

Summary of Israel's Present Plight and Her Future Glory

by Art Katz

Art Katz discusses Israel's historical suffering as a precursor to her future glory and restoration through divine intervention.

Scripture: Isaiah 51:17, Isaiah 53:5, Isaiah 54:2-3, Isaiah 60:10-11, Jeremiah 31:10-13, Ezekiel 37:11, Zechariah 8:23, Matthew 22:29, Luke 24:25-26, Hebrews 12:5-10

Topics: "Redemptive Suffering", "Israel's Future Glory"

Description

Art Katz discusses Israel's current struggles and the prophetic understanding of her future glory, emphasizing that the nation must undergo redemptive suffering before achieving lasting peace. He argues that Israel's historical catastrophes are a fulfillment of God's covenant, and that the nation must recognize its need for divine intervention and humility to fulfill its priestly role to the nations. Katz warns against naive expectations of an easy resolution to Israel's plight, asserting that true glory comes only after suffering, akin to the suffering of Christ. He calls for a deeper understanding of God's character, which includes both judgment and restoration, and highlights the necessity of acknowledging past sins for future redemption. Ultimately, he envisions a time when Israel, having endured its trials, will emerge as a beacon of hope and blessing to all nations.

Transcript

In my book, *The Holocaust - Where was God?*, I proposed a biblical explanation for the Nazi Holocaust as well as for a future Holocaust, a time of distress for Israel, of which contemporary Jews have no anticipation at all. The theme and perspective of the book is based on the way the prophets have understood the previous catastrophes in Jewish history as judgment. Therefore, I am not offering anything novel, but speaking out of this prophetic tradition, which is essentially a Deuteronomic view of covenant--covenant failure, covenant obligation, covenant blessing, covenant curse.

There is very little covenant consciousness to be found in the church, let alone in secular Jewish society; but God is not finished with covenant-keeping. I believe that Israel's past catastrophes have been the very fulfillment of what God said would happen if His people chose to violate covenant. However, there is a final suffering that must come before Israel's lasting peace will be assured. Redemptive suffering that must precede the glory is the central theme of the prophetic and biblical tradition and understanding.

I think Jesus might say to us today: "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). I would paraphrase and say, "You are mistaken in your naïve and hopeful expectations that Israel will come out of her present predicament without any necessary catastrophe, even to the point of the loss of the state and an expulsion from the Land. You are mistaken because you have not sufficiently reckoned on the issue of Israel's glory." In Jesus' resurrection appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He chided them: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). Death and resurrection ought to be the central principle of one's whole understanding about God, a key for the interpretation of anything that is destined for the glory of God. One cannot circumvent this great necessity. Israel must be fitted for an eternal destiny of an unspeakable glory to all nations; but the nation's present character is an absolute contradiction of that destiny.

However, if we were to take her destiny into our deepest consideration, we will be far more equipped to understand and bear the sufferings that must necessarily precede her coming into her destiny. Israel's own natural propensities are continually and painfully being revealed, not least her inability to live at peace with her neighbors, or to answer their deepest heart-cry. The nation is presently far too concerned for her preservation and survival to fulfill her priestly role to the nations.

Priesthood is the deepest calling of God, requiring an identification with those to whom we are ministering, taking them into our hearts. Priesthood is the profoundest statement of what God Himself is, which was exemplified in the Lord Himself, the "High Priest of our confession." Israel's call to priesthood cannot be attained, or obtained, without the deepest contrition and breaking of soul; she must be brought very low, and in that condition, she will be able to minister and intercede in a priestly way for the nations.

The evidence of the apostle Paul's priestliness was the way in which the believers hung on his neck when he announced to them that they would no longer see his face. In Acts 20, Paul made his farewell speech, calling for the elders of Ephesus to meet him in a place called Miletus. Paul called, and they came. There was a deep bond of affection between the apostle and those with whom he had oversight. They came at his bidding, and he told them: You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink back from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:18-20).

Paul's apostolate to the Gentile believers was a foretaste of Israel's own future apostolate to the Gentile nations. Can you picture the day when Gentile nations, particularly the Arab nations, will hang on the neck of Jews with gratitude? In that day, Israel will not withhold anything from them. They will minister the word of the Lord and the way of God to them, not from some place of spiritual superiority, but from a place of contrition and humility, as the receivers of the deepest mercy of God.

