

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS, EDITOR

7844 GRIMSBY CIRCLE, HARRISBURG, N.C. 28075

MAY 2014

FROM PENTECOST TO HOLOCAUST

When Jesus stated in Matthew 21:43 “Therefore I say unto you, (Chief Priests and Elders, ver.23) the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it” he was saying God had created a new nation (I Pet. 2:9) demonstrating that covenant, not race is the defining mark of the people of God. Many prophesy preachers teach that God has two peoples, Israel and the church, and someday soon (it is always soon), Christ will return invisibly and snatch away the church (the rapture theory) and God will go back to dealing with Israel. This heretical doctrine is called “Christian Zionism”. The *Scofield Reference Bible* has played a major role in inserting Christian Zionism into the religious fundamentalist camp. Scofield’s version inserts Zionist friendly notes in the margin between verses and chapters as well as in the footnotes. It has been published in at least four editions since its introduction in 1908 and remains one of the best selling Bibles today. The late Jerry Falwell was one among many chief proponents. Christians have no theological stake what so ever in the modern state of Israel.

That the Kingdom is a present reality as well as a future event is definitely the teaching of scripture (Eph. 1:20, 21; Dan. 7:13, 14; I Cor. 15:28; Psalm 110:1-7). The first demonstration of the reign of Christ was to send the Spirit (Acts 2:33-36) and the first message of the Spirit was twofold: (1) the restricted, national exclusive right of God (which the Jews claimed) was over, and (2) the physical structures of all that the old system stood for and stood upon was to be completely destroyed. Verses 17 and 18 of the quotation from Joel 2 which Peter used to explain Pentecost is generally understood to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit on that day, but verses 19-21 are not so generally understood. “Wonders in the sky, signs on the earth, blood, fire and vapor of smoke, the sun being darkened and the moon turning into blood” are the same terms used in the Old Testament by the Prophets to describe the judgments of God both upon the heathen nations and the nation of Israel (Isa. 19:1; 34:4,5, 10; Jer. 4:23-28; Psalm 18:7-10). To understand the significance of these verses we need to note the original prophesy in Joel 2. Peter quotes it verbatim, but does not quote the last part of verse 32 which states: “For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.” Jesus warned the people of his day that when they saw certain things begin to happen to flee and escape out of Jerusalem (Luke 21:21-23; Matt. 24:15-22). Therefore verses 17-18 of Acts 2 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The outpouring of the Spirit and the destruction of Jerusalem (Israel as a national People) is intimately connected as being parts of the same event. The power and significance of the material, fleshly, earthly kingdom of Israel based upon a covenant of Law is over. Now it is spiritual and God has a new temple, a new city and a new covenant people. But who would believe this as long as the old system was hanging around? So God “takes away the first in order to establish the second” (Heb. 10:9). This was done

spiritually in the death and resurrection events, but physically in 70 AD with the destruction of the city, the temple and the nation of Israel. This destruction upon Israel was the sign that Jesus is enthroned in heaven at the Father’s right hand, ruling over the nations and bringing vengeance upon his enemies (Matt. 26:64). The promised destruction of the Jewish system is considered by the prophets to be an aspect of the work of Christ intimately connected to his work of redemption. The outpouring of the Spirit and destruction of Jerusalem are all parts of his one work in bringing in his kingdom and creating a new temple and a new people (Dan. 9:24-27).

Alfred Edersheim, in his monumental work *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* describes this holocaust in these words: “This tribulation of Israel was unparalleled in the terrible past of its history, and unequalled even in its bloody future. The persecution was so dreadful, that, if Divine mercy had not interposed for the sake of the followers of Christ, the whole Jewish race that inhabited the land would have been swept away. No Messiah came, as Israel fondly hoped; but over those corpse would the vultures gather.” J.W. Bernard in his book *The Sign* quotes Josephus, the great Jewish historian’s words on the destruction of Jerusalem: “No city ever suffered such misery, nor did any age ever produce a generation more replete with wickedness than this generation...if the Romans would have delayed the destruction of the city, the Jews’ enormous wickedness would have caused the city to have been buried by earthquakes or swallowed up by an overflowing ocean. It was more wicked than evil Sodom.”

The coming of the Spirit brought the phenomena of the gift of tongues. The religious world has long argued about the purpose of tongues. The Apostle Paul plainly states the purpose in I Corinthians 14:21-22: “In the law it is written ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people and even so they will not listen to me’ says the Lord. So then tongues are a sign, not to those who believe, but unbelievers.” Who were the unbelievers to whom tongues were a sign? The miracle of tongues was a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy against unbelieving Israel (Isa 28:11-19). The tongues of Pentecost were a sign to unbelieving Israel that the cornerstone had come and Israel rejected him to their own destruction and the kingdom was given to another people. The coming of the Spirit with its prophecy of indwelling all men and the prophecy of Jerusalem’s demise and the speaking in tongues ushered in the Kingdom which is not of this realm. It is the Church, not the nation of Israel that will ultimately bring full and complete glory to God. The church is “the fullness of Him that fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). In redemptive history the church becomes the crown in God’s purpose and plan. This is the new nation (I Pet. 2:9) and the new man (Eph. 2:15) through which God’s purpose of redemption is now being served and realized, and through which He receives continuing glory (Eph. 3:21). A national Israel may continue among the nations and acquire greater political status as we see today, but that political and national status is in no way related to Biblical prophecy, and has nothing to do with redemption.

