, His ministry on earth

among the Jewish people, and His death as the sacrifice for sins, transferred the priesthood from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly. All those figures were efficacious, until the time of reformation. This reformation took place when Jesus began His priestly ministry in heaven. And in heaven our Lord Jesus is and has been since His ascension, when He was anointed as the high priest for the house of Israel, and for all men, at the right hand of the throne of God, where He makes intercession for those who come unto God by Him.

### Teachings of Moses and the Prophets Fulfilled

The apostle Paul, as well as the other apostles whom the Lord sent forth to minister the gospel of grace, calls the attention of the seed of Abraham to the fulfillment of all the Lord promised in the writings of Moses and of the prophets; for when Paul made his defense before King Agrippa, he said: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." Acts 26:22.

The message which the Messiah sent to the Jewish people in regard to the sanctuary ministry of the Lord Jesus in heaven, was an outstanding further appeal to the Jewish nation to lead them to a clear understanding of the truth of God which was given unto the fathers. Says the great apostle to his brethren: "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:26, 27, 38, 39.

This man of God realized that the people who were listening to him did not sense the value of the message that he was presenting to them, and what the acceptance of this message would mean to them and to their nation. So he admonished them: "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts 13:40, 41.

With heaviness of heart he must have observed what was about to take place. "When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:45, 46.

Some time later, the apostle was obliged to repeat this statement to the seed of Abraham. "When they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Acts 18:6.

Just before his execution by the axman of Nero Caesar in the city of Rome, the apostle felt compelled to restate this same thing to his brethren after the flesh: "When they [the Jews in Rome] agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the

salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." Acts 28:25-28.

Most fervent and appealing messages were given to the seed of Abraham by the messengers of the Saviour, in order that these children of the patriarchs might turn to their Lord and Messiah; so that the Lord might make it possible for them to benefit by the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But to every appeal, to the leaders and to the multitude, they turned a deaf ear. Some here and others there responded to the call of their High Priest and Mediator; but the messengers of the Lord were forced to tell their own Jewish brethren that they found it necessary to turn to the Gentiles.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED

**G**OD was under no obligation to create the world and to place man upon it. The reason why the earth was brought into existence is given by the Lord in these words: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4:11.

Sin, sorrow, misery, and death were not included in God's original program for this world; for it is written: "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." Eze. 18:32.

The apostle tells us how these woes came into the world: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:13-15.

However, God did make ample provision to remedy evil should it arise; for it is written of the Lord Jesus, man's Saviour and Deliverer: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1 Peter 1:20. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13:8. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Rom. 5:20.

As soon as man departed from the path of rectitude and sinned against his Maker, God's plan of redemption for the human race immediately became effective. This provision for man's restoration to the favor of God is called the gospel.

Rom. 1:16. In the Old Testament the gospel is spoken of as "good tidings." The following statement will make this point clear: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." Isa. 61:1.

The Saviour, in quoting this scripture as authority for His mission, says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." Luke 4:18.

To Adam, the first man who sinned, and to his posterity, this gospel was offered. In regard to this saving power of the Lord Jesus to Abraham and his posterity, we read: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Gal. 3:8.

Of the Jewish nation, the literal posterity of the patriarch, the apostle says: "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 4:2.

This power of God to save men through the gospel of the Lord Jesus was manifested to Abraham's literal seed before it brought justification by faith to the heathen. The apostle says it was preached to us as well as unto them. He indicates that that people had the gospel before they rejected their Lord and Messiah. Of his Jewish brethren and their opportunity to accept the gospel, the apostle says: "They have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Rom. 10:16, 18.

### The Gospel's Power to Save

From what does the gospel save men? Why did the Father offer the Saviour to restore the human race? What was the necessity of making so great a sacrifice through the Son of God? The answer is found in one word, SIN. The

apostle John tells us that "sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4.

The prophet Isaiah says: "Thy first father hath sinned." Isa. 43:27. The first father is Adam. 1 Cor. 15:45. Our first parents, therefore, transgressed God's law. The only remedy that God has provided for sin is the saving power of the Lord Jesus.

The Jewish people were indeed acquainted with God's plan of salvation. God gave them His law. He offered them His grace when they transgressed that law. Through their entire wanderings in the wilderness for forty years, Christ ever was with them. It is written: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; . . . and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. 10:2-4.

Of the experiences of this same people, the apostle further writes: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." 1 Cor. 10:9.

The Lord put forth every effort to save those people through His divine power manifest in the gospel; for it is written: "He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour. . . . But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit. . . . Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him?" Isa. 63:8-11.

### The Sanctuary and the Sacrifices

The entire ministry of the sanctuary and its sacrificial system was a compacted form of the gospel. Moses wrote: "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Lev. 17:11.

This statement is in perfect harmony with what the apostle Paul wrote in the book of Hebrews, where he says: "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Heb. 9:22.

By faith in those sacrifices, and in the ministry of the priests who offered the blood upon the altar, those people were made to understand the great sacrifice to be made through the Lord Jesus, as the only One who could pardon their sins.

