

# PROPHETIC STUDIES

PART III.



## *The Land and The People.*



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# CONCERNING

# PROPHETIC STUDIES

We are pleased to be able to place in the hands of our readers Part 3 of Prophetic Studies for which we return thanks to our God for His goodness in enabling us to continue thus far.

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(D.V.) Part IV, entitled

## "THE WORLD'S LAST

## NOTABLE LEADERS."

will be issued February 1st, 1928, and we shall value orders in advance, which will be executed as soon as ready.

If the Lord so lead, these Studies will be continued from time to time but we are entirely in His hand concerning this matter, and desire to fulfil His will until He come.

The prayers and fellowship of our readers are much valued, and we trust that in the "Coming Day" writer and reader will rejoice together.

# The Land and the People.

**"Thy land, O Immanuel"—(Isa. viii. 8).**

**"The most lovely inheritance of the nations" (Jer. iii. 19, Darby).**

**"Thou gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever"—(2 Chron. xx. 7).**

**"The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while"—(Isa. lxiii. 18).**

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**T**HERE is a land—one need scarcely name it—that has an interest and a charm for all who fear God that no other land can ever have. It is the centre of Bible history and of all God's ways in connection with the earth. There the Patriarchs trod their pilgrim path and enjoyed hallowed communion with God; there Jehovah wrought His wonders on behalf of Israel His chosen; there the Son of God was born, there He suffered and there He died. From that land He ascended up to where He was before (John vi. 62) and to that land He will assuredly return when God's time comes for Him to claim His Kingly rights. His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. (Zech. xiv. 4).

The land has various names in Holy Scripture. **Palestine** (Exod. xv. 14) is derived from the fact that the Philistines for several centuries occupied a considerable strip of the coast-land; **Canaan**, (Gen. xii. 5-6) is more reminiscent of the inhabitants in general before the conquest; **The Land of Israel** (Matt. ii. 20-21) connects itself very distinctly with the people of God's sovereign choice; while **Immanuel's land** (Isa. viii. 8) stamps it as the peculiar possession of Him who is "God with us."

### **GOD'S OWN DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND**

is attractive. "The glorious land" (Dan. xi. 16, 41); "the pleasant land" (Dan. viii. 9); "the glory of all lands" (Ezek. xx. 6,15); "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. iii. 8); "a plentiful land" (Jer. ii. 7); "a land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year" (Deut. xi. 12). We need not marvel at the language, for when God chooses for His people, He always chooses the best.

God had His eye upon the land and He framed His purposes in connection with it before Israel became a nation at all. Thus Moses told them in Deut. xxxii. 7-8; "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

This means that at the time of the Babel scattering God caused the various peoples to drop down just where His ways would require them when Israel came into view. Thus the first map of the world was divinely settled with the land and people of Israel as God's centre. Ezek. v. 5 is interesting in this connection: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her."

### **THE HISTORY OF THE LAND**

and the people need not be detailed here. All the world knows it. Israel has been God's object lesson to all. In Israel's twelve tribes have been exhibited in a very special way the principles of God's righteous government. More favoured than any in sovereign grace, they have suffered as no other people have suffered on account of their unfaithfulness and sin. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2).

Jehovah has never ceased to love His people. In spite of their ingratitude and evil, He abides the same, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). "As touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake" (Rom. xi. 28), and Israel's tribes will yet have in full and everlasting possession, not merely the portion of territory which they occupied under the ancient kings, but the whole vast inheritance as originally

promised to Abraham, extending from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen. xv. 18-21).