IN PURSUIT OF THE OBVIOUS

One of the great saints of Scripture was Noah, and awe-inspiring man. The Scriptures speak of Noah as “a just and upright man” (Gen. 6:9), “a preacher of righteousness” (II Peter 2:5), a man who was in covenant with God (Gen.6:18), and that he was “moved with fear” to faithfulness, whereby he “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7). These early days in the history of men were tyrannical, degenerate, and unbelieving, but the times are spoken of in I Peter 3:20 as “the days of Noah,” not the days of unprecedented evil. Scottish writer, George Matheson, in his book Representative *Men of The Bible* first writes of Abel and Enoch then says of Noah, “The old conditions are there, the old struggle is there, but the result is different. Hitherto, the problem has been solved by the translation of the man, it is now to be solved by the translation of the world. Hitherto, the only sequel has been the removal of the man from his environment, there is now introduced a new solution—the renewal of the environment to suit the man.” Now to the point. When Noah set out to build the ark in obedience to God’s command, he did not waste his time on the obvious. He did not document the corruption around him, whine and moan because of the world’s condition or complain about how unjust the system was. In fact he didn’t set out to change the system. He built the ark.

Today we have many religious leaders who write and speak at length on conspiracies, corruption, evil in high places, the danger of government intervention in our lives, the loss of individual liberty and on and on as if these things constitute the gospel. It is an obvious fact that these evils exist, but the way to confront them is not to talk about them, establish an organization to correct them, or enlist Christians to do battle against them, but to major on God’s Word. Journalist Cal Thomas, who served as vice-president for communications for the Moral Majority when it first began, in his book co-authored with Ed Dobson *Blinded by Might* wrote: “Did the Moral Majority really make a difference? During the height of the Moral Majority, we were taking in millions of dollars a year. We published a magazine, organized state chapters, lobbied Congress, aired a radio program, and more. Did it work? Is the moral condition of America better because of our efforts? Even a casual observation of the current moral climate suggests that despite all the time, money, and energy—despite the political power—we failed. Things have not gotten better; they have gotten worse.”

It is obvious that welfare, taxes, multiculturalism, political correctness, immigration reform, domestic violence, women in combat, the drug war, gun control, the United Nations, and political power-grabs and more, are all problems that concern our nation; but the real answer is not found in political solutions nor in the church making them their main concern. Although these are 21st century problems, we cannot say comparable problems did not exist in the time of Christ and the Apostles. In spite of the oppression of the Roman Empire, burdensome taxes and cruel treatment by a corrupt Jewish system, the church, even though it was the target of persecution, “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6), threw cities into confusion, and threatened to destroy the economy (Acts 16:21; 17:6), and was scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Yet in a few short years it had swept across the Empire, confronted a pagan culture with the Lordship of Christ, demonstrated to the world a new and living

way and made Roman emperors sit up and take notice. How did they do it? They did not do it by organizing against the obvious, which was the Jewish System and the Roman Empire. The answer is found in Acts 19:20: “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.”

Many preachers seem to be more fascinated with Satan and his plan than the Lord and His plan. Jesus warns against an interest in “the deep things of Satan” (Rev. 2:24), yet some of the bestselling books in our “Christian” bookstores deal more with the darkness of spiritually than with its light. It should be obvious to any believer that Satan is a defeated foe, so why spend time and energy in trying to “bind the strong man” when he is already bound? A few years ago our pulpits resounded with warnings that Communism was about to silence the witness of the church and we were all in danger of being swept away by the tail of this great red dragon. Today it is “the Supreme Court and the United Nations that threaten to take away our liberty.” So what else is new? The systems of the world have always persecuted God’s people. Talking about them as if this were our great commission is to deny the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the church today. It is obvious that the Supreme Court has outlawed public prayer in public schools, so there are many sincere Christians who are spending so much time telling how evil this is that they have no time for prayer. No court can outlaw personal prayer. It is a fact that the church is called to a ministry of prayer. Then why do churches spend time, money, and energy staging rallies complaining about these laws not being constitutional. Instead they should emulate the example of the early church when they “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers” (Acts 2:42).

In the mid-twentieth century protestant churches sought to end drinking and the saloon culture in the nation by legal means. There were temperance movements established in the 1800’s, such as the national Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League that were very active into the 20th century. James Timberlake in *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement* wrote that according to the view of many churches it was the Christian’s duty “to use the secular power of the state to transform culture so that the faithful might be kept pure and work the work of saving the unregenerate might be made easier.” The church, then, was seeking to change society by force of the law, neglecting the fact that “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe” (Rom. 1:16) and “our weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (II Cor. 10:4). As a result the temperance movement won a victory and the Eighteenth Amendment was ratified in 1919, prohibiting the production, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages. On January 16, 1920 this Amendment went into effect and Prohibition began and America was a dry nation by law. But it was only a dry nation by law, not consumption bootlegging and rum running and the illegal traffic of liquor and corrupt officials became the norm. John J. Rumbarger wrote in his book *Profits, Power and Prohibition* that “there was a growing widespread feeling that Prohibition did not and could not work and law and order was breaking down.” This resulted in the Twenty-first Amendment, repealing the Eighteenth Amendment and putting an end to Prohibition in 1933. This is evidence that the government cannot and should not do the work of the church.