Unless we bring this context into our consideration, we will not understand the necessity for Israel of what must precede it--the redemptive suffering and chastening that must come for that nation. No suffering, no entry--that is the long and the short of it in those things that pertain to God's glory. Isaiah 53 is a description of the Suffering Servant, the Messiah; but it is descriptive, in a very real sense, to His chosen servant-nation that must necessarily follow in His footsteps.

As you walk along Jerusalem's Street of Sorrows (Via Dolorosa) there are twelve stations--where He fell, where His face was wiped, where He did this or that. Israel, as a servant-son, is destined for her own Calvary road; and she will likewise be succored along the way by those who will give her rest and comfort, or wipe her tears, as she must necessarily follow the Lord down the same path of agony and suffering. In other words, it is going to take a comparable experience of suffering, similar to the Messiah's Calvary road, to communicate to Jewish people what we have historically relegated to the trashcan.

Jews complain of revisionism, the denial of the historicity of the Holocaust; but few of us have considered that this might well be a chastening judgment upon us for our denial of the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus. We have relegated that event to a non-event, and have therefore lost the critical significance of what God was seeking to portray of Himself. In the wisdom of God, it will therefore take some approximation of Jesus' actual suffering to open our understanding of that which has been lost to us by our dismissal of it.

Suffering reveals, and ultimate suffering reveals ultimate things; and Israel's suffering will be to bring this nation to a fundamental awareness and knowledge of God, not least being the God who reveals Himself so profoundly at the cross. There is something about the revelation of Jesus in His suffering that is the ultimate revelation; it is so powerful and so ultimate that even a Gentile standing by the cross watching Him suffer unto death could say, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39).

He had seen many others crucified, squirming and writhing in their final death gasp, their mouths filled with cursing and reviling, but he saw something in the way Jesus bore that suffering that revealed His deity. There is a sorrow and a suffering ahead for the Jewish people, but it concludes with their obtaining an everlasting joy and gladness being upon their heads, as they return to Zion with singing. The word "everlasting" indicates a final and enduring millennial joy. "They shall find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isaiah 35:10b).

"Find" is not something that one can manufacture; it is something given. They shall find gladness and joy when suffering and sorrow shall flee away. Sorrow and sighing is more than the issue of physical suffering; it includes the painful loss of the hope that the nation Israel stood for. There is an appointed time to favor Zion: "When God's servants find pleasure in her stones and feel pity for her dust" (See Psalm 102:13-14). I believe the stones and dust are not the ruins of antiquity but the ruins of modern-day Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Tiberias, etc.

The compassionate servants referred to are those who will be moved to identification with Israel in her final distress and judgment because the set time to favor Zion will have come. The Deliverer will come out of Zion and bring restoration, but He is waiting for something to issue from compassionate servants. There will be a people in the earth whose hearts will be stricken and broken by the necessary judgments that must fall. God will not be arbitrary in bringing those judgments; but those judgments will be, as they have always been, in exact proportion to our sins.

As His witness nation, we suffer double for our sins. It says in Leviticus that when we will acknowledge the sins of our fathers as our own and that the judgments that have come have been righteous, "then I will remember My covenant with Jacob" (Lev. 26:42a). So the issue of judgment, the way it is perceived and understood, is critical in understanding Israel's future. As the church, how can we expect Israel to recognize the things coming upon her when we ourselves resist such a scenario?

Are we hoping for a less painful solution, a more gradual process of change and improvement in the national character? Human optimism may pander to our fleshly desires, but it is still a false hope. Change does not come to the innate corruptness of man by some gradual improvement; it can only come by the direct intervention of God, both in judgment unto death, and resurrection out of that death. Israel is going to be the first resurrected nation because her destiny cannot be fulfilled on any other basis.

That is why the scriptures in Ezekiel 37 speak of a necessary death and resurrection for Israel. God waits for a certain acknowledgment from the whole house of Israel: "Our bones have dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off" (v.11). The Nazi Holocaust did not bring this ultimate confession from us as a whole nation. The Jewish people are entrenched optimists, ultimate humanists, an exemplary people. They are mankind at its best. They are man in all of his hopes, his ambitions, his strength and his self-assurance.