The night of His passion, the Lord Jesus told His disciples at the last supper that the cup they were to drink represented His blood of the new covenant, which the prophet Jeremiah said would be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Luke 22:17-20; Jer. 31:31-34.

The Saviour testified that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established. Matt. 18:16. At least twice does the apostle Paul declare that the new covenant was made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Heb. 8:6-12; 10:15-18.

The gospel was preached to the literal seed of Abraham. But they refused to accept God's power of salvation; the Scripture says that the gospel was preached to Abraham and to his seed. When the literal seed of the patriarch refused to accept the gospel, and rejected the Author and Finisher of their faith, it was then that the messengers of the Lord were obliged to say: We turn to the Gentiles.

Says the apostle Paul: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1:16. We must understand that the term "Greek" in this text applies to all non-Jews. The gospel of Christ is God's power to save Jew and Gentile. The Lord applied the spirit of adoption to the Gentile, when the literal seed failed to obey the gospel. For it is written: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Rom. 8:15.

**The Same Terms Applied to Gentiles as to the Literal Seed**

When the literal seed refused to remain the heirs of God, as it was their privilege, the Lord said that the kingdom of God would be given to another nation that would bring forth the fruits He desired. The same privileges were then offered to the Gentiles as were originally given to the nation called out of Egypt.

Of that people the Lord said: "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Ex. 19:6. The apostle Peter applies these same terms to the Gentiles, who become Abraham's adopted seed: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

The apostle reminds these people who they once were, and compares with their former estate their present relationship to God. He says: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." 1 Peter 2:10. The apostle says further of these people: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5.

**There Is Hope for the Literal Descendants of Abraham**

It must be remembered that, while the Jewish nation rejected their Lord and Messiah, God has not cast away the literal seed; for says the apostle Paul: "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite. . . . God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. . . . Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Rom. 11:1-5.

The grace of God is sufficient to save every individual descendant of Abraham through the gospel, as He is able to save the spiritual descendants of Abraham. For says the apostle to the Gentiles: "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is

come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?" Rom. 11:11, 12.

The apostle's burdened heart for his brethren in the flesh is beautifully expressed in these words: "I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them." Rom. 11:13, 14.

### The Lord's Olive Tree

The prophet Jeremiah, in describing God's people anciently, spoke of them as follows: "The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult He hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. For the Lord of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger." Jer. 11:16, 17.

God Himself called His people a green olive tree. But on account of the people's actions against God, the Lord felt obliged to break off some of the branches. This olive tree is spoken of by the apostle Paul in the following language: "If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Rom. 11:16-18.

But who is the root of this beautiful olive tree which the Lord Himself planted, and some of whose branches were broken off? Jesus Himself answers the question: "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the

churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Rev. 22:16.

Our Saviour Himself is the root. The apostle thus says further, of the grafted branches of this tree: "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. . . . And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." Rom. 11:19-23.

Thank God, there is hope for the literal seed of Abraham, if they remain not in unbelief. What God has done miraculously in grafting in the branches of a wild olive tree, and making them partakers of the root and fatness of the original olive, He surely is able to do for the natural branches of the original olive tree.

The apostle concludes his discussion of the olive tree, in the following language: "If thou [the Gentiles] wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Rom. 11:24-26.

The apostle virtually says: The Lord intends to save the olive tree. This olive tree is Israel. Isa. 45:17. Since some of the natural branches were broken off, the tree was not to be thrown away. The root of that tree is the Lord Jesus. He plans to keep the tree alive. He decided to take the branches of a wild olive tree, and graft them into the good olive tree contrary to nature. In this way, God plans that the wild

branches shall partake of the root and the fatness of the olive tree. The same root which gives life to the natural branches is able to give the same life to the branches that are grafted into the tree. In this way, says the apostle, all Israel will be saved. Then the apostle quotes Isaiah 59:20. The Deliverer, the Lord Jesus, originally came to Zion, which is Jerusalem. His coming was to turn away ungodliness. This He did when He forgave the people their sins, all those who came unto Him. He is able likewise to do the same for the Gentiles who come to Him and accept His pardon.

The gospel which was preached to Abraham and to his literal seed is proclaimed to Abraham's spiritual seed. The Gentiles, the spiritual seed, have been adopted into God's family, through the Lord Jesus. In the Lord Jesus, says the apostle, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:28, 29.

The natural branches in Christ, and the grafted branches through Christ, constitute God's olive tree.

To Abraham's seed have been committed the law of God, and the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This gospel is being proclaimed in all the world and among all nations. When this message shall have been fully announced, and to all nations the everlasting gospel has been given as a witness, the end will come. Matt. 24:14. At that time the fullness of the Gentiles shall have been reached.