Centuries before Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophetic band in general gave utterance to their magnificent predictions of grace and glory yet to come, Jehovah expressed the thoughts of His heart in

### ISRAEL'S TYPICAL INSTITUTIONS.

The Jubilee year, when every man who had lost his inheritance from any cause was re-established therein (the trumpet being blown on the Day of Atonement), is suggestive of Israel's ultimate return to the land in virtue of Christ's redemption (Lev. xxv. 8-10); the cities of refuge which sheltered the manslayer until a change in the high-priesthood suffer him to go home once more, pictures Israel's present remarkable position as divinely guarded (even though responsible for the death of Christ) until our Lord's present priesthood has served its purpose, with a gracious restoration at that epoch (Josh. xx. 1-6); the twelve loaves on the table of shewbread upon which the light of the lamps fell during the darkness of the night are suggestive of Jehovah's remembrance of His people even in their darkest hours (Lev. xxiv. 5-9); the ordinance of the scapegoat speaks of the dismissal of all Israel's transgressions when Christ comes out of the sanctuary where now He appears before the face of God for us (Lev. xvi. 20-22); while the seven feasts of Lev. xxiii. set forth most blessedly and with wonderful fulness all God's ways

with His earthly people until the final blessing is consummated. The feast of Tabernacles is a delightful picture of Millennial peace and blessing.

Alas !

### ISRAEL SAW NOTHING

of what is here set forth. "The children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished (i.e. they failed to see the end God had in view in connection with their typical ordinances), but their minds were blinded." So it was in Moses' day, so it is still, "for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." But thank God, a change is coming. "When it (i.e. Israel's heart) shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away" (2 Cor. iii. 13-16) "Oh, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when Jehovah bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad" (Psa. xiv. 7) "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. xxv. 9). This is the full and happy fulfilment of our Lord's words in Matt. xxiii. 39. "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." "This is the day which Jehovah hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psa. cxviii. 24).

Men would do well to

### **LET GOD DO HIS OWN WORK.**

in His own time, and in His own way, Human meddling with God's purposes can only lead to disaster. Amongst the many movements of our own day, all solemnly suggestive that the end of the age is approaching, is the proposal of the British Government to re-establish the Jewish people in the land of their fathers. We repeat "the Jewish people", not the twelve tribes as such. Of the whereabouts of ten of the tribes nothing is known with certainty, Jehovah will bring them into view when the great trumpet is blown at the public appearing of the Son of man (Isa. xxvii. 13; Matt. xxiv. 31). Their restoration lies altogether outside men's political arrangements.

### **THE BALFOUR DECLARATION**

concerning Palestine, dated November 2nd, 1918, has become world-famous. The gifted statesman (since created an Earl) who wrote that letter to Lord Rothschild probably had no adequate perception of the significance thereof. It marked an epoch in the history, not of the Jews only, but of the world. Palestine has had many Gentile masters since the great dispersion consequent upon the murder of the Messiah, but it was reserved for the British to announce to the world that they propose to make the land a national home for the Jewish people.



Observant Christians will be under no misapprehension as to the true character of what has happened. In some quarters it is common to speak of "the liberation of the holy land," as if the overthrow of the Turkish power were the end of Israel's sorrows. This is by no means the case. Jerusalem is still "trodden down of the Gentiles," and "the times of the Gentiles" have not yet been fulfilled (Luke xxi. 24). The land has not been liberated; it has simply changed masters. Its present rulers are doubtless more equitable and merciful than those who ruled it before, but Israel's land is still in the grip of the stranger, and Israel's sons may only go there by the favour of the alien Power. The tragedy of the land is not at an end; if Scripture is to be believed, its worst sorrows are yet to come.

Many enthusiastic Bible readers exclaimed when they saw the Balfour declaration, "Surely prophecy is fulfilling fast." Similar words were frequently heard during the years of the great world-war. Here caution is needed. The Church is not yet complete. It is still in testimony upon the earth. Its translation to heaven has not yet taken place. This being so, it is scarcely correct to speak of prophecy being fulfilled. Prophecy has to do with the earth, and it finds its centre in the people of Israel. God's present dealings are not with Israel, but with the Church. Heavenly things, not earthly, are before the divine mind during this period. God's King is not yet sitting upon the throne in Zion. He is in heaven,

and the Holy Spirit is here gathering out of the nations those who are to share His bliss on high. Not until the Church has been removed to the Father's house will prophecy begin to be fulfilled.

## THE PROPHEPIC CLOCK STOPPED

when the Messiah was refused, and its pendulum will not swing again until the present purpose of divine grace is completed.