Their hope in man and in themselves must be brought down into the place of utter hopelessness before they can bless all the families of the earth. Resurrection out of death needs to be understood as the fundamental reality of God. Resurrection life is newness of life. It is to no longer living unto oneself or for oneself, but unto God. That is what makes it newness of life. Jesus exhibited that life, and believers who enter into His death and resurrection exhibit that life. The nation Israel has a destiny to live in that same newness of life.

That is why they require a new name: "And you will be called by a new name" (Isaiah 62:2b). They will be called: "The LORD is our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16f). Can you imagine what that means for Jews, whose righteousness has been their own, whose righteousness is obtained and expressed through their own exertion? When the entire nation will say, "the LORD is our Righteousness," they are attesting to God as being their life. God does not Himself address Israel's dry bones, but turns to a "son of man" and says, "[You] prophesy over these bones...that they come to life" (See Ezekiel 37:4-9).

Mere sentimental identification with Israel and mere wishful thinking will never speak a word that can raise the dead. We ourselves can only speak to the house of Israel from the resurrection side, when God will command it, a company of "sons" that can speak the word that raises the dead. The greatest obstruction to our being a mouthpiece for God is, ironically, our own unwillingness to relinquish our present sentimental attachment to Israel. Sentiment is that soulish element in our natural inner life.

It is in the carnal realm, disguising itself as love, and is revealed by the way it condescends to the Jewish people and confirms them in their own thinking. The love of God chastens, is unsparing, and will not withhold judgment. We will know when we have come into an understanding of the love of God and the life of God when our thinking, our conduct, and our relationship with Israel is put on a whole other basis. Israel will be reduced to a place of utter destitution. We Jews are the epitome of human self-reliance and self-assurance; therefore, whatever comes to us has got to come to us from outside ourselves.

In the wisdom of God, He has made the predominantly Gentile church--an entity Jews have long despised and looked upon with contempt and disdain--to be the salvific agent of God for Israel's restoration to God. Now we can better understand Paul's ecstatic outburst of praise: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!...Who has been His counselor?" (Romans 11:33, 34). To desire the mere success of present-day Israel is to fall short of the glory of God; and we will find ourselves in opposition to the glory of His will.

We are going to see the remarkable, direct, supernatural intervention of God displayed toward a surviving remnant of Israel in their time of ultimate distress. Israel is going to require a demonstration of God's supernatural power in order that there will be no questioning who delivered them. As humanists, we Jews are eminently the world's rationalists. There is something offensive, even to the Orthodox, about God in His supernatural power; it somehow offends our categories, but it also keeps us in a place whereby our own strength and ability can be exhibited.

I will always remember a debate I had with an Orthodox teacher in a high school in New York when I was a missionary to the Jews. He was the epitome of the kind of Jew we so admire. He was tempered in his speech and manner, articulate, and had every appearance of a righteous and morally ethical life. One could almost say he had no need of Christ. After the session, I ran into the man in the hallway, and asked him, "Oh, excuse me just a moment, do you believe God opened the Red Sea so that Israel could walk through as on dry ground?"

It was as if I had splashed a bucket of cold water on him. He choked and spluttered, and said, "No, it was a confluence of tides." There is something deep in our rationalistic humanism that is happy to acknowledge God, but it is not an acknowledgment of God as God is; it is more of a projection and a view of God that corresponds to, condones, and allows the perpetration of our own religious, moral and philosophical life. Can you understand that however much you admire that, it still falls short of the glory of God?

Israel has a destiny that eclipses that, which can only be obtained on the basis of the life of God Himself, requiring divine intervention--raising of the dead into a newness of life. When survivors of the "time of Jacob's distress" return as the redeemed of the Lord, there will be gladness and joy, but only after sorrow and mourning has passed away. Yes, we have seen a measure of gladness coming from the gratitude of having one's own land and nation; but biblical joy is an ultimate condition of being.