The literal seed of Abraham received their day of gospel opportunity for fifteen centuries. The gospel was preached unto them. Since their day, the gospel has been offered to the Gentiles. Those who accept this good news in Christ become Abraham's true seed. To all nations and peoples, tribes and races, kindreds and tongues, Jews and Gentiles, heathen, savage, civilized, living on land or on the sea, either in the Orient or in the Occident, is being offered the final everlasting

gospel message, that all who believe may be grafted into the olive tree of which the Lord Jesus is the root. The door of mercy will remain open until this work is accomplished. The true Israel of God will then be saved. The end will come. Of those who will be ready to meet the Lord at His second advent, it will be said: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Rev. 14:12.

## CHAPTER XX

### A NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN PRAYER

**J**UST prior to our Lord's ascension to heaven, His disciples came to Him with this question: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6.

It would seem from the instruction which the Saviour had imparted to those disciples during the three and one-half years He was with them, that they would have understood that the kingdom He was to set up was not an earthly monarchy, with the city of Jerusalem as its capital.

All through their experience, the disciples had been influenced by rabbinical instruction. Repeatedly they came to the Master with certain questions which indicated that they were influenced by the teachings of the rabbis. Matt. 17:10-13. The Saviour had often told His followers not to give heed to the traditions of those rabbis, but rabbinical teaching had so affected these men that it seemed difficult to free them from rabbinism. Mark 7:5-23.

#### A Glorious Kingdom Ahead

For centuries, the rabbis taught the people that the kingdom of God belonged to the Jews, and the city of Jerusalem would be its capital. Luke 17:20-25. Great banquets would be enjoyed in that kingdom, and Jerusalem yet would be the glory and praise of the world. Luke 14:15. Although the Saviour had explained to His disciples that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the temple would no longer exist, it seemed well-nigh impossible for these disciples to be impressed with what the Saviour had told them in regard to the future of the Holy City. Mark 13:14, 19.

The Lord said He was to have a kingdom. He also told them that His kingdom was not of this world. John 18:36, 37. They believed that Jesus was to be King, for they remembered how He accepted the joyful praise of the multitude when He descended to the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Mark 11:8-10. They still hoped that before He left them, He would inform them that Jerusalem would be the capital of the kingdom He planned to establish; and now before His ascension they wondered whether this was the time when the kingdom would again be set up.

This is the Saviour's reply to their question: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Acts 1:7, 8.

When that power should descend upon the disciples, the Spirit of the Lord would so enlighten their understanding that the Scriptures of the prophets would have a new meaning to them. Then the rabbinical traditions would be thrown into the discard. The word of the Lord would be opened to their minds in a new way. Not once after the Holy Spirit was breathed on them did the disciples discuss the setting up of a kingdom in Palestine, nor did they mention the city of Jerusalem as the capital of such a kingdom. The Saviour had opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. The divine Spirit had enlightened them, so that they were able to perceive that Jerusalem and the Holy Land were not their future hope or their promised eternal haven. They had learned that the Messiah had an entirely different viewpoint for them, for their future, and for the world.

#### **A Resurrected Saviour Now the Burden of the Disciples' Thought**

The Scriptures of the prophets, the writings of Moses, the teachings of the Psalms, presented a crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord and Saviour to these disciples.

They now had a different experience to tell. No longer did they talk about a kingdom reestablished in Jerusalem. The slaying of the great leviathan, and the killing of the great ox, which the rabbis taught fed on a thousand mountains every day, that it might fatten for the righteous to eat in the kingdom, had no interest to these followers of Jesus. The sacred writings of Moses, of David, of Hosea, of Isaiah, presented to them an entirely new vision in regard to Jesus of Nazareth. To the Sanhedrin, to the rabbis, to the populace, these humble followers of the Lord Jesus repeated the message of those fearful events which were connected with the death of the Messiah, Son of the living God. They declared that this Jesus has been raised from the dead, and that He is now at the right hand of the throne on high. These leaders of Israel were called upon to repent, and to believe on the Lord Jesus as their only hope of salvation and redemption. Acts 2:22-36.

The Spirit of God had answered the question of the disciples about the setting up of a kingdom in Jerusalem, in an entirely different manner from what they had formerly anticipated. The burden of soul these men carried was to present to everyone the Lord Jesus as Saviour, Messiah, Deliverer. Acts 3:13-17. The apostles were not now concerned about a kingdom set up in the Holy City; they were interested in what was occurring at the right hand of God, where Jesus had gone to intercede in their behalf, and in behalf of those who believed on Him as their Deliverer. Acts 4:24-30.

Israel's leaders refused to accept the interpretation of Scripture as explained by the apostles. The Sanhedrin knew that if they expected to retain their hold on the multitudes, the rabbinical instruction in regard to the future of the kingdom of Israel must be accepted. Consequently, they added further laws, maxims, and precepts, in order that the descendants of the patriarchs might never lose sight of the promised future glory which would be theirs in Jerusalem and in Palestine, according to rabbinical teachings.

