

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

JACOB’S TROUBLE AND THE FINAL RESTORATION

(Chaps. 30, 31)

Nowhere in Scripture, so far as I am aware, have we clearer instruction as to the final, literal restoration of Israel, preceded by the great tribulation, than in the section which now claims our attention. If read in connection with Matthew 24, 25; Romans 11; and the books of Daniel and Revelation, it will help much to give a clear outline of what God has in store for His earthly people. Because of its supreme importance in this regard, we shall look at it verse by verse, in place of making as hasty a survey as of some previous portions.

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book” (vers. 1, 2).

It is necessary that we have clearly before our souls the fact that here, as in all Scripture, God Himself is speaking. **“The Lord God will do nothing unless He reveal it to His servants the prophets.”** Having been pleased thus to announce His purposes for Israel, we can be assured that it is for our profit and blessing to seek to become acquainted with what is so manifestly near to His heart.

“For, 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” (ver. 3).

** Having divided into two kingdoms after Solomon, the ten tribes (forming the bulk of the nation) are distinguished as “Israel;” while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the kingdom of “Judah.”*

Distinctly we are told that both Israel and Judah - not the latter only - are to be returned to their land. Nor does the temporary restoration at the expiration of the seventy years fulfil the terms of this prophecy; for, when brought back to the home of their fathers, they are to **“possess it,”** which was manifestly not the case with those who returned under Zerubbabel, as their descendants were scattered again among the nations, and remain so to this day.

At that time also, though a few from the ten tribes went back with the remnant of Judah, there was no regathering of Israel, as such. When the Lord's set time to remember Zion has come, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes will be delivered out of the hand of the Gentiles. (See Revelation 7). The number may be figurative, we admit, but it at least implies a goodly company out of each tribe.

“And these are the words the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah” (ver. 4).

Here note again how clearly the northern and the southern kingdoms are referred to. Both have been scattered. Both are included in God's counsels of judgment and grace.

“For thus saith the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace” (ver. 5).

Before there can be the fulfillment of the promises of blessing, there must be the tasting to the full of the cup of the Lord's indignation. The subject therefore to which these words introduce us is that of **“the great tribulation”** (See Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14). Before the appearing of Israel's once rejected Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom, the favored nation will be exposed as never before to the power of the oppressor and to the malice of Satan. It is their special punishment for having crucified and slain the Anointed of the Lord.

“Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?” (ver. 6).

So terrible will be that time of trial, but so sure is the joy to follow, that it is likened to the travail-pains that precede the birth of a child. Strong men will be in anguish as of a woman in her pangs.

“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (ver. 7).

To the Church the promise is: **“Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall Come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”** (Revelation 3:10).

The saints of this dispensation shall be kept from the hour of travail. Those of the next period will be saved out of it: they will pass through it, but find deliverance at last when the Lord returns in glory. This short but dreadful time of sorrow is emphatically the time of Jacob's trouble. Necessarily others will be involved in it.

All **“earth-dwellers,”** in fact, will have to suffer while it continues; but it is the special season of Israel's sifting, when God will repay them double for all their sins. Scripture gives no hint of the Church passing through this unparalleled tribulation. It is not for the testing of the members of the Body of Christ, but for the chastisement of Israel.

“For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (vers. 8, 9).

The yoke referred to is that of the last great Gentile power, the ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 - the Roman empire revived in its last and awful form. The power of the beast will be destroyed by the appearing in flaming fire of the Lord Jesus Christ with all the armies of heaven (Revelation 17); after which Israel, restored to their land, shall enter into rest under Messiah’s beneficent rule. **“David their king”** refers, doubtless, not to the first son of Jesse who wore the royal diadem, but to the fact that the reign of the Lord is the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to raise up, of David’s line, One to rebuild his fallen tabernacle and to sit upon his throne.

“The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32, 33).

This declaration, communicated by Gabriel, has never been fulfilled in the present dispensation. Not for one moment has the Lord Jesus sat upon David’s throne. He now sits upon His Father’s throne (Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 1:3). At the end of this age He will rise from that throne, when His enemies are made His footstool (Hebrews 1:13; Psalm 110:1). Then He will descend to earth to fulfil the promise spoken of by Gabriel and all the prophets.

“Therefore fear thou not, O My servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid” (ver. 10).