It is not occasioned by something that feels good, or something momentary. Joy is the deepest relationship of something that is relative to one's capacity for its opposite, namely, sorrow. Sorrow and joy--because we have borne the one, we shall experience and be capable of the other. Therefore, that joy is yet future, but it comes when sorrow and sighing flee away. The present history of Israel has not exhibited a people who have obtained this gladness and this joy because they have not yet experienced this sorrow and this sighing.

It is future, but it will be God's final chastising for Israel. It says in Amos, "I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land." (v. 9:15a). The context of this chapter speaks of millennial blessing, the restoration of the Tabernacle of David, of Edom and other nations coming under the purview of a restored Israel, which has become the theocratic hub of God's kingdom. Israel has a theocratic destiny that has to do with God's government over creation.

The law must go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. That reality requires a certain kind of environment conducive to the government of God. This is not man shuffling papers around in some bureaucratic fashion. God's government is righteousness and justice. It is not corrupted by human self-seeking, but is characterized by benevolence, goodness and mercy. It is teaching men how to live. Even the communication of divine rule has to be in keeping with the character of the kingdom.

It is a Davidic kingdom, having a certain character. God is going to make Jerusalem His sanctuary and dwelling. The law will go forth out of Zion. Yes, Zion is a geographical location--I insist upon the literalness

of that, which many in the church want to dismiss--but it is also, at the same time, a spiritual condition of being. Have we obtained, or attained to, Zion? Are we the people of Zion? Zion is where God's heart is. It is a Davidic condition of the kind God found in both Jesus and David that made them "beloved."

The Davidic heart is worshipful; it loves God and His way. It understands and welcomes His judgments. These are those who make up the Zion for which God waits, and until He will have it, the law will not go forth to the nations, and men will continue to study war and practice it. If our focus is the mere preservation of the state of Israel, we will be blinded to the fulfillment of a theocratic rule that waits for a Zion out of which it can issue. There are passages in Isaiah 51 that foretell a future time of distress for Israel.

It describes something more than a minor military defeat, even suggesting a humiliation, whereby those inflicting the defeat want to relish and luxuriate in Israel's humbling: "Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, you have drunk from the LORD'S hand the cup of His anger" (v.17). God is the Author of this; it is His wrath, the cup of His anger. He may use others as the rod of chastisement for the enacting of it, but He Himself is the Author. Do we make known a God of wrath, who pours out His anger?

Can we fit that into our present understanding of God without His known character suffering loss? Or will this description of God jar our notion of His kindness and love? On the other hand, can we say, "Yes, if this is what Your word says about Your wrath and judgments, then who am I to contradict what You say about Yourself"? If so, we will find ourselves with another perspective of God that is much more profound and true and in keeping with who He in fact is. Not only must our sentimental attachment to Israel go, but also our attachment to our own view of God, which serves our purposes and fits in with our understanding, but falls short of what He in fact is in His intrinsic being.

The issue of Israel, then, becomes the issue of God. God's dealing with Israel is the revelation of what God is as God. There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne, nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons that she has reared. These two things have befallen you; who will mourn for you? The devastation and destruction, famine and sword; how shall I comfort you? Your sons have fainted, they lie helpless at the head of every street, like an antelope in a net.

Full of the wrath of the LORD, the rebuke of your God (Isaiah 51:18-20). Every time I read this, in my mind's eye I imagine the Israeli Defense Force helpless, frustrated, confused and defeated. Israel's sons, the strength of Israel, will be caught up in a net like a helpless animal, choked, stupefied, and unable to get out. If this is future, and God is saying it, then who are we to gainsay it? If there is a humiliating defeat that is imminent and must come, then what ought we to anticipate as believers, both in Israel and in the nations?

Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine: Thus says your Lord God, the LORD, even your God who contends for His people, "Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling, the chalice of My anger; you will never drink it again. I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, "Lie down that we may walk over you. You have even made your back like the ground and like the street for those who walk over it" (Isaiah 51:21-23).

Closeness to the fulfillment of prophetic events described in the scriptures gives a particular illumination and key of interpretation. When one sees increasing Islamic hatred expressed against Israel and against the Jew, one begins to get a sense that they will not be content with Israel's defeat; they will want to see her uttermost humiliation. God will allow that kind of humiliation if it serves His redemptive purposes and glory. The Lord Himself suffered ultimate humiliation, and because He humbled Himself unto death, the

Father has exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every other name.

