

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is looked upon by most people as a holy city. It is certainly a religious centre, and has been for centuries. Three great religious groups — Christians, Jews and Moslems — honour it; yet they all miss the true reasons for its importance. Their interest derives from a sentimental regard for the past, whilst the Bible reveals that its real importance lies still in the future.

Not that the past history of Jerusalem can be ignored. It finds frequent mention in the Bible and many important events recorded in the Bible occurred there.

Jerusalem became prominent when David, the most illustrious king of God's chosen people, Israel, established it as his capital city, and in the reign of his son, Solomon, God declared that He had chosen Jerusalem to place his name there.¹

Israel were the people by whom God declared he would work out His purpose as revealed in the Bible. Their kingdom was destroyed when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and carried the Jews into captivity in the days of king Zedekiah. God revealed through the prophet Ezekiel that this was a punishment to the nation for its disobedience to Him, but the kingdom was to be overturned only until one came who had a right to it.²

The one who has the right to the throne of the kingdom of Israel is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a direct descendant of David and therefore heir to his throne. Furthermore, the angel promised his mother, prior to his birth: 'the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David'.³ Jesus has never yet sat on the throne of David, so that the fulfilment of this promise must still lie in the future. This means that the ancient kingdom of Israel, with its capital and throne in Jerusalem, must be restored.

This is what the apostles of Jesus believed and looked for. Shortly after his resurrection they asked Jesus: 'Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'⁴ Jesus was then taken up into heaven, but immediately two angels stood by them and gave them the assurance that Jesus would return from heaven,⁵ showing clearly that Jesus is to return to earth to restore the kingdom to Israel and to sit on David's throne.

This shows that Jesus is to reign over the earth from Jerusalem, because David's throne was in Jerusalem. That this is a true interpretation of Scripture is proved by many references in the prophetic Scriptures concerning this famous city.

Jesus himself said 'Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: **neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.**'⁶

In view of the foregoing, it is obvious that this great king is Jesus himself. The Psalmist also speaks of the future glory of Jerusalem:

'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God'.⁷

'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King'.⁸

(1) II Chron.6.6. (2) Ezek.21.25-27.

(3) Luke 1.32. (4) Acts 1.6. (5) Acts 1.11. (6) Matt.5 34,35.
(7) Psa.87.2,3. (8) Psa.48.2.

The prophets of Israel, when referring to the glorious future which God has in store for the earth, speak of the important position which Jerusalem will occupy, as the following passages show:-

'For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy'.⁹

It is evident from the context of this passage that this expression 'a new heaven and a new earth' is used metaphorically to designate the order of things to be established in the Kingdom of God, in the same way as the apostle Peter uses it:

'Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness'.^{9a}

Jeremiah, speaking of this same time, declares:

'At that time they shall call Jerusalem **the throne of the Lord**: and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart',¹⁰ 'The Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever'.¹¹

'So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more'.¹²

'Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously'.¹³

'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles'.¹⁴

All these passages clearly indicate that Jerusalem is to be the capital, the seat of government and the centre of worship, when the kingdom of God is set up on the earth. Jerusalem is more than a city of sentimental associations whose future is of a mystical nature. It has a real and glorious future:

'Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof'.¹⁵

For this reason, all those who hold the true Bible hope will echo the words of the Psalmist:

'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces'.¹⁶

(15) Psa.102.13,14. (16) Psa.122.6,7.

(9) Isa.65.17,18. (9a) II Pet.3.13. (10) Jer.3.17. (11) Mic.4.7.
(12) Joel 3.17. (13) Isa.24.23. (14) Zech.14.16.