## A Daily Prayer

The rabbis have so arranged the worship of the Jews that they never forget that Jerusalem is their goal of future happiness, and the restoration of the Holy City the fulfillment of God's promise to them. Not a day passes but many petitions ascend for the fulfillment of those rabbinical teachings. Among the daily prayers repeated by the pious Jew in the synagogue, is found the following: "O be mercifully pleased to return to Jerusalem, Thy city; and dwell therein, as Thou hast promised. O rebuild it shortly, even in our days, a structure of everlasting fame, and speedily establish the throne of David thereon. Blessed art Thou, O Lord! who rebuildest Jerusalem."—*Prayers of Israel*," p. 85.

"Let it be acceptable before Thee, O Lord, our God! and the God of our fathers, that the holy temple may speedily be rebuilt in our days; and let our portion be in Thy law; and there will we serve Thee in reverence as in ancient days and as in former years.

"And may the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in ancient days and as in former years."—*Id.*, p. 97.

The Sabbath cannot pass without their reminding the Lord in regard to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. At the Friday evening synagogue service, the people repeat: "Rouse thyself: rouse thyself: arise, shine, for thy light is come. Awake, awake, utter a song, for the glory of the Lord is revealed upon thee." "O be not ashamed, neither be thou confounded. O Jerusalem, why art thou cast down? why art thou disquieted? In thee, the poor of thy people shall take refuge, and the city shall be built on her own heap."—*Id.*, p. 137.

At the Sabbath forenoon service, the following prayer is offered: "Shine forth from Thy place, O our King, and reign over us as we hope in Thee. . . . Speedily in our days inhabit it forever and ever. Thou shalt be exalted and sanctified in the midst of Jerusalem, Thy city, throughout all gen-

erations, and all eternity. May our eyes behold Thy kingdom, according to the word that is written in Thy mighty songs, by the hands of David, Thy righteous anointed."—*Id.*, p. 187.

No new moon may pass, no fast, no feast may come or go, but the rabbis have enjoined upon the people to plead with Heaven for the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. At the beginning of each month, this prayer is offered: "O God, and the God of our fathers, let our prayers ascend, and come, draw near, and behold, accept, hear, and visit and remember. Remember us and remember our ancestors, and remember Messiah, the son of David Thy servant, and remember Jerusalem the holy city, and remember all Thy people, the house of Israel."—*Id.*, p. 89.

#### Four Outstanding Fasts Observed by the Jews

Ever since the destruction of the temple of Solomon by King Nebuchadnezzar, the seed of Abraham have observed various fasts to commemorate that sad occasion, and similar events since. The prophet Zechariah speaks of these fasts as follows: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace." Zech. 8:19.

Yet after these twenty-five centuries since the Lord sent that message to the people through the prophet Zechariah, these fasts are still observed. It is at the time of the fast of the fifth Bible month, known among the Jews as "Tisha B'Av," the ninth day of Av (this coincides with August of our calendar), that the following prayer is offered at the synagogue service: "Comfort, O Lord, our God, the mourners of Zion and the mourners of Jerusalem, the city that mourns, which also lies waste and is destroyed, reproached, and desolate, which mourns for the sake of her children that is solitary for her inhabitants, robbed of her honor, desolate without the inhabitants of her dwellers; with her head shamed, like unto

a woman that beareth not. She is overwhelmed with sorrow. . . . Therefore Zion with bitterness weepeth, and Jerusalem lifteth up her voice. O my heart! My heart grieveth for those that were slain. . . . For Thou, O Lord, with fire hath consumed it, and with fire Thou wilt again rebuild it; as it is written, for I, said the Lord, will be unto her, a wall of fire round about it, and will be the glory in the midst of her. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the comforter of Zion, and the builder of Jerusalem.”—*Id.*, pp. 85-87.

At the time of the Passover, before the evening meal is finished, the family, gathered about the festive board, together announce: “Let us hope that before another year rolls round we shall inhabit Jerusalem.”

In the prayers for the Passover service are found these words: “O Lord our God, have mercy, we beseech Thee, upon Thy people Israel, and upon Jerusalem Thy city, and upon Thine altar, and upon Thy temple; and build Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days, and bring us up into the midst of it, and make us glad therein.”

It is the hope and prayer of every devout Israelite that he may spend his last days in the Holy City, and be buried amid the graves of his fathers. If this may not be done, it is the wish of the pious descendants of Abraham that a little of the soil of Jerusalem may be placed in the graves where they may be buried, in order that the Messiah may have them in remembrance when He raises the dead in Jerusalem, and when He shall establish the capital of His kingdom in the Holy City.

### A Multiplicity of Prayers

While the children of Abraham still observe the solemn feasts and sacred festivals, such as the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, the Blowing of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, in addition to the observance of the Feast of Purim and the Feast of Dedication, the prayers which they offer in the synagogue, prepared for them by the

rabbis, since the early dawn of Christianity, contain most earnest appeals to the Most High to speedily hasten the day when Jerusalem shall again be the possession of the people whom God chose to be His peculiar race. How fervently these petitions are offered up! In the synagogues may be seen the petitioner with sandals removed, with head bowed, weeping and crying aloud, in order that his prayers may be heard, and that Heaven may respond favorably.