Israel will be exalted above every nation, but it will never boast that it came to this place of centrality and exaltation because of any virtue it had of its own. Where it says, "You have even made your back like the ground and like the street for those who walk over it," you may be tempted to ask, "How is it that this verse is referring to the future, when it is written in the past tense?" The prophets always spoke with an immediacy; they saw the future thing as present, and they often spoke of it as past, but that does not mean it is not future.

In other words, the prophet sees the future event with such an intensity that he speaks of it either in the present or past tense, but that does not change it from being a future event that needs our consideration. This verse describe a people who are suffering at the hands of oppressors who are ventilating their long-held spite in trampling the helpless: "Lie down that we may walk over you." "[Y]ou have forgotten the LORD your Maker (Isaiah 51:13a). To those in a place of affliction, when things are evidently helpless, God is saying: "Be reminded that I am the God who has created the heavens."

Again and again in the prophetic scriptures, God calls the nation of Israel to remember Him as Creator, a reminder that we need because present events and things that are before our eyes obscure the greater knowledge of God. The Lord calls the attention of the nation to Himself as the One who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth because the Lord, who is the Creator, can create again. Our devastation is not the last word, because the God who allows it as judgment is the God who can also restore out of His power.

Do we know God as a God who both judges and restores? "Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; loose yourself from the chains around your neck, O captive daughter of Zion" (Isaiah 52:2). There is no reason why the word "captive" should be seen as an analogy or metaphor. A nation defeated and expelled is in captivity. There is a weight of prophetic testimony that is concerned with the captivity of Israel in the last days. God's chastisements are not punitive, but redemptive; they have an end, which will both glorify the people who suffered and glorify His own Name--and that before all nations.

There is no other way that Israel can be fitted for her future destiny. A righteous God cannot overlook the sins of a nation. The chastising strokes must come, but God Himself is, in all of our afflictions, also afflicted. He bears that suffering and pain with us. He is a weeping Father, but His love is of such a kind that He does not withhold chastening. We, on the other hand, do withhold it, because we want to save ourselves when we spare our children. There is a whole generation of young people out there who have never had the one thing most needful for them--the love of parents being expressed in chastening.

When the son recognizes that that is love, something happens. Weeping together, the son and his heavenly Father are bonded in a love that has not been their experience before. Then the Father will say, "You are My son. You have borne My strokes. You have understood My wisdom and the necessity of chastising. Now as a son and priest, you can convey to the nations who I am as God, for that is your destiny. I have called you from the first for that purpose, to make My Name known as I truly am, for who has known My mercy more than you?"

Who has undergone My judgments more than you? And if mercy can come to you totally undeserved, then you have a message for Jordan, Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and any other nation that has opposed you. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves, He

disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness (Hebrews 12:5-10). This holiness is not religious affectation, nor ethical and moral superiority, but the holiness that is of God, which only comes out of a chastening received as sons; and only out of that holiness can we bless all the families of the earth.

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness (v. 11). Afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness...to those who have been trained by it! If there is any other form of training, God would have described it. As sons, chastening is the form by which holiness and righteousness can be obtained. Are we prepared to bear and receive that? Are we prepared to succor Israel and comfort her and to explain to her why it is that she must pass through what she must?

Is this not an incentive to speak to Jews now, of the necessity and urgency, of coming into the ark of God and receiving the mercy of His salvation? I cannot think of a greater reason for preaching the gospel to the Jew in Israel and elsewhere in the world, than to communicate the sense of coming judgments, from which God wants to save them. If you look at the book of Acts, this is exactly how the gospel was first preached by Peter: Come out from this evil generation! Be saved out of it.

Call upon the Name of the Lord, not just for a safe place in heaven, but to be saved from the judgments that must necessarily follow for this sinful nation. That was the message at the first, and needs again to be the message for now. As believers, our response to God's chastening of us reveals whether we are indeed sons or merely illegitimate children. If we resent the circumstantial providences of God that afflict us from time to time, or if we murmur and complain against God, it is a statement of where we are in our relationship to God.

