

REASONS WHY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST MUST RETURN

TO FULFIL A PROMISE TO HIS OWN:

Personal Affirmation.

The final verses of John 13 reveal a disquiet and puzzlement among the disciples and particularly Peter about their Master leaving them. This anxiety had been with them since the announcement at Caesarea Philippi - *"From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up"* (Matthew 16:21). Now the time of 'his going' was imminent hence the explanation and promise in John 14:1-3 - *"...if I go away," he said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."* He makes the promise in the context of the 'Father's house'. This is an over arching promise that carries us forward to the final consummation of all things, to the eternal state.

Angelic Confirmation

In Acts 1:9-11, *"...this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."* We have the Lord's return to the earth stated. The disciples were standing on the Mount of Olives, a hallowed place for them, a place of many memories. What a comfort and reassurance to them, though they could not know the timing and the programme of events, to hear that in a future time He, the same Jesus, would stand again on that familiar spot, literally and bodily! Of course, the prophet Zechariah at the end of his prophecy fills in the details of that event. *"His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives..."* Zechariah 14:4.

Apostolic Declaration

The Apostle Paul gives more information, received by revelation, of another aspect of the Lord's return in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. He states that this time the confirmation of His return is to the air, without any specific reference to the earth. *"...the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain*

shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..." The message the apostle received was not in the context of Israel or the nations as is His coming to the earth, but to help disconsolate and sorrowing believers understand the means by which they and their deceased loved ones, who died in Christ, would be reunited with Him.

TO DISPLAY THE GLORIES OF HIS CHURCH:

The church of God, universal, comprising all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, is unrecognized and generally despised by this world. To the world, at large, with its six billion people, mock, ridicule, persecute and in many places martyr the people of God. To many governments, past and present, they are the off scourging of the earth. We remind ourselves of something that was written two thousand years ago and ask the question as we survey our world, have things really changed?

"...they were TORTURED, others had trials of MOCKINGS and SCOURGINGS, BONDS and IMPRISONMENTS, STONED and SAWN in two; they went about in SHEEP SKINS, DESTITUTE, AFFLICTED, EVIL ENTREATED, they wandered the DESERTS and in the MOUNTAINS and CAVES of the earth. OF WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT FOUND WORTHY." Hebrews 11:36-38.

But what of 2006? Have things changed?

Extracts from Barnabas Prayer Notes (Nov/Dec 2006):

EGYPT: On the 27th June a Christian man was killed. He was stabbed several times in the neck and chest, for no apparent reason.

SOMALIA: A 22-year-old man was shot dead. He had converted from Islam to Christianity and was shot when he refused to recite portions from the Quaran.

IRAQ: The death toll of Christians in Iraq in August was one traffic warden, a shepherd, two carpenters and an oil worker. One man was kidnapped and when released said "I am asking everyone to pray that the kidnappers minds will be enlightened and that peace will come to our dear land Iraq.

ISRAEL: The Christian community in the Holy Land is in a desperate state,

suffering discrimination, harassment and economic problems.

IRAN: A Christian from a Muslim background was imprisoned on the 24th July. He was accused of apostasy from Islam.

PAKISTAN: A stonemason called Nasir drank water from a public water tank near a mosque. He was accused of polluting the glass. He was knocked unconscious and his collarbone was broken in two places.

INDONESIA: Three Christians were executed by firing squad on 22nd September, because of a new reign of terror against Christians.

BLACKBURN (UK): An evangelical church recently installed high fences around the building to prevent constant attacks by Muslim youths.

Similar reports emanate from RUSSIA, CHINA, TURKEY, MALAYA, SYRIA, JORDAN.

It has to be said that in the midst of all the tears and the suffering, the prediction of the Lord Jesus is being fulfilled: *"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"* Matthew 16:18. And in the final analysis there will be a dramatic change when the Lord Jesus returns. For as we have said He MUST come to DISPLAY THE GLORIES OF HIS CHURCH. What Scriptural evidence do we have for this?

"...that he might present the church to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" Ephesians 5:27.

(`spots' - anger, wrath, malice, etc, things that badly need removing; `wrinkles' - the ageing process, lethargy, bodies of humiliation - changed and fashioned like His body of glory)

"When he shall come to be admired in his saints and to be marvelled at in all them that believe because our testimony was believed in that day." 2 Thessalonians 1:10.