Was this the case when Judah returned by permission of Cyrus? Were they in rest? Did none make them afraid? The book of Nehemiah and the apocryphal records of the Maccabees give the answer, as also the Gospels themselves. From their return to the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, we have one long record of unrest and warfare. To the near future we must look for the carrying out of this word. **“For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished”** (ver. 11).

Their long sojourn among the Gentiles is but the fulfillment of this. The legend of the Wandering Jew, deathless, yet ever moving on, has its foundation here. Impossible to destroy the people of the Lord’s choice! Empires may rise and fall, nations may be blotted out as the meteors of the heavens, but Israel shall abide, and at last will triumph and bear rule over all the earth.

“For thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased” (vers. 12-14).

Prophets and seers had sought in vain to apply the healing word. Disaster and captivity even had not resulted in recovery. That the wound was utterly incurable so far as human power was concerned, the Cross would soon bring out. God in Christ walked among them in lowly grace. They nailed Him to a gibbet. Disowned by the Lord, for a time, they must be.

Antichrist, the false shepherd, shall bear rule over them in the day of their deepest tribulation. Their **“lovers”** - that is, the idols in which they had trusted - shall avail them naught. They must know to the full that **“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God.”**

The Gentile nations, however, who shall be the means of their affliction, shall in their turn know the rod of the Lord's wrath.

“Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, everyone of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey” (ver. 16).

All down through the centuries the nations have been made to know the truth of this verse.

None have prospered long who oppressed Israel. Babylon and Assyria exist not; while Persia and Greece are still preserved. So among modern nations. There should be no question that one source, at least, of the strength of Britain and the United States is found in this, that they have, as a rule, befriended the Jews. On the other hand, the history of the powers who have stretched out their hands against the Lord's people, records disaster after disaster. Spain is witness to this; as, markedly, Russia is also - that great dominion of Gog.

“For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after” (ver. 17).

Through the wounded One the wounds of Israel shall yet be healed, when, no longer outcast, they shall be called **“Sought out, A city not forsaken”** (Isaiah 62:12).

“Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry; and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before Me, and I will punish all that oppress them” (vers. 18-20).

Temporal blessings await repentant Israel as of old, **“when there was no strange god with him.”**

The city, rebuilt upon the ancient site, shall be filled with joy and gladness; young and old shall alike be blessed, as Zechariah also prophesies:

“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” (Zechariah 8:4, 5).

No longer oppressed by the haughty stranger, **“their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto Me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? saith the Lord. And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God”** (vers. 21, 22).

There seems to be good reason to believe that the **“governor”** here spoken of is the same as the prince referred to so frequently in the last five chapters of Ezekiel. (See Ezekiel 44:3; 45:7; 46:2, etc). He will, we gather, be a direct lineal descendant of David, and will be the earthly ruler, subject in all things to the glorified Immanuel. In this day of **“the restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets,”** the hearts of the people will have been fully turned to the Lord - that is, the spared remnant, for the apostate part of the nation will be destroyed in the great tribulation which is brought to our notice once more in the closing verses of this chapter.

“Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until He have done it, and until He have performed the intents of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it” (vers. 23, 24).

The expression **“the latter days”** is evidently synonymous with **“the time of the end”** of Daniel 12, when **“many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand”** (ver. 10).

The fury of the Lord will fall with awful power upon the ungodly part of the nation who own Antichrist’s impious sway; but those who refuse **“the mark of the beast”** (Revelation 13), and who honor the Lord’s Word, will then come into blessing.

Chapter 31 continues the general subject, dwelling more particularly upon the deliverance of the righteous remnant, and the establishment of the new covenant with them.

“At that time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people” (ver. 1). The Lo-ammi sentence of Hosea 1:9 will be forever repealed, for it is written: **“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God”** (Hosea 1:10). **“Thus saith the Lord: The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest”** (ver. 2).

The faithful remnant in the latter day are doubtless referred to. By Ezekiel a similar message is given:

“I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people” (or nations), **“and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord”** (Ezekiel 20:34-38).

In that unparalleled tribulation period, referred to in Matthew 24:21, the apostates of Israel will be destroyed by the judgment of the Lord; after which, those who have faithfully sought to walk in His ways will be established in the land.

All this, however, is pure grace; for it is His own loving-kindness that shall attract their hearts to Himself. Hence we read:

“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (ver. 3).

