

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSE

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LESSON 7 • How the children of Israel Fit into God's Plan - 2WEEKLY READINGS
READING FOR STUDY PAPERGenesis 21-23
Deuteronomy 28, Zechariah 8**Between the Old and New Testaments**

The Jews had come back from Babylon to the land of Israel after 70 years of captivity. Encouraged by the prophets, they rebuilt the Temple of God in Jerusalem. The last three books of the Old Testament - Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi - were written during these days.

Then there was a long period of time - 400 years - during which the Jews had no direct message from God. The prophet Amos had foretold this time. In Amos, chapter 8, verse 11 we read,
"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Lord."

This period of 400 years comes between the last book of the Old Testament and the first book of the New Testament. No wonder that when John the Baptist appeared, there was a great stir among the people. After hundreds of years of silence, God had spoken again to His people.

The greatest Jew

But John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the way for someone even greater. God was about to send His own Son to save His people. And so, in the land of Israel, nearly 2,000 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ was born. We sometimes forget that Jesus was a Jew.

You know what happened. After hearing His words, and seeing the wonderful things He did, the Jews rejected Jesus. They persuaded Pilate to crucify Him. When Pilate said "I am innocent of the blood of this just person", the Jews answered, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew, chapter 27, verses 24-25). They could not have committed a worse crime. They had shed the innocent blood of God's own Son. Yet, by the powerful preaching of the apostles, God gave them another chance. Most of them refused God's offer of mercy, and punishment had to come. A dreadful punishment it was!

A people without a home

Forty years later, the Roman army came and fought against those men and their children. (You remember they had said, "His blood be on us, and on our children"). It was a time of dreadful suffering for the Jews. The horrors of that war are among some of the grimmest in history. The city was taken by the Romans, and those Jews who survived were scattered among all the nations of the earth.

God had warned the Jews long ago that this would happen if they forsook His ways. You have read in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verse 64,

"The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other."

And so, for nearly 2,000 years, the Jews had no land of their own. Worse than this, they have suffered many terrible persecutions, and the dreadful curses of Deuteronomy have been brought upon them. Some of these persecutions have happened within living memory.

Many of us can remember the concentration camps of Hitler, and his persecution, in which over six million Jews were killed with a cruelty that shook the world. Read again Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verses 64-67, and you will marvel that these words, written by Moses over 3,000 years ago, have come to pass in our time.

It is a sad story, and it is not yet ended. We are bound to feel glad when we read from the Word of God that the ending will be a happy one.

Back to their own land at last Turn to Jeremiah, chapter 30, and read the words of God to the Jews in verse 11,
"Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

Again in Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 10-11, we read,

"He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he."

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And now, after nearly 2,000 years, God is gathering Israel. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration was signed. This was a promise that the British would make the land of Palestine (now called Israel) a national home for the Jews. From that time onward, the Jews have been going back to the land of Israel in great numbers, though Britain has not always been as helpful as she promised to be. There was another step forward in 1948, when the State of Israel was formed.

Jerusalem - the future capital of the world

Today there is trouble in the Middle East. The little Jewish State has had to fight for its existence against great odds. Even now, surrounded by powerful and well-armed enemies, its future appears black.

But we read in Jeremiah, chapter 30, verse 7,

"...it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

When the last great day of battle comes - and we can see from our daily papers that it cannot be far away - the Jews in Israel will be in a desperate position.

And at that time, the Lord Jesus will come again. He will save the land of Israel, and - at last - the Jews will recognise Him and accept Him. The prophet Zechariah tells us,

"...they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son..."

(Zechariah, chapter 12, verse 10).

Under Jesus, their King, the Jews will be the most exalted nation in the world, and the prophecy of Zechariah, chapter 8, verses 22-23, will be fulfilled,

"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."

This list may help you

1. 3,500 years ago God brought the Jews out of Egypt. He gave them the land of Israel to live in, and taught them His ways.
2. The Jews forsook God's way. Instead of showing the nations around how God wanted them to live, they copied those wicked nations.
3. 2,500 years ago God at last punished them by sending them into captivity. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was brought back to the land of Israel after 70 years, but they still went on disobeying God.
4. 2,000 years ago After the crucifixion of Jesus, the Jews were driven out of the land. For nearly 2,000 years they were homeless and persecuted.
5. Today God is again bringing them back to the land of Israel, and will shortly make them "The head (of the nations), and not the tail" (Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verse 13).