It is not unusual for these devout petitioners to repeat many times the same prayer, with the hope and expectation that if the Lord failed to hear them the first time, He would eventually hear before they gave Him rest. Some pious believers feel that there can be no Messiah or any future for the Jew outside of the return of the Holy City. The thought of Palestine belonging to these people has never been lost sight of by them. The hope of the traditional leaders has been to keep this petition so everlastingly before the parent and the child, the rabbi and the student, that it becomes the outstanding passion of the true descendant of the patriarchs to see Jerusalem restored once again as it was when it was occupied by their ancestors.

The persistent teaching that Palestine and Jerusalem should belong to the Jews, may explain in part why the Jewish people, who gave the church and the world the entire Scriptures, the New Testament as well as the Old, have been kept in the dark in regard to the teaching of the New Testament. About fifty years ago only five per cent of the Jews knew of the existence of the New Testament. While a larger percentage of people now know of the existence of the New Testament, the pious orthodox will still keep the Jew from learning the contents of the New Testament. If the Jews would only read the New Testament, they would understand some of the reasons why the ancient city and the country of Palestine can never again be the possession of their people. They would comprehend what their own Messiah has said in regard to that country.

**Promises of a New Jerusalem**

From the foregoing, it is clear that the rabbis have placed the emphasis on a literal restoration of the earthly Jerusalem. They have omitted the promises the Lord made through the prophet Isaiah of the building of the New Jerusalem, the capital of the new heaven and the new earth, which the Lord promised His people, after His return at the second advent. Isa. 65:17-19; 66:22, 23.

It is not surprising that the Jews, who do not read and are not familiar with the New Testament, and who have no faith in their own Messiah, the Lord Jesus, after offering the afore-mentioned prayers for many centuries, have so deep an interest in the modern movement of the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to Palestine.

Through all these centuries, the rabbi and the synagogue have held before the people the glorious future of the land of their forefathers. No opportunity is missed by the rabbi to instill into the mind of the pupil that the day is coming when the land of Israel shall again be restored to the descendants of the patriarchs. The rabbis set aside those scriptures which were fulfilled by their predecessors, in the days of the kings of Persia, when the Lord made possible their return to the Holy Land. The leaders fail to stress the teachings of the New Testament in regard to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. All has come to pass which was foretold by the Saviour and by the apostles, as well as by the prophets of former days. The people still cling to the rabbinical hope, offered them by those who refuse to accept their own Messiah. The prayers of the synagogue encourage the belief in a glorious future for the Jewish people in the land of Palestine and in the city of Jerusalem. Well would it be for them if they only accepted the testimony of one of their own kings, who said: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chron. 20:20.

## CHAPTER XXI

### IS MODERN ZIONISM A FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY?

**A**LTHOUGH numberless prayers have been offered by the Jewish people through the centuries for the regaining of the land possessed by their forefathers, very little organized effort had been introduced to make possible this reclamation, until the latter part of the nineteenth century. There were periods during the Christian Era when no literal descendant of Abraham was permitted to sojourn in the cities of his ancestors. Yet the people hoped on that the era would arrive when the land again would become their possession.

The cries of the people to the God of heaven for the restoration of their prophets, have brought no apparent response. The pious of Israel weep, fast, clothe themselves in sackcloth and ashes, maintain periods of self-denial, and exert themselves to the limit, in the hope that it may yet be possible for them to again enjoy the favor of the God of their fathers. Nearly two millenniums have passed since their prayers have seemed to be heard, and there are those among them who almost question whether there is a living God.

Those who have found it possible to spend their time in Jerusalem have availed themselves of access to the Wailing Wall. At least twice each week groups may be seen gathered at the wall, where they mourn over the loss of their former possessions. At the time of the festivals, hundreds and thousands gather solemnly at this reminder of former glorious days, to pour out their souls to the Most High to "remember Jerusalem, the holy city."

The Lord is not deaf to the cries of His children. These people fail to remember that their prayers for deliverance

have long since been answered in the gift of the Son of God as their Messiah and Deliverer. God Himself, through the prophet, has made public confession that through the fulfillment of the Scriptures of the prophets, He exhausted His resources to save His people, when He freely and lovingly gave His own Son to die for sinners. Isa. 5:4; Mark 12:5-9; Rom. 8:32.

#### Britishers Interested in the Jews

About the middle of the nineteenth century, certain prominent Englishmen became interested in Palestine in behalf of the Jewish people. This interest, originally, was political. It was thought by these men that if the Jews could be returned to Palestine, it doubtless would satisfy their longings for their homeland, and at the same time it would be a benefit to Great Britain. Considerable agitation on this matter was continued for about ten years; then the matter was dropped.

