

IS GOD THROUGH WITH THE JEWS?

Genesis 12:1-5

When a minister of the gospel of Christ ventures to speak to a Gentile audience on the Jewish question, a certain amount of prejudice is naturally aroused. But, an understanding of the Jew in prophecy, and of God's plan for Israel throughout the ages, constitute a necessary key to learning God's purposes for all the peoples from Adam to the end of time.

One of the most fascinating stories of all ages is that of Israel. Her past, present and future record is found in the Word of God. Biblical prophecy is history pre-written. The importance of the Jew and his effect upon society are recognized and understood by the Bible student, whereas the average person observes him as somewhat of a necessary evil, or a misfit in society, or an excellent scapegoat for whatever ills may arise, or perhaps all three together. It is important for us to understand the Jew because he is God's time-piece of the ages, or God's blueprint of what He will do with all the other nations under given circumstances.

The history of the Jewish race is without parallel in the annals of time. The Jews are remarkable for their antiquity. No nation can trace back its lineage by the clear light of reliable history as far as they. For more than four thousand years, amid all civilizations and countries, and under all types of government, there has existed a distinct people, with laws, habits and customs distinctly their own. No people have ever had such manifest and visible tokens of the "Divine Presence." For them the Red Sea was driven back and the Jordan was parted. They were miraculously fed in the wilderness, and divinely sheltered and guided by the pillar of cloud and fire. The preservation of the Jewish people is the "Miracle of History." When Frederick the Great asked the court preacher, or chaplain, for an unanswerable proof of the inspiration of the Bible, he replied, "The Jew, your Majesty."

God made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised him and his seed the land of Canaan. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, 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 for ever" (Genesis 13:14-15). Remember that this unconditional grant was made to the seed of Abraham before he had any. Moreover, it was given to them for an everlasting possession.

Later this covenant was reaffirmed. Of it we read, "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" (Genesis 15:18). So far as God was concerned, it was already done, for He plainly said, "Unto thy seed have I given this land." It was in the past tense, but Abraham as yet had no seed to whom God could give the land. But with God it was all settled, even though the seed was still to be born. If you will note the boundaries of this tract of land, you will observe that it embraced far more than the little country of Palestine as we know it today. This territory which God gave to Abraham and his seed is known in the Bible as Canaan. This tract extended from the Nile River in Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, thence northward to the country of Iran and the Euphrates River. "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" (Genesis 15:18). So you see Canaan is the promised land, and Palestine is only a part of it.

In this unbreakable and everlasting covenant of grace, God promised to the seed of Abraham the entire land of Canaan as their possession forever. In history, this nation of Israel possessed only a fraction of this promised land, but in prophecy God tells us they will at some future time possess and inhabit all of it, never to be driven out again. Until the nations recognize this covenant God made with Abraham, the solution to the problems in the Middle East will never be found. Ultimately God is going to fulfill every covenant of that covenant which He made, for a covenant of grace can never be broken, annulled or set aside.

In order to emphasize the absolute certainty of His Word, God gave the promise of the seed and of the land to Abraham seven times. In Genesis 12 and 13 God said, "I will give this land." In chapter 15 He said, "Unto thy seed have I given this land." But Abraham had no seed as yet. He was still childless and advancing in years, and still God said, "Unto thy seed have I given this land." As far as God was concerned it was already done. In the mind of God it was already accomplished, for God has no past and no future, but lives in the eternal present. With God all things are in the present, for He cannot change. When He promises, it is as good as done. There is never any question as to whether or not He will keep His Word.

In repeating His covenant with Abraham, God gave the term during which He would give the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed. It is to be forever. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God," (Genesis 17:7-8).

Abraham was seventy years of age, and Sarah, his wife, was sixty, when God called him to go to Canaan. At these advanced ages God promised to give them a son, a seed whose descendants should be as the very sand of the seashore. Years passed by and this promise was unfulfilled. Meanwhile, Sarah suggested to Abraham that he have an heir by her Egyptian handmaid, whose name was Hagar. Their son, Ishmael, was born when Abraham was eighty-six years of age. Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah when they were one hundred and ninety years of age respectively.

Then, a real problem arose. For thirteen years Ishmael had been the only son of Abraham in the tent. When Isaac came, the battle was on and it has never ceased. Isaac was the progenitor of the nation of Israel. Ishmael was the progenitor of the Arab nations as we know them today. They were both sons of Abraham, and therefore half-brothers. On the basis of God's covenant to Abraham, both the Jews and the Arabs claim possession of the land which God gave to the seed of Abraham. Since both claim to be the seed of Abraham, and both lay claim to the possession of the land, this is the basic problem in the struggle in the Middle East today.

Automatically the question arises now, Is the covenant which God made with Abraham to include both Ishmael and Isaac, or one or the other? God answered that question very clearly and unmistakably. "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. And as for 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. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Genesis 17:19-21). God did not recognize the son of the concubine as the seed in any sense whatsoever. Therefore, Isaac was the only one who was recognized in the covenant concerning the land, so Ishmael had to go. Now that Isaac had entered the tent of Abraham, Ishmael had to be banished from the presence of his father. The tent was too small to contain both Isaac and Ishmael. One or the other had to go. Compromise was impossible.

Because of his attachment to his son Ishmael, Abraham requested that he might take the place of the covenant son and be the sole heir. He said, "O that Ishmael might live before thee" (Genesis 17:18).