Note that this verse does not say `BY all them that believe', but `IN' all, etc. In other words they will be a part of the marvel! There is coming a day of manifestation and revelation when the once despised and crucified Jesus will

appear in power and great glory, when His name and His claims will be vindicated and validated.

“Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad and let us give the glory unto him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen bright and pure...” Revelation 19:7-8.

We might ask who are these who come glorified with their Lord? They are the children of God, once sinners of Adam's fallen race, now washed in the blood of the Lamb. Clothed in garments of spotless righteousness. They will stand in their myriads before an astonished world in all the perfection granted to them by grace through faith.

TO REGATHER, RESTORE AND CLEANSE ISRAEL:

The calling out of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees marks a new beginning in God's programme of the rescue of fallen man and the world, which he inhabited. ISRAEL would be the vehicle by which He would guarantee its ultimate salvation. It would be through that nation that the promise to Eve would be realised. *“I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel”* Genesis 3:15. Foreshadowing the coming of a Messiah, none other than God Incarnate.

Beginning with Abram and through Isaac, Jacob, David, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, God would make Covenants specifically with the nation of Israel. Those agreements would trace the nation's call, dispersions, regathering and cleansing.

To Abram God said, *“...get thee out... unto the land that I will shew thee and I will make of thee a great nation...and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed”* Genesis 12:1-3. It is important to note that there is specific reference to 'the' LAND and the NATION. In verse 7, the Lord states, *“unto thy seed will I give 'this' land”*. This is expanded on later, *“...look now towards heaven and tell the stars...so shall thy seed be...I am the LORD that brought*

thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land" 15:5-7. This promise is immediately followed by a strange ceremony; The Lord instructs Abram to take a heifer, a ram, a she goat, a turtle dove and a young pigeon, kill them and split them down their backbone, (excluding the birds) then lay them out with the divided parts making a processional route between them. We must note this was a scene of blood and death. Jeremiah 34:18 describes a similar situation in relation to making a covenant. The parties covenanting passed between the pieces, saying in effect if either one breaks the covenant let him be as these animals are. It is significant that in the case of Abram, the LORD put him to sleep. He had no part in the figurative procession that followed. If he had there is no doubt having regard to Israel's failures that the Covenant would have been broken This is the first signal that it was an unbreakable agreement about the 'land' and the 'people'. In relation to the land we must distinguish between 'ownership' and 'occupancy'. Later prophecies make it very clear that if Israel disobeyed the Lord they would forfeit possession (Deuteronomy 4:26,27).

After the deliverance of Isaac, the LORD tells Abraham that his seed would be as *"the stars of the heavens and as the 'sand.' which is upon the sea shore"* Genesis 22:17. Indicating a heavenly and an earthly people (*"... that he might be the father of all them that believe"* Romans 4:11. When we come to the renewal of the Covenant to Isaac there is an omission. *" I will multiply they seed as the 'stars' of the heavens"*. There is no mention of the sand of the sea shore. The Apostle Paul has an informative comment to make regarding Isaac, when he describes him as *"the Jerusalem above"* and as *"...the children of promise"* Galatians 4:21-28. In other words a heavenly people - the Church of Jesus Christ. In contrast to this the LORD in confirming the Covenant to Jacob, says *"thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth"* Genesis 28:14. There is no mention of the stars! This surely must indicate the literal Israel (the twelve sons of Jacob who was renamed Israel) would exist among the nations and now again in her own land until the eventual return (still yet future) of her Messiah restoring and cleansing her as He had covenanted to do.

Before leaving this, we refer often to Genesis, the book of beginnings, as the SEEDPLOT of the entire Scriptures. These three references, then, to the

LORD'S Covenant made with the patriarchs is the sound basis upon which the messages of the coming Hebrew prophets and Apostles would be based.