About the year 1837, Doctor Russell, of England, published a book entitled, "Palestine, or The Holy Land." Doctor Russell suggested that with the changes then going on in the East, if the Jewish people could again get possession of that country, it would help to solve a number of problems. About this same time, another prominent Englishman, Lord Lindsay, published a series of letters on Palestine. In those letters he wrote:

"The Jewish race, so wonderfully preserved, may yet have another stage of national existence open to them, may once more obtain possession of their native land and invest it with a greater interest than it could have under any other circumstances."—*Great Britain and Palestine, Sidebotham, p. 44.*

It was about this time, too, that the Church of Scotland sent two of its prominent men to ascertain the conditions of the Jews in the Holy Land. Frequent mention was made in the English press during the latter part of the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, of the advantage of creating

## Is Zionism a Fulfillment of Prophecy? 179

a Jewish state. In the year 1840, the *Times*, a British newspaper, advocated the idea that England purchase Palestine from the Turks, and present it to the Jewish people.

This idea of the Jews' returning to Palestine was gaining ground, and the sentiment favoring such a suggestion began to affect many Jewish people in various parts of Europe.

### **Jews Begin to Emigrate to Palestine**

Whether the discussion of this question in Great Britain influenced the Jews to any extent may never be fully known; nevertheless between the years 1850 and 1870 a large number of Jews emigrated to Palestine, and began to work the land. They founded several colonies, and in the year 1870 the first Jewish agricultural school was established for boys near the town of Jaffa. Encouraging reports were received by their coreligionists in Europe; and between the years 1880 and 1890 some ten or a dozen Jewish colonies came into existence and flourished. The immigrants found the soil hard to work, as it had lain dormant for many centuries. But these sturdy people, glad for the privilege of finding themselves in the land of their fathers, proved that the labor they put forth brought encouraging results. New ground was constantly being broken, and the Jews and Arabs lived on very friendly terms.

### **Modern Zionism Is Founded**

Toward the close of the nineteenth century, an unfortunate incident occurred in Europe, when a Jewish army officer was banished from his adopted country. In certain sections anti-Semitic feeling ran high, and the political horizon did not appear very clear for the Jewish people. About this time there appeared a bright, keen Hungarian Jew by the name of Theodore Herzl, who was training to be a lawyer. Herzl wrote a book in German, entitled, "Judenstat" (Jewish State). The book appeared in 1896, and it at once created a sensation among the Jews. It made an appeal to the children of Abraham. This young Hungarian was in Paris at

the time as a newspaper correspondent for a German daily. He was immediately hailed as a man of destiny. Many European Jews looked upon Herzl as a deliverer, although his sentiments were not accepted by all the European Jews. Soon Herzl was received by kings and rulers.

There were already a large number of Jews who had advocated the idea of a political Zionist home in Palestine, and these people were known as Zionists. There were also found non-Jews in Europe who were favorable to the idea of founding a Jewish state. The Jewish Zionists at once rallied about this new prospective deliverer, and an agitation for a permanent possession of their forefathers' country was soon under way in many lands. Zionism grew and multiplied. The literal descendants of Abraham made themselves felt and heard, as they gave free expression to their longing for the land formerly held by their ancestors.

The British Royal Commission invited Mr. Herzl to appear before them, and gave him information on alien immigration. Improving this unusual opportunity to appear before so prominent a government commission, Mr. Herzl became acquainted with a number of high officials, among whom was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who then was secretary of state for the colonies. Through this high British official Mr. Herzl was enabled to negotiate for a charter from the Egyptian government to settle a large number of Jews in the Sinaitic peninsula, adjoining southern Palestine. He was unsuccessful in this, but he was offered a large tract of land in British East Africa to locate settlements of Jews. But British East Africa was not Zion.

About this time, the Zionist movement, as it was beginning to take form, was not looked upon favorably by the Russian government. Mr. Herzl therefore went to St. Petersburg, where he was received by several prominent officials who listened intently to his plan to settle the Jews in Palestine. The Russian leaders assured Mr. Herzl that they would be more lenient with his people. They also gave him to under-

## Is Zionism a Fulfillment of Prophecy? 181

stand that they would give consideration to his proposals for the amelioration of his people.

### Zionist Congress Introduced

While many influential Jews favored Mr. Herzl's idea of creating colonies of Jews in Palestine, his political Zionist movement was not received everywhere with open arms by his coreligionists. In some countries where the Jews were firmly established, and received every consideration as citizens, there was much opposition to Herzl's scheme by rabbis, professors, and literary men. Nevertheless, this man was persistent in what seemed to him a great movement to return his people to their fatherland.

In order that this movement might receive greater prominence, an international convention was called. The first Zionist Congress convened in the city of Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. A platform was drawn up at this gathering; it was called the "Basel Programme." In this platform were stated the plans and purposes of the Zionist movement, with the following as the object of Zionism: "The establishing for the Jewish people of a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine."

Following this first congress, annual gatherings were held, and the leading spirit in all such gatherings was Mr. Herzl. In fact, he was the outstanding spirit of the movement during the remainder of his lifetime. At every Zionist gathering he was the leading figure, and the stimulating force on all the prominent committees. Mr. Herzl died July 3, 1904. While there was no great leader to keep the Zionist fires burning after Mr. Herzl's decease, other prominent Jews endeavored to stimulate Zionist influences. These influential Jews hoped that a door might be opened through which many Jews, who found their stay in certain lands not desirable, might enter Palestine.