But this much may reasonably be affirmed. The remarkable events which have been crowded into the Twentieth Century have helped to clear the ground for the doings of the last crisis—the world's final agony before the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the hands of the Man Christ Jesus. Things are manifestly getting ready for the tremendous happenings that will mark the close of "the times of the Gentiles."

The Balfour declaration has brought us appreciably nearer to the fulfilment of Isaiah xviii. In that most interesting chapter, written twenty-seven centuries ago, we read of a movement on the part of a maritime Power to restore the Jews to their land. It is probably well meant. The Power referred to is friendly to the long-scattered and peeled people, but the project has no hope of success. The resulting disaster is described, very graphically by the inspired prophet. The reason of the failure is most solemn;

God is left out of the scheme! The Christ to whom "the glorious land" (and every other land) belongs is not taken into account! Worse still, the terrible circumstances which caused the people to be expelled from the land are completely ignored. It was not the mere "fortune of war" that caused the Jewish people to lose their possession; it was the act of God because they murdered His Son. When Messiah the Prince came to them at the time appointed (Dan. ix. 25-26) they rejected Him, publicly announcing that they had no King but Cæsar (John xix. 15). The Messiah was "cut off, and had nothing." Now, seeing that this is why the people have been fugitives and vagabonds in the earth during the past nineteen weary centuries; and seeing also that they are in no wise repentant of their awful sin, is it not a most serious matter that any Power should propose to re-instate them? Is it not interference with God's righteous discipline? Surely it is fighting against God! How then can the project prosper?

One British newspaper has described the exclusion of the Jews from Palestine as "the great wrong of the ages." Has the writer never heard of an infinitely greater wrong? Men may forget, but God never can, that "when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him" (Matt. xxi. 38-39).

The reader will understand

**ISAIAH XVIII.**

better if he reads the Revised Version along with the Authorised. Some of its renderings in this chapter (whatever they may be elsewhere) are helpful. The first verse is not a denunciation, but a call. "Ah, (or, Ho) to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible (or, marvellous) from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!"

Two things may be observed here. First, the Power addressed is friendly. "Shadowing with wings" means that it is disposed to protect the feeble Jews. But how much happier it would be for the Jew if he could say, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Psa. lvii. 1). But alas! God is not in all their thoughts. The arm of flesh is more to their liking than the arm of Jehovah (Isa. li. 9). Second, the protecting Power is distant. "Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia" (i.e., beyond the Euphrates and the Nile), means outside the range of the nations with which God's earthly people had dealings in the past.

**WHAT POWER IS MEANT?**

The Roman Empire, unquestionably, of which Britain, the present holder of Palestine, will be a constituent part when the Empire is re-established. This notable event seems near at hand. The Beast that John saw rising up out of the sea in Rev. xiii. 1 may be expected to show itself shortly. The desirability of the restoration of the Empire is already being discussed, and it is rapidly becoming practical politics. For the Empire, Palestine will be a convenient buffer State, standing between it and the threatening Powers of North and East, and for the Jews, the protection of the Empire will seem a vital necessity because of their dread of the same threatening adversaries. Alas! their scheme will only result in the nation so long trodden down, being trodden down yet again, and the land so long ravaged by the rivers (the peoples) being ravaged more ruinously than ever. For that unhappy country is destined to be the scene of the last and mightiest clash of nations. Armageddon is not placed in Europe, but in Palestine! (Read carefully Isaiah xxviii. 14-18).

God is not in the restoration movement, but He is interested in it, for everything that concerns the seed of Abraham is deeply interesting to Him. Accordingly, He draws attention to what men are doing. He would have all the earth take notice of the fearful drama that is about to be played out in Israel's land. "All ye inhabitants of the world,

and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign upon the mountains, and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye" (verse 3). Men are active, but God is not. His time has not yet come. "For so Jehovah said unto me, I will be still, and I will behold in my dwelling-place like a clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest" (verse 4). The imagery here is very striking. We think of a sultry day, when the sun shines as it were mercilessly, when not a leaf stirs, and all the portents suggest a gathering storm. So it will be with the Jewish people, restored in unbelief for political reasons by their would-be benefactors.

