

ISRAEL'S "SEVEN TIMES" OF CHASTISEMENT A BLESSING

QUESTION. – If the punishment for all the righteous blood shed from Abel's day to our Lord's day came upon the Jews in the year 70 A.D., how can we explain the chastisements through which they have been passing all down the Gospel Age?

Answer. – We certainly know that the Jews said at the time of our Lord's death at their hands, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." They not only were willing to bear personally the responsibility for Jesus' death, but expressed the desire that their posterity also should bear it. Doubtless God, with His foreknowledge in respect to what this people would do, as well as in respect to their general heart condition, had from the beginning planned their "Seven Times" of disfavor. This He had caused to be recorded by Moses in the book of Leviticus (26:18-45). God had there declared that if the Israelites did not repent of their transgressions against their Covenant, and if His repeated chastisements failed to reform them, He would bring upon them "Seven Times" of punishment and discipline.

In Bible chronology a "Time" is a symbolic year. According to Jewish reckoning each year was composed of 360 days; hence when used symbolically each year would mean 360 years, and seven such symbolic years would be a period of 2520 literal years. These Seven Times, or seven symbolic years, began in 606 B.C. at the destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of the entire nation into Babylon, at the time when the foretold 70 years of desolation of the land began (Jer. 25:8-12; 2 Chron. 36:14-22), and has continued ever since, we understand, or until about September 21st last.

During this long period of affliction upon Israel, the Lord has given the Gentile nations an opportunity of showing what they could do in the way of world-government. God had declared that during these "Times" He would deal very differently with His Covenant people from His previous dealings. He would walk contrary to them and would scatter them among the heathen (Gentiles); and they should be under the domination of their enemies, etc. It is a matter of history that the Jews have indeed ever since been oppressed by the other nations, "without a king," in full harmony with what was foretold by the Lord. This experience has been favorable to Israel as well as unfavorable. It has not been merely a chastisement for their sins. It has been an experience which the Lord has given them for their good.

"BEFORE I WAS AFFLICTED I WENT ASTRAY"

During these "Seven Times," then, the Jews have had severe tribulation and discipline. All of God's people, of every Age, have needed chastisements for their correction and development, some more and some less. God says to Spiritual Israel, "For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards [spurious] and not sons." (Hebrews 12:8.) And so it has been with the House of Servants, Natural Israel. Because they were God's Covenant people, therefore He dealt with them; and He has really given them, during these 2520 years, experiences which will prove favorable to such of them as will incline to do right. Those bitter experiences proved so favorable that when Jesus came they, as a people, were the holiest in the world; and at that time they had suffered only a small portion of these "Seven Times."

So we find that the preaching of the Gospel by our Lord and His Apostles found about five hundred of the Jews ready to believe and accept Jesus as Messiah. And soon afterwards, just after Pentecost, there were quite a number of thousands who believed. These, we are told, were Israelites indeed in whom there was no

guile. It is very remarkable that there was so large a number in Israel ready to receive the Messiah. This would not have been the case had they not been passing through disciplinary experiences. These experiences were all such as would tend to keep them separate from the Gentiles, keep them from mixing with any of the peoples of earth.

If the Jews had prospered under the various governments – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome – they might have intermingled with these other peoples and have ceased to be Jews altogether. And the same is true of their posterity since their national overthrow under Titus, A.D. 70. In God's providence the Jews have continued to have such tribulations throughout this Gospel Age as to have kept them separate from the rest of the world; and thus their minds have been kept in that condition of humility in which they will be best prepared for **[R5721 : page 204]** the Lord's service when the time of their complete restoration to favor shall come.

Our thought is that when the proper time arrives the Israelites will be more ready for the Kingdom than any other nation. The afflictions through which they have passed, their obedience to the Law, etc., will have prepared them for the Kingdom. We are not, therefore, to consider this long period of their suffering and affliction merely as tribulation, as punishment. For their ultimate good the Jews were to be trodden down of the Gentiles until the full of Gentile domination.

ISRAEL'S GREAT REGATHERING

St. Paul tells us that just as soon as the Gospel Church shall be completed, God's favor will return to the Jews – return in the full sense. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles [the full predestined number of the Church to be gathered from the Gentile nations] be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, There shall come out of Zion [the

glorified Gospel Church, spiritual Zion] the Deliverer [The Christ, Head and Body, Jesus and His Bride], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Natural Israel]; for this is My Covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins." – Romans 11:1-33.

The Lord purposed to take away all sins – the sins of Israel, the sins of those who were to constitute the Gospel Church, and the sins of the whole world. For this cause Christ was manifested, for this cause He died. This cancelation, or doing away with the sins of the whole world, will progress as each shall recognize the Heavenly gift of forgiveness and obey the Government.

The orthodox Jews, those who still hold to the teachings of the Law and the Prophets, and have faith in God, will be the first to receive the blessings of the New Age. "As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your [the Church's] sakes; but as touching the election [the natural election], they are beloved for the father's sakes." So, then, this condition of affliction in which the Jews have been throughout the Gospel Age, in addition to the overthrow of their nation in the year 70 A.D., has really been a favor from God. All the tribulation through which this people have passed during the entire "Seven Times" of chastisement will be finally found to have been to their advantage, preparing them for the blessings of Messiah's Kingdom. The Church will be first in the Kingdom, Natural Israel with the Ancient Worthies at their head will be the second. Subsequently all nations will come into Divine favor and blessing, becoming members of Israel. All will be blessed through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"DOOR" PROBABLY NOT YET CLOSED

Question. – Would there be any prospect for one who consecrates at this time to be of the "Bride" class, or has the Call now ceased?

Answer. – We make a distinction between the end of the public Call and the shutting of the door. We understand that the public Call ended when a sufficient number had been invited and had accepted the invitation – in 1881. But of these invited and accepted ones there was still to be a testing. Only those enduring loyally to the end will be finally counted in as victors. Others, not proving wholly loyal to their Covenant in their daily lives, will in time be dropped from the list, which would mean that they had not been running faithfully. This would continually make vacancies to be filled. But such a filling of vacancies would not require a new Call, but merely a permission for one to enter as one went out.

Our thought is that a large number of those who consecrated prior to 1881 failed to "make good." It is our thought that you are still in time to make your consecration, with every reason for hoping that you may make your calling and election sure by zealous faithfulness in sacrificing earthly interests in favor of the Heavenly.

In any event, the most reasonable thing for any of us to do would be to give ourselves wholly to the Lord, just as soon as we realize our imperfection and the Lord's sufficiency. We should be glad to have Him as our Care-taker, regardless of what reward He would give. We should be sure that so great and so generous a King as God would give good gifts to all who are His. In other words, after the Little Flock is completed, the Lord will be glad to bless in some other manner others who have the spirit of obedience and sacrifice.