What a picture of the situation in Canaan today! The sons of Ishmael, the Arabs, have lived in Canaan for centuries, just as Ishmael had been in the tent before Isaac arrived. Then came the sons of Isaac, the nation of Israel, a few years ago, and began to settle the land and establish their ancient system of government in the land of Canaan, and the

struggle immediately began. That land cannot contain both Isaac and Ishmael, Jews and Arabs, any more than the tent of Abraham could. One or the other must go, and God says that Ishmael must go. It was with Isaac that God made His covenant, and so the struggle today is the same one which we saw in Abraham's tent. Remember, the nation of Israel is the seed of Abraham through Isaac, and the Arabs are the seed of Abraham through Ishmael, but the land was given by covenant to Isaac and not to Ishmael, to the Israeli and not to the Arabs.

Peace in the tent of Abraham depended upon his obedience to God's command. There could not be any peace while Ishmael and Isaac were together. Nothing but strife and contention could result, and peace could only be restored by the banishment of Ishmael from the tent, leaving Isaac as the sole possessor. Ishmael, therefore, was sent away, and became a nation of nomades, desert dwellers and wanderers.

For centuries the descendants of Ishmael have dwelt in Palestine, but a few years ago the descendants of Isaac arrived, with the return of thousands of Jews, and there followed the rebirth of the nation, significantly called "Israel." Their coming was vigorously opposed by the sons of Ishmael. Against greatly superior numbers and humanly insurmountable odds, Israel was in part victorious, and gained possession of a part of the land, but only a part. On May 14, 1948, it was declared a sovereign nation as an independent Jewish Republic, upon the termination of the British Mandate over Palestine. None of us can evaluate the importance of this event.

Acting contrary to the story of Abraham's tent, the United Nations sought to solve the problem of the tension and fighting between the Jews and the Arabs by suggesting a compromise, dividing the tent of Abraham, the land of Palestine, into sections, one for each group. A line has been drawn right through the city of Jerusalem, so that on one side live the descendants of Isaac, and on the other side live the descendants of Ishmael. According to the Word of God, this arrangement can never succeed. It is a perfect set-up for border clashes. There is only one solution that will ever prove satisfactory, and that is the Arabs must go. How long the present situation will last we do not know. How soon strife will flare up and perhaps cause a full-scale war we do not know. One thing we do know is that in the end Israel will be given full and complete possession of the land. As certainly as the sun continues to shine, Israel will ultimately possess the land. The key to world peace is the land of Palestine, and the city of Jerusalem. As long as Israel is not given full and exclusive possession of her land, there can be no peace. Until peace is restored in the tent of Abraham in the land of Palestine, the world's tension will continue, and it will continue to be the scene of strife and violence. There has not been any peace in Palestine since Israel took over part of Jerusalem. Scarcely a week has passed without some border incident.

Concerning Israel's final restoration in the land of Canaan we read: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (Amos 9:14-15). The Jews will return to the land to be settled permanently, and never again be plucked out. God will keep His promises. He will yet regather the nation of Israel and establish them in their land and make Jerusalem and Palestine the praise of all the earth, instead of the storm-center of dissension, strife and hatred.

Beginning with the miracle of God's calling Abraham in grace, and the miracle of Isaac's birth, the whole history of the nation has been accompanied with miracles all along the way. Thousands of years ago God said that Israel was an eternal nation, never to perish, and never to lose her identity. This could not be possible with any other nation. When other peoples leave their homeland and migrate to other countries, it is but a few generations and they have lost their identity. They are soon assimilated. But not so with the remnant of Israel.

Why did God raise up the Jewish race and establish the nation of Israel?

1. That Israel might reaffirm and teach that there is but one God.
2. That she might be a repository for His truth on this earth.
The Jews were to be the writers, preservers and transmitters of the Holy Scriptures. To them were committed the "oracles of God."
3. That God through them might give the world a Saviour.
Israel was to be the channel for the coming of the Redeemer.
4. That Israel might be a national witness for God before the other nations.
5. That through Israel He might save the world from moral decay.

I. The Heritage Of The Jews.

1. God gave the Jews a law.
That law covered every detail of life. Moses warned the people that if they disobeyed God's law and forsook Him they would be scattered over the world, and would be persecuted wherever they went. "You will I scatter among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you." Leviticus 26:33.
2. God gave the Jews a land.
It was a prosperous land. It was so fertile that it produced three crops in rotation, and in some cases five.
3. God gave the Jews a Lord.
He was Jesus Christ. He came to His own first.

What did the Jews do with their heritage? They defied the law, defiled the land, and denied the Lord.

II. The Hatred Of The Jews.

They have been banished from various nations. They have been shamefully treated, ruthlessly plundered, abominably abused, diabolically tortured, and barbarously martyred.

Why does Satan and his followers hate the Jews?

1. Because of their peculiarities.
He retains his identity. He doesn't intermarry with others, except in very rare cases, and then trouble usually results. People dislike those who hold themselves aloof.
2. Because of their prosperity.
If they didn't have any money, others would not pay them any attention. They are censured because they are successful. Some cannot stand to see others prosper. Much hatred of Jews is due to jealousy. They have achieved a greater percentage of success than others. They lead in many professions, medicine, science, music, literature, business. Merchant sitting by Jew on train said, "They won't allow Jews to live in the village where I live." Jew replied, "Exactly; that's why it is a village."

No nation has given to world such a large number of great men; such a man of faith as Abraham; leader and lawgiver as Moses; statesman as Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon; king as David; prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; man

as the Man of Galilee.

But God still loves the Jews. He is far from being through with them. He will certainly take care of the Jews and avenge those who mistreat them. He has warned all who despises and persecutes the Jews that they will be punished. He knows all about the sins of the Jews, but He says to us Gentiles: "Keep your hands off my people--I shall do all the punishing." God is preserving the Jews, not because of their worthiness, but because He made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would surely keep them, and God always keeps His promises. He always stands by His word.