The same principle applies to how we view God's chastisement of Israel. Our very displeasure at God's chastening indicates the truth of our spiritual condition. He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock. For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, and they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD--over the grain and new wine and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; and their life will be like a watered garden, and they will never languish again.

Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance, and the young men and old, together, for I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow (Jeremiah 31:10b-13). Virtually every time there is a reference to the millennial blessedness of peace and prosperity, there is also reference to, "you will suffer no more, you will sorrow no more, you will not be in terror anymore." It is as if the last experience of Israel before entering into the millennial blessedness is the experience of violence, terror and suffering.

Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities (Isaiah 54:2, 3). Here is another statement of

millennial promise: "Your descendants will possess the nations," and before the sentence is concluded, God adds, "And will resettle the desolate cities." Again, a reminder that Israel's finally coming into her call is on the heel of the experience of the chastening, suffering, violence and a judgment that has come.

The memory of Israel's experience is needed to carry her through her millennial future. It will be a reminder that her chastening judgments were just and deserved judgments and in proportion to her sins. This, in turn, will have the effect of tempering her corporate personality and character for all the future. The whole idea of Passover is to call to mind the remembrance of having been brought out of slavery. Remembrance is critical, and it will be critical for Israel if it is to have a priestly demeanor and a priestly function to all nations.

There is something in the remembrance of a past chastening that tempers the soul and allows you to speak to an Arab, who was once a threat to your existence, in a way that was never before possible. In the whole redemptive program of God, His intention is to bless the nations. He is the God of the nations. Israel was selected as the witness nation to the nations. His redemptive work will not be concluded until all the nations give praise to the God of Israel. They shall know God through His dealings with a redeemed Israel, and they will come to the brightness of that nation's rising (See Isaiah 60:2).

The nations will see Israel's transformed character. When they acknowledge Zion, the city of God and the Holy One of Israel, His redemptive purpose to all nations shall have been completed; but this grand design cannot be obtained by anything less than what I am describing. For in My wrath I struck you, and in My favor I have had compassion on you. Your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession (Isaiah 60:10b-11).

The response of the nations is gratitude for the blessings that now redound to them through the fulfillment of Israel's call to be a nation of priests. In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23b). The nations will be as grateful for a redeemed Israel as the Gentile believers were for Paul, and for the same reason, namely, they will mediate and minister to the nations the wisdom and the way of God.

Violence will not be heard again in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders; but you will call your walls salvation, and your gates, praise...and the days of your mourning will be over (Isaiah 60:18, 20f). Again, statement after statement speaks of the millennial blessing in the context of the recent violence, wasting, destruction and mourning. "Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever" (Ibid, v.21a). This is what it says about the land that has so long been the object of vain striving for Zionist aspiration: "So the LORD God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations (Isaiah 61:11b).

There is a difference between appropriation and inheritance. An inheritance is given to those who are in a right relationship with God. The redeemed nation is given an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken, and in that condition, the Land can be inherited as "the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified" (Isaiah 60:21b). There is something about the metaphor of planting that is peaceful. It is a statement of God; and there will be a stark contrast between God's perfect inheritance and the modern history of Israel, which is really not much more than man seeking to obtain and own, but by his own Jacob striving.

When God gives, He gives it as an inheritance; it becomes the planting of the Lord. It does not exacerbate your neighbors; they are blessed by it and receive the blessing that falls to them because of it. Israel is scheduled to become a servant-son, through chastening and suffering, through expulsion and a final return. However, at the end of it, nations will give praise to the God of Israel. In that day, there shall be one King, one kingdom, and one Lord over all. This is the end of Israel's trial and preparation, the end that was always in God's view.

He will have His witness nation, that all nations might acknowledge that He alone is God. C. H. Spurgeon, the great English preacher, says of this great scenario, "Happy will the day be when all nations shall unite in a worship of Jehovah. Then shall the histories of the old times be read, with adoring wonder, and the hand of the Lord shall be seen as having ever rested upon the sacramental host of His elect. Then shall shouts of exalting praise ascend to heaven in honor of Him who loosed the captives, delivered the condemned, raised up the desolation of ages, and made out of stones and rubble a Temple for His worship. An edited message spoken in Jerusalem, April 2001

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