It is His eternal love for them, not theirs for Him, that insures their final blessing. So with us: **“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”** (I John 4:10). When in us, as in Israel, there was naught to draw out that love, save, indeed, our deep and bitter need, He set His heart upon us and wooed us for Himself. In this way had He dealt with His earthly people; and having once set His affections upon them, He will never give them up.

“Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry” (ver. 4).

For centuries their harps have been hung upon the willows, for **“how can they sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”** But soon the scene of the dance and song led by Miriam on the banks of the Red Sea shall be repeated in grander, fuller measure, when all their enemies are overthrown forever. In that day also they **“shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things”** (ver. 5).

The temple at Jerusalem will be rebuilt on a scale of magnificence previously unknown, and the tribes shall once more gather there to celebrate the feasts of the Lord.

“For there shall be a day that the watchmen Upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. For thus saith the Lord: Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel” (vers. 6, 7). The **“time of the singing”** (Song of Solomon 2:12) will have truly come, when the Lord shall turn again the captivity of His people.

“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind, and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born” (vers. 8, 9).

God was not revealed as Father in an individual sense in the Old Testament.

- To Abraham He was known as the Almighty, or the All-Sufficient;
- To Moses, as the Lord; prophetically, as the Most High;
- To the remnant in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, as the God of heaven.

The Lord Jesus it was who revealed the Father to us - **“My Father and your Father,”** He says. This is blessedly individual. Each saint is a child, and can cry by the Spirit, **“Abba, Father.”** Nationally, Israel was His son. As so recognizing them, He is spoken of as Father, but in no nearer sense. **“Doubtless thou art our Father,”** the future remnant are entitled to say, **“though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting”** (Isaiah 63:16).

In the book we are studying we have already noticed the Lord’s pathetic appeal: **“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, my Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?”** (chap. 3:4).

As a Father, often grieved but loving still, He will rejoice over them when once more they ask the way to Zion.

“Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock” (ver. 10).

No temporary restoration can be here contemplated; no gathering to allow of scattering again; but they shall be brought back to be kept by the faithful **“Shepherd of Israel,”** nevermore to wander from the fold.

“For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he” (ver. 11).

He has never given up His purpose of redemption. As a nation they were sheltered by blood from judgment and redeemed by power from Pharaoh’s thralldom, when He brought them out of Egypt. He has contemplated them ever since from that standpoint.

His grace cannot admit of failure to bring them into fulness of blessing at last, however much their ways may have necessitated chastisement in the interim. When brought safely through the time of Jacob’s trouble, they will sing the song both of Moses and of the Lamb (Revelation 15). Their final deliverance is intimately connected with their salvation from bondage in the past.

“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord” (vers. 12-14).

It is an utterly false system of exegesis that would spiritualize all this, and then apply it to the Church in this dispensation. The language is plain and simple. It is a millennial picture, descriptive of the joy of Messiah’s kingdom when set up in this world.

In verses 15-17 we have the tribulation period once more referred to, with comforting assurances of blessing eventually. We know well that the words of verse 15 are referred by the Holy Ghost to the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem, under Herod’s cruel edict. **“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping, for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.”** (Comp. Matthew 2:17, 18). That was a similar case and an apt fulfillment of the passage, but the two following verses make it evident that a second and more complete fulfillment is contemplated; for it is distinctly stated that the children of which Rachel is bereft shall **“come again from the land of the enemy,”** and that they **“shall come again to their own border.”** It is captivity, and not alone slaughter, that is contemplated. This twofold application of prophecy is very common in Scripture, as witness Peter’s citation from the prophet Joel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The words will have a fuller performance in the last days in connection with the ushering in of the kingdom.

From verses 18 to 21 the repentance of the ten tribes (*often referred to under the name Ephraim, as the two tribes are included in the term Judah*) is vividly depicted.

“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God” (ver. 18).

Hosea had declared that **“Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer”** (Hosea 4:16). This is here taken up as their own confession, but they turn to the One so long refused and sinned against. In true self-judgment Ephraim is heard to exclaim, **“Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth”** (ver. 19).

It is the acknowledgment of the Lord’s grace in bringing them back. Smiting on the thigh is, I judge, an expression symbolizing the entering once more into covenant. This breathing after Himself is at once responded to by the Lord, who exclaims:

“Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord” (ver. 20).

Hence the call to take the highway leading back from the lands of the nations to their ancestral home in Palestine. **“Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thy heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, o virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities”** (ver. 21). How boundless the grace that owns as a virgin the people that had been so horribly polluted!