In 1901 the fifth Zionist Congress was held, and at that time action was taken that hereafter the Zionist Congress

should convene biennially. This plan for conducting biennial sessions of the congress is continued till the present. The actions committee, which originated in the Zionist Congress and which was the outstanding committee for a number of years, met with many obstacles in its endeavor to hold the Zionist movement to its original Basel program.

From time to time leaders among the Jews arose who suggested that the Jewish people be located in other lands than Palestine, and under different conditions. Despite the opposition which was continually being felt among the Zionists, and despite the factions which continually were arising within the organization itself, the purpose of securing Palestine as a homeland for themselves was never lost sight of by the followers of the Zionist movement.

### The Balfour Declaration

After more than twenty years of earnest and uninterrupted labor on the part of the Zionist organization to bring about its desired aim of securing the Holy Land as the home of the Jews, the auspicious hour of seeing their labors rewarded seemed to arrive near the close of the World War. An outstanding Zionist, yet a loyal Britisher, is Mr. Chaim Weizmann, who was an ardent worker in the British chemical laboratories. Through this loyal supporter of British aims and purposes, Earl Balfour, who on November 2, 1917, was one of England's most prominent government officials, made the following proposal to the British Zionists: "His Majesty's government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, . . . it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities."

Before discussing the merits and effect of this declaration, it might be well to give a brief background of the foregoing statement, which may have influenced the giving of this pronouncement to the Jewish people. In his book, "Great

## Is Zionism a Fulfillment of Prophecy? 183

Britain and Palestine," Herbert Sidebotham, the author, gives a description and views of Mr. Weizmann. Mr. Sidebotham says of Mr. Weizmann:

He "was reader in chemistry in the University of Manchester. His scientific attainments were very considerable, and were afterward to be put to most useful service in the Allied cause. . . .

"He was a Russian Jew, . . . a son of the ghetto. . . .

"Doctor Weizmann was brought up in the strictest school of Jewish orthodoxy, but his conversion to Zionism—in the political, not the liturgical sense, in which every Jew is a Zionist—came very early in life. Although Russia had his affection, England early captured his youthful imagination. . . .

"He early indulged dreams that England would be the power that would restore the Jews to Zion."—*Pages 28, 29.*

"Mr. Balfour was fighting a very difficult election in Manchester [England, in the year 1906], where Doctor Weizmann then lived. His agent, hearing that Mr. Balfour wanted further information about Zionism, suggested that he should have a talk with Doctor Weizmann, who, as a member of the Zionist Actions Committee, knew all about the subject. Doctor Weizmann, after some hesitation, . . . finally agreed, and he spoke long and eloquently to Mr. Balfour on the subject. Their next meeting was ten years later at a reception in London. 'It is not necessary to introduce Doctor Weizmann to me,' said Mr. Balfour then. 'He is the man who converted me to Zionism in the middle of the East Manchester election.' . . .

"A year later Weizmann placed at the disposal of the government a new method of making acetone, which was of great importance in the manufacture of high explosives, and came to London in the service of the government. His ability as a chemist brought him into close touch with other members of the government, and he was not the man to miss any opportunity of putting the case for Zionism which lay so near

to his heart. It was natural that, working as he was for British victory in the war, . . . his advocacy of Zionism should also acquire a strongly British tinge. And it was in fact the needs, political and strategic, of British policy, that definitely inclined the scale in favor of Zionism."—*Pages 54, 55.*

Shortly after the Balfour Declaration, many of the Jewish papers, particularly those under British influence, publicists, orators, rabbis, cantors, and other professional men interpreted this declaration to mean that the entire country of Palestine was now to be turned over to the Jewish people. Effective machinery was soon put into operation for emigrating to Palestine masses of the Jews from those lands where the Jews were not as welcome as they had been in former years. Great bustle and stir were felt in Jewish organizations favoring this move toward Zion. Committees, congresses, councils, and conventions were the order of the day. Those responsible in this movement undertook to make possible what they believed was their legitimate right in gaining possession of the Holy Land.

Emigration to the country began in real earnest. From December, 1917, to May, 1921, upwards of fourteen thousand Jews entered that country, while from June to December, 1921, almost eight thousand gained admission into Palestine. During the years 1922 to 1926, more than seventy-five thousand were admitted into Palestine.

### **Immigration Begins to Slow Down**

Because of this rush into the country, disaffection and displeasure were expressed by other peoples living in Palestine. Inhabitants of that land who had occupied the territory for centuries did not appreciate such unlimited immigration into the country by a people who had been aliens to the land, but who now proclaimed that they were to become possessors of Palestine. England recognized the necessity of issuing a supplementary definition of the Balfour Declaration, by

## Is Zionism a Fulfillment of Prophecy? 185

telling the Zionists that it was not her intention of imposing a strictly Jewish "nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole," but that it was "contemplated that the status of all citizens of Palestine in the eyes of the law shall be Palestine, and that it has never been intended that they or any section of them should possess any other juridical status."

