

The Centrality and Significance of Jerusalem in Prophecy

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In things pertaining to the kingdom of God on earth, all roads lead to Jerusalem. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. 122:6; the Old Testament equivalent of "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth").

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isa. 62:7).

But before Jerusalem is made 'a praise' in the earth, she is first made 'a cup of trembling to all people.'

And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it (Zech 12: 3).

Jerusalem will be the epi-center of the coming storm. The menacing and insoluble dilemma of Jerusalem will increasingly become the 'hot potato' of international politics, the proverbial 'fly in the ointment' that threatens world stability. Jewish intransigence over Jerusalem is perhaps the

most probable source for the prophetically anticipated resurgence of world wide anti-Semitism. Indeed, it is the intractable problem of Jerusalem in particular that is calculated of God to irresistibly draw all nations into the final conflict that leads to Armageddon and the Day of the Lord.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to (1) finish the transgression, and (2) to make an end of sins, and (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, and (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, and (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint the most Holy (Dan. 9: 24).

The controversy of Zion is the last day's extension of the age-old contention that has raged in the heavens and on earth concerning "the holy covenant." Jerusalem represents the place of God's name, the locus of the divine rule over the earth. This is why "the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing." At issue will be the final outworking of the quarrel that began in the tents of Abraham, and that must continue to divide the descendants of Abraham and Isaac until these ancient brothers will be gloriously reunited with the coming of the messianic peace, so graphically portrayed in Isaiah 19:18-25. It is the issue of the covenant that leads unavoidably to the question of God's election and sovereign rule, His divine right to choose as he will choose. And this most troublesome of questions presents itself forcibly over the issue of Jerusalem and 'the land.'

Because God's choice and declaration is the issue of His authority and rule, it necessarily constitutes a divine 'rub' calculated to offend humanistic reason ("the natural man"), and to evoke the rage of the powers. This is especially because the wisdom of God expressed in the 'rule of grace' so utterly opposes any notion that the right of promise and inheritance is in any way predicated on human qualification, virtue, or merit (viz., the relativistic ethics of humanistic morality).

Through the divine strategy of a hidden wisdom revealed first in the cross of Christ, and now again reiterated at the end of the age through a people who "love not their lives unto the death,"

Satan is finally cast down; and the proud and rebellious rulers of this world's darkness are finally defeated and stripped from their thrones so that "**now** is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). And "the kingdoms of this world **are become** the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ (Rev. 11:15).

'The controversy of Zion' is calculated to press upon the nations the great questions of God, His predestined purpose, and the sovereignty and authority of His rule. It intends to thrust upon world attention the right of divine claim, and the implications of the everlasting covenant that the nations have historically ignored, trespassed, and presumptuously defied (Isa 24:5). Indeed, all nations will be forced to grapple with the great issues that the crisis of Jerusalem is divinely intended to elicit.

Because Jerusalem signifies the issue of the rule of God, it becomes the focal point for the ultimate and fateful confrontation between God and the fallen powers of the air. Their manipulative sway over governments, institutions, and men will be identified and broken through the judgments that come on all nations because of what this city represents in the eternal purpose of God to establish His theocratic rule over the nations out of Jerusalem (Ps. 2; Micah 4:1-8). Therefore, the ultimate displacement of the principalities and powers is bound up with those points of divine contention that are provoked and exposed through the controversy of Zion.

That this one mountain (Zion), and this one city should be granted by divine decree to a **particular** ethnic people, and on no other basis than the free sovereign electing grace of God, is calculated, as nothing else, to draw out the ultimate offense to humanistic sensibility and reason; it is consummate scandal. But it also spells the ultimate threat to the illicit rule of the fallen usurping powers that oppose and war against God's intention to rule all nations from this city. Significantly, Satan's very title 'the accuser' (meaning one who opposes) derives from a statement in Zech 3 in relation to the sovereignty of God's election of Jerusalem. In keeping with the prophets who frequently identify Jerusalem with Sodom and Babylon, the once faithful woman now become a harlot, Jesus refers to Jerusalem's symbolic centrality as

also the very seat of apostasy and rebellion: "Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: "for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:33; cf. also Rev.18:24 with 17:16-18). It is therefore fitting that the Beast kills the two prophets of Rev. 11 in Jerusalem. Significantly, the Anti-Christ, in keeping with Satan's usurping aspirations, "shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain ?" (Dan.11:45). Isa.14: 13 suggests that aback of the Anti-Christ's aspiration to seize Jerusalem for his capital is Satan's original envy of Messiah's appointment to rule from the chosen city. "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north (a definite reference to Jerusalem: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" Ps. 48:2).

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

The impulse to contend against God's choice raises deeper questions concerning how persons understand the basis of their own standing and relationship before God. It is a critical first principle of personal salvation to recognize that grace is wholly 'apart' from works, that the gift of God is unprejudiced by any human qualification or virtue. And though God's choice anticipates the necessity of a new heart, (whether individual or nation, "ye 'must' be born again"), this, however, is never its basis (Ro.9:11). It is based in the eternal predetermination of God through the everlasting covenant that guarantees the imputation of another kind of righteousness that is very God's alone, and by the instrumentality of faith alone 'imputed' in order to exclude any natural claim or merit.

Jacob becomes Israel by the power of God at the appointed time ("and when he shall have accomplished to 'scatter the power' of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" Dan. 12:10). For the estranged and apostate nation it will mean the "bringing in of everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24). But just as in personal salvation, the righteousness that will come to Jacob 'in that day' is the same free gift of God, based on an eternal purpose in grace that has its working completely 'apart' from human working or willing. And Israel will constitute the national and visible demonstration that salvation is 'wholly' of the Lord, conferred on the basis of grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone, and this grace is on the basis of election. Why election? Paul answers: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth" (Rom. 9:11). The promise is according to election, because only the sovereign act of God's choosing fully defines the nature of grace, and the basis on which it is given, or not given ("whom He will" Jn. 5:21; Rom. 9:18).

Therefore, Ishmael's perpetual contempt for the child of promise touches the issue of the very basis of promise, and of the very nature of grace. It is more than contempt for what God has chosen, it is the presumption that raises itself to contend with the divine right to choose, revealing a lack of consciousness of the extent of sin's ruin, and the only just provision for its remedy. So then, the dilemma of Jerusalem, (like its trans-historical counterpart, the so-called "Jewish Problem"), is ordained to crowd the nations to a consideration of issues much larger than Jerusalem itself, viz., the question of the nature of righteousness as defined by election and grace, as set forth by Paul especially in the books of Romans and Ephesians.

It is to be expected that in the divine strategy that brings the age to its predestined conclusion, issues of this ultimate kind will not be left in the shadows, but that all nations will, at length, be required to consider the basis of righteousness and the character of grace. Such is the purpose of Jerusalem in the scheme of divine wisdom.

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