“How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man” (ver. 22).

The so-called “Fathers” were wont to apply this verse to the incarnation. The woman, with them, was the Virgin Mary: the man, her Holy Son. This, however, seems to be quite unwarranted and dubiously fanciful as an interpretation. Is it not more likely that the woman referred to is the virgin of Israel of the preceding passage? In that case the man would possibly be the symbol of power in the hands of the Gentile. (See Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2). Israel, weak as a woman, shall compass, or overcome, the power of the nations. This would harmonize with the context. The verse is confessedly difficult and the meaning obscure.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and have replenished every sorrowful soul” (vers. 23-25).

When could Jerusalem have been referred to as the **“habitation of justice and the mountain of holiness”** in the five centuries following the return by permission of Cyrus? Beyond all contradiction these are promises yet to be made good. They refer to Judah, not the Church; therefore the Jews must be brought back to their land and established there in the fear of the Lord if this word is to be carried out. **“The Scripture cannot be broken.”**

Our prophet has been like a man in slumber while this vision of future glory and rest was unfolded to him. He is now aroused and his heart filled with a sweet, trusting peace as he enters into the purpose of God for his people. **“Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me”** (ver. 26). The few verses following recall at once the parable of the sour grapes uttered by Ezekiel at about the same time.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast . . . And I will watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge” (vers. 27-30).

In Ezekiel 18 we find that this proverb had become a common one on the lips of the people of Judah. Blind to their own sins, they attributed their misfortunes to the Lord’s anger because of the evil doings of their fathers. This was far from being the case, as both Ezekiel and Jeremiah testify. Their own sins had drawn down condign judgment.

They had eaten the sour grapes, therefore were their teeth set on edge. **“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”** This they will be brought to confess in the time of their greatest sorrow; and as a result, we find the Lord sowing them once more in their land; building and planting, whereas before He had been obliged to pluck up and afflict.

Following on this, the new covenant will be made with them. It is important to note that while the blessings of the new covenant are ours, yet it is never said to be made with the Church. In the epistle to the Hebrews, as in the passage before us, it is distinctly stated that it is to be made with **“the house of Israel and the house of Judah”** (Hebrews 8:8-13).

The Mediator of that covenant is the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of the new covenant is that which He shed for our sins. Therefore believers now rejoice in the distinctive blessings it insures; but it is with the earthly, not with the heavenly, people that the covenant itself is to be made.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord” (vers. 31, 32).

It were folly to speak of a new covenant with the Church, when no former covenant had been made with us. In the case of Israel and Judah it is different. They entered into the covenant of works at Sinai. That covenant had two parties to it. If they did their part, God would fulfil His. Alas, on that ground they forfeited everything before ever the tables of the covenant were brought down from the mount! Legal righteousness they had none.

In the new covenant God alone is the responsible One; hence they are placed in the position of recipients. It is pure grace. As we, also, are saved on this ground, it is clear that the same principle is operative in both cases; but the new covenant, as such, has its place in connection with them alone.

We get the terms of it in the next two verses:

“But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (vers. 33, 34).

There is no possibility of failure here, because all the pledges are on God’s side.

This covenant, therefore, once made, shall never be abrogated. It is **“an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”** Israel and Judah, one nation in the land - purged, repentant and forgiven - shall never more forfeit the Lord’s favor. Forever they shall be debtors to His grace.

“Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is His Name: If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus saith the Lord: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord” (vers. 35-37).

The vastness of the heavens above and the earth beneath set forth this immeasurable mercy to Israel. In the face of this passage, what possible ground is there left for those to stand upon who teach the ultimate rejection of the once-favored nation?

Mark: it is not here a promise to bring Israel into blessing through the Church, and by incorporation into it. It is their national existence that is pledged, and their blessing as Israelites - not as Christians. They must be restored to their land, recognized once more as a nation, and brought into complete subjection to the Lord, owning their once rejected Messiah as King and Saviour, or the prophecies of this chapter fall to the ground. All here is intensely literal.

Nothing could be more so than the remaining verses, which need no comment.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever” (vers. 38-40).

To no period of the past can these words apply. In our Lord's time the filthy stench of the valley of Hinnom still polluted the atmosphere. It was in no sense holy unto the Lord. To the future alone can we look for a fulfillment that shall accord with, and transcend, the promise.

“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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