### THE RUIN OF THE SCHEME

is most graphically described by the inspired prophet. "For afore the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower beareth a ripening grape, he shall cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and the spreading branches shall he take away, and cut down" (verse 5). The idea is suggested of a beautiful vine that bids fair to yield abundance of luscious fruit to its owner, but, when everything looks at its best, disaster comes. Someone ruthlessly cuts the tree low, and all hope of fruit is gone. The vine is the symbol of Israel, as Psa. lxxx. and Isa. v. teach us.

The following verse interprets the figurative language of verse 5. In plain language we are told

of the calamity that will overwhelm the Jews when politically restored to their land. "They shall be left together unto the ravenous birds of the mountains and to the beasts of the earth: and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them." The birds are the servants of the Devil (Matt. xiii. 4-9), and the beasts are the Gentile Powers around them (Dan. vii). The apostate people being at that time worshippers of the Antichrist (accepted as their King in the land—Dan. xi. 36; John v. 43), and being withal in league with the blasphemous, God-defying Roman Empire, they are given over by God to desolation. Their covenant with Hades (for so their treaty is divinely stigmatised) will avail them nothing; the overflowing scourge will pass through, destroying all before it (Isa. xxviii. 15). Immanuel's land will, as it were, be flooded up to the neck (Isa. viii. 7-8). "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters" (Isa. xvii. 13). This is nothing else than the invasion of the Assyrian (or, King of the North), and his Northern and Eastern allies, which the Jews' Western patrons will be powerless to prevent, for it is the will of Jehovah that His deluded people shall drink to the dregs the results of their impious folly.

But God's hour will then arrive. Men's schemes having utterly failed, Jehovah of hosts will put forth His almighty hand. Accordingly, Isa. xviii. closes with

**THE FINAL BLESSING.**

"In that time shall the present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible (or, marvellous) from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden underfoot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of Jehovah of Hosts, the mount Zion" (verse 7). To understand this verse aright, we must distinguish between the suffering remnant and the apostate mass. Of the latter, the demon-possessed swine of Mark v. are the appropriate symbol; of the former the delivered man sitting humbly and gratefully at the feet of Jesus is the suited expression. The pious remnant are hated and persecuted by their own evil brethren. Not only does the external foe give the dead bodies of God's servants to be meat to the fowls of heaven, and the flesh of His saints to the beasts of the earth, shedding their blood like water round about Jerusalem (Psa. lxxix. 1-3); Psa. xliii. 1 speaks also of their afflictions at the hands of an "ungodly nation." "The deceitful and unjust man" is the Antichrist, and the "ungodly nation" are his worshippers. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. xxiv. 21).

The frightful disaster which overwhelms with ruin the apostate mass becomes the occasion of the final deliverance of those who sigh and cry over Israel's transgressions, and they become the nucleus of the new nation. To the delivered remnant in the land



will be added the purged remnant of the ten tribes from other lands, and together they will form "a present unto Jehovah of hosts" (Ezek. xx. 33-44; Isa. xlix. 18-23).

But not only will they be themselves a present unto Him; with adoring hearts they will bring Him a present, and praise will be vocal in Zion once more. "For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things" (Ezek. xx. 40). Psalm cvii. 1 exactly expresses what their hearts will feel. "O give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is good: and his mercy endureth for ever."

"It shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy" (Isa. iv. 3). "They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, Jehovah is my God" (Zech. xiii. 9).

But however blessed will be Israel's portion when there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. xi. 25), the portion of the Church as blessed in Christ in the heavenly places is immeasurably more wonderful. To be in union with the Man of God's

appointment is unspeakably better than to be a beneficiary of His righteous government. And to this higher and better portion all are called who believe in His name while earth rejects Him. But whatever blessing God may have for men, whether it be above or below, all is founded upon the Saviour's atoning blood.

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“Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.”

Psa. lxxxv. 1, 2, 9.

“Give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth ” (Isa. lxii. 7).