The next reference to the Covenant with Israel is in relation to David, and given through the prophet Nathan. In 1 Samuel:7 and summarised in Psalm 89:3-4 *"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant: thy seed will I establish for ever and build up they throne to all generations."* Concerning the Land David exclaims: *"...He hath remembered his covenant for ever... The covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute; to Israel for an everlasting covenant. Saying unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance."* 1 Chronicles 16:15-18, Psalm 105:8-11. So secure was this covenant that God was able to say through Jeremiah *"If you can break my covenant of the day... and of the night...then shall also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne."* Jeremiah 33:15-21, 25-26. While this undoubtedly refers to Jesus, Messiah, we might ask "Is this to be understood as a literal kingdom?" The answer is obvious; David would have taken this to mean that his kingly line would last forever through his offspring. For the Apostle Paul was in no doubt about the future and literal reign of David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, for he states *"...for I say that Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision (the Jew) that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers"* Romans 15:8. He then continues in verse 12 *"...and again Isaiah saith (11:10), There shall be the root of Jesse and he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles; on him shall the Gentiles hope."* This confirms that the nation of Israel will continue as an entity until the end times.

There is still one more Covenant that we need to consider. It was announced by God through the prophet Jeremiah and first given to Israel; it is called 'the New Covenant' *"...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel (ten Northern tribes) and the house of Jacob (two Southern tribes)...I will put my laws in their inward parts and in their heart will I write it, and I will be their God and they shall be my people...I will forgive their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more."* The LORD then continues, *"...if these ordinances depart from before me... Then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation*

before me forever..." Jeremiah 31:31-37.

It is true that through disobedience Israel was exiled to Assyria and Judah to Babylon, the latter returning as a remnant after seventy years. It is also true that after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 the nation was scattered for the second time. We read in Hebrews 8:7 about a 'first covenant'; *"...if the first covenant had been faultless then no place would have been sought for a second."* We must not confuse this with the Covenant made to the patriarchs, which we have been discussing. The context of Hebrews 9 makes it clear that the 'first covenant' was the one given to Moses and which Israel defaulted on. Abraham's Covenant had nothing to do with forms of worship or an earthly sanctuary. God was not finding fault with the Abrahamic Covenant but with the people who failed to obey the law as given to Moses. So the New Covenant takes on board the failures of the nation and promises something quite wonderful and far reaching. This is further emphasised by the prophet Ezekiel: Ezekiel 36:24-30 - *"I will sprinkle clean water upon you...I will put my spirit within you... You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers.... and I will be your God."*

The next reference to this new Covenant was on the night of that special Passover when the Lord Jesus, Son of God and Messiah of Israel, made it clear that the establishing of the New Covenant would be in the shedding of His blood. Luke 22:19-20 *"...my body given for you...this cup is the new covenant in my blood..."* He gave it to His followers, Jewish disciples and to the *"lost sheep of the house of Israel."* But He also announced, in those days before His death, something quite astonishing *"other sheep I have which are not of this (Jewish) fold, they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold (flock) and one shepherd"* John 10:16. Through the New Covenant the door would be opened to the Gentile world and the books of Acts, and Epistles would introduce us to something new; the church of Jesus Christ, open to both Gentile as well as Jew. But in so doing He was also confirming all the promises covenanted to the patriarchs. Israel would remain a nation according to Paul *"until the fullness of the Gentiles be brought in"* Romans 11:25, up until that time which includes the present day *"blindness (hardening) in part hath*

befallen Israel." As we have seen in Romans 15:8 "*...theirs is...the Covenants... and the promises*" Romans 9:4 "*...for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (irrevocable)*" Romans 11:29.

Israel, scattered through disobedience, was warned by God that this would happen - Deuteronomy 28:25, 37, 64, "*the LORD shall scatter thee among the nations.*"

This was emphasised by Ezekiel "*I will scatter thee among the nations and disperse thee through the countries*" 22:15. We need to note Isaiah's prophesy "*In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a SECOND time to recover the remnant of his people*" 11:11-12.

For two thousand years, Israel has been a people without a country, but the return has been in progress since the beginning of the last century culminating in the reestablishment of the nation on the 6th May 1948, when David Ben Gurion hoisted the Tikvah, the blue and white starred flag of Israel on top of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Since then the population has grown to almost 7 million. But in general, departure from the God of Israel and rejection of Jesus as Messiah has prevailed. They are back in the Land in unbelief. But NOT all. There is a remnant the Apostle predicted. Today there are over fifty Messianic communities and Assemblies, saved by grace, members of the Body of Christ and waiting for the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and king.

The day of national cleansing and restoration has yet to take place and that will not happen until the Lord returns to earth to rescue the nation from annihilation.

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