It was, however, the plan of the Zionists that Palestine should be as Jewish as England was English, or as America was American. It was their hope and plan that the Jews would occupy Palestine as a "Jewish Commonwealth." They expected that the country would be given into their hands as their very own, although they recognized the rights of other peoples of the country to live in that land.

Following this modification of the Balfour Declaration by Great Britain, as the Zionists regarded it, there developed rather a peculiar situation in regard to the mandate given to the British Government over that country. Nevertheless, immigration went forward, even though not as briskly as aforesaid. For during the years between 1927 and 1931, more than nineteen thousand immigrants entered that territory.

Beginning with the year 1932, the flow of immigrants increased. The peak year of immigration was 1935, when more than sixty thousand people entered Palestine. Between the years 1932 and 1938, well-nigh two hundred thousand Jews entered Palestine. From the time of the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 until the close of 1938, more than three hundred thousand Jews were admitted as immigrants into Palestine. By the beginning of 1939 there were in Palestine almost four hundred thousand Jews. How much longer this flow will continue, time only will tell.

Other thousands of Jews entered Palestine, not as immigrants, but as tourists, but these latter remained in the country. These added thousands would augment the number already mentioned.

**Does This Movement Have Religious Significance?**

What significance, if any, does this modern Zionist movement have in connection with the Sacred Scriptures? Does the word of God intimate or predict that such a movement as this would occur in the latter part of the nineteenth or in the opening of the twentieth century? Have we any forecast either in the Old Testament or in the New, that tens of thousands of Jews should immigrate into the land of Palestine in these latter days, and that this inflow would mark a fulfillment of prophecy? Does this movement constitute one of the signs of the last days, an omen of the nearness of the end, or of the coming of the Lord? Can we point to any portion of the word of the Lord as a fulfillment of what has occurred and what is now occurring among the Jewish people, in connection with this Zionist movement?

It would bring great joy to many hearts if such a forecast were contained in the Scripture. The sympathies of multitudes have been drawn upon, as they have read of the terrible afflictions visited upon the descendants of Abraham in many lands. If a return to the land of their fathers would heal the sorrows and afflictions, the perplexities and distresses, through which they have passed during the last twenty centuries, even as a return to Palestine brought joy and gladness to their ancestors following the seventy years' exile in the Babylonian and Persian Empires, great rejoicing would be felt by all who love God and their fellow men.

All the promises which God gave their ancestors, He has fulfilled. Not a single prophecy or promise remains unfulfilled. Furthermore, the promised Messiah who was to come through that people appeared at the proper time. The gospel of the blessed Saviour has been proclaimed and is being proclaimed to all the world. The next outstanding event portrayed in the Scriptures is the second advent of the Lord Jesus. There is no part of the Bible in which we learn of a Palestinian movement to be conducted by the literal descendants of the patriarchs in these latter days.

## Is Zionism a Fulfillment of Prophecy? 187

It does bring satisfaction to know that the Jews, who have been so abused by the nations, may find a refuge in some lands where the sole of their feet may be at rest. It is good that there are countries that welcome the Jew, as well as people of other nationalities. Many countries gladly receive immigrants and encourage the newcomers to receive the blessing of the country, but we do not consider such immigration as a fulfillment of prophecy.

### How God Fulfilled His Promises

When God made promise to the patriarchs that they should have a seed, and this seed should inherit a country, every member of the family, especially the male members, was registered. The descendants preserved their records which proved their title to the land. This method of procedure was conducted from the time Abraham was called until the archives in the temple at Jerusalem were consumed at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Roman general, in 70 A.D.

When the exiles returned to Palestine, in the days of the divinely appointed leaders, Ezra, Nehemiah, and others, the records of the captives had been kept intact. When certain men who professed to belong to the tribe of Levi, desired to take part in the ministry of the priesthood, the genealogical records of these persons were not found. They were not permitted to have any part in the sanctuary service. Ezra 2:61-63.

The patriarch Jacob prophesied that the tribal distinction should not depart from Judah until Shiloh should come. Gen. 49:10. When Shiloh, the Messiah, came, tribal distinctions came to an end. Genealogical records were not preserved after this. All such records were destroyed at the time the temple at Jerusalem was burned with fire. No records of tribal distinction have been kept since those days. No Jew can prove his distinct tribal genealogy. During the history of the Israelitish people in the land of Canaan, the Lord

sent them prophets, appointed their leaders, and had personal charge of their movements. All such appointments and relationships terminated nearly twenty centuries ago. There are no Scriptural records which say those former conditions shall be revived before the second coming of Christ. When the Saviour returns in power and great glory to receive those who have waited for Him, He then shall sit upon the throne of His glory. He shall be King of kings and Lord of lords. The kingdoms of this world will then become His exclusive jurisdiction. He shall have charge of the world. All should prepare, whether Jew or Gentile, for that soon-coming day. May we encourage all, Jews as well as Gentiles, to meet Him in peace.