

ISRAEL And The RAPTURE

By Jack W. Langford

WHAT IS OUR FUTURE?

The future of the nation of Israel and the hope of true Christianity are vital themes in the thinking of many people in these very crucial days. The minds of the general public, however, are often blighted by the dilemma of world conditions, and then soothed by the proud, boastful dreams of social, political and atheistic philosophers who seek an Utopia without the God of the Bible. May this brief message, which reflects upon past and future Biblical prophecy, be the answer to the inquiry of honest hearts.

DUAL APPEARANCE OF MESSIAH

The Scriptures abound in prophecies about two separate and distinct aspects of the work of the promised Redeemer Messiah: (1) His coming to suffer as “The Lamb of God” for the sins of mankind (Isaiah 53 and John 1:29); and (2) His coming as “The Lion of Judah” to rule in great power and glory over regathered Israel and the world (Isaiah 9:6,7 and Rev. 5:5). Regardless of how one interprets these two lines of Messianic prophecy, they still exist boldly on the pages of Holy Scripture.

Sometimes these two aspects of prophecy are found in the same sentence—as in Isaiah 61:1-3. One day Jesus stood and read publicly in the synagogue of Nazareth the first part of this prophecy (Luke 4:16-30)—

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD—”*

Jesus stopped His quotation of the passage right in the middle of a sentence. We are told He simply “closed the book, and gave it to the minister, and sat down. And he began to say to them, ‘This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.’”

That audience was frozen in rapt attention as they listened to that lowly carpenter speak to them with both beauty and authority. However, because of His lack of clerical prestige and His persistent probing of their hypocrisies, they became very offended by Him.

CONFUSION ABOUT MESSIAH

A great controversy ensued concerning this Jesus called Christ (Messiah), and concerning these two aspects of prophecy. Most failed to understand the sufferings of the Messiah, and thought that all which was prophesied of Him would somehow occur simultaneously. The High Priest, himself, finally dispelled the quibbling among the religious leaders when he sternly proclaimed in the midst of one debate, “You know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one should die for the people...BUT that also He should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad (i.e., regather the Jews of the dispersion)” (John 11:49-52).

In the main, that generation refused Jesus Christ the throne room of their hearts and He was delivered to the Roman tormentors who gave Him a crown of thorns instead. He voluntarily was hung between heaven and earth upon a cross—His time had come to die for the penalty of the sins of the world. In God’s overruling providence and design, Christ gloriously arose from death to give new life and power to all those who put their trust in Him.

FORESHADOWED

Amazing as it may seem, this whole episode was beautifully prefigured centuries before in the life of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob (Genesis 37:1-20). Joseph, you may remember, was sent to seek the welfare of his brethren, but was instead hated because of his princely dreams of ruling over them, and because of his reporting their evil deeds. They said, “Shall you indeed reign over us?”—just as did those of Jesus’ day (Luke 19:14). Both Joseph and Jesus were raised from the pit of death and given to the Gentile people where they eventually achieved a unique place of prominence. And like Joseph, Christ remains unrecognized by His brethren UNTIL the time He will again be shockingly revealed to those who at the first rejected Him (Gen. 45:1-5 & Zech. 12:9-13:1).

PROPHECY PENDING

Nearly 2000 years have passed since Jesus made His first appeal to His people and to the world, and yet mankind goes carelessly on their way, blindly ignorant of the fact that the remainder of that prophecy He quoted in the synagogue of Nazareth looms on the horizon to be fulfilled—

“—AND THE DAY OF VENGEANCE OF OUR GOD...and to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, TO GIVE THEM BEAUTY FOR ASHES...” (Isaiah 61:2,3).

Oh, please do not be so stupid, my friend, as to think that the latter part of that prophecy will not be literally fulfilled, just as certainly as was the first part Christ quoted some 2000 years earlier. “The Day of Vengeance of our God” is none other than the great world wide calamities, such as described in the book of Revelation, which will fall upon the earth in the last days.

PARENTHETICAL TIME

There is a gap in time between Christ's first coming and His promised second coming. Since His death and resurrection, the ascended Christ has been building His church or congregation, which is as *unworldly* and *misunderstood* as was He, Himself. Therefore, do not confuse the true church with modern man-made professing Christendom—they are not the same. Modern "Church-anity" such as Catholicism, Protestantism or Cultism is something else. The true church is Divine and real; the man-made is devilish and vane. The one includes all true heart believers the world over, whereas the other is sectarian and artificial. The one worships God in Spirit and in truth, but the other is often heathenish and idolatrous. Sad to say, in these days of apostasy, the vast majority of the true church is carnally mixed within the counterfeit.

The one true church, which Christ is building, is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who are saved and spiritually baptized into one body, "the church which is Christ's body" (I Cor. 12:13 & Eph. 1:22,23). This dispensation of time is called a "mystery," not prophesied in past ages (Eph. 3:1-9).

MODERN CONFUSION

The Pharisees and Sadducees of modern "Christendom" have made the very same blunder all over again, as did those clerics of old in failing to "rightly divide the Word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Many of today's religious teachers have tried in vain to rob Israel of any real future hopes. These would argue that all the prophecies and promises in the Bible to Israel actually refer to "their churches," instead. This form of butchering the Bible is called "Replacement Theology." It amounts to nothing more than theoretical "Hocus-pocus." There is a vast difference between making distorted applications of prophecies and the literal fulfillment of prophecies.

Having confused, on the one hand, God's promises to the nation of Israel with God's promises to the church of Jesus Christ, it is no wonder these clerics then fail to understand and distinguish between: (1) the "mystery" coming of Christ to gather or rapture the true church out of this world (I Cor. 15:51 & I Thess. 4:13-17); and (2) the well known prophesied coming of Christ in fiery judgment to rule over this earth in great power and glory (Isa. 11:4-12; Matt. 25. 31-34 & II Thess. 1:7,8). In between these two separate events is a brief period of time of "great tribulation" over the whole earth, during which apostate "Christendom" will be destroyed as was ancient Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (see Revelation 17,18).

THE FINAL MYSTERY

A prominent ex-Pharisee named Saul was converted to Christ and became Paul the Apostle of Christ. To him was given the "mystery" of this present age of grace (Eph. 3:1-9). In addition, Paul explained another "mystery" which most of our modern clerics, who want to set Israel aside permanently, stumble over to their own confusion. However, it surely settles any and all arguments to the contrary—

“For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, ‘The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins’” (Romans 11:26,27).