

"Therefore said he unto them. The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

December 1986

No. 012

[Editor's Note: This is the remaining part of the article which we began last month.]

MIDDLE EAST SIGNPOSTS

In our previous study we discussed the present situation which exists in the Middle East involving the age-old conflict between the Jews and the Arabs. It appears that the present nation of Israel was forseen by God when He inspired Paul's writings in Romans 11:11-25. It appears, too, that when Jesus said in Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," He had in mind the event which occurred in 1967. At that time, for the first time in nineteen centuries, Jerusalem came

The HARVESTER Sun Hill Rd. Church of Christ 1120 Sun Hill Road Birmingham, AL 35215 NONPROFIT ORG. U. S. POSTAGE P A I D BIRM, AL PERMIT NO. 4624 under the control of the Jewish people. Since 70 A.D. the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem had been dominated in turn by the Romans, Arabs, Turks, and British. In 1948 the modern nation of Israel was founded by the United Nations, and in 1967 Jerusalem came again under their control.

The present situation may be likened to that which existed in Genesis 15:13-16, where God told Abraham of the land of promise which would fall to his children some 400 years later. This lapse of time was necessary, for God said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." God does not harm righteous people. When man wills to do what is right, God aids and blesses him. But when a man or a nation becomes corrupt, turns away from God, and ceases to walk the path of righteousness, that man or that nation becomes subject to God's just wrath. What an ideal parallel is seen between the Amorites and their wickedness and the wickedness of our Western civilization in this present age.

The founding of the present nation of Israel in 1948 and the domination of Jerusalem by the Jews in 1967 appear as signposts serving God by the way of pointing out to Western man that he has reached his peak and how dangerously far he has gone down the road of time. How good it would be if our people could recognize these signs, become aware of our plight, and change our course.

But lest we be misunderstood, it seems well to state that nothing we have said thus far should be interpreted as meaning that present-day Israel constitutes God's chosen people or that they occupy a favored position in God's sight. This is not the case at all! Contrary to the teaching of many latter-day proclaimers of Israel as God's chosen people, such a status

was not intended by God and is contrary to the Scriptures.

Israel of old was especially chosen to be the family through which our Saviour would ultimatecome and the source through which He could identified when He came. Their purpose in chosen people is seen in Paul's servina as a writing to the Galatians (3:7-8, 16-19, 24-29). "Know ye therefore that they which are of haith. the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scriptures, horeseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed... Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none For if the inheritance be of the law. it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions. till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free. there is neither male nor hemale: for we are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's. then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Israel was chosen to be the instrument through which God would reveal His Son, the Messiah. That was a noble purpose and a great calling! But that purpose and that calling were fulfilled, and their special standing ceased when Christ came to serve His role as Saviour.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication mailed free of charge to anyone wishes to receive it. Please name, address, and all correspondence Ray McManus

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In the Ephesian letter (2:11-19), Paul explains the completion of God's purpose through Israel. "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down that middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were For through him we both have access bu niah. one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Let us point out from these verses that God's intent was that there no longer exist two peoples (the Israelites and the Gentiles), but that through Jesus those from both groups who would respond to Him should become one. Jesus had foretold this completion of Israel's purpose when He taught in John 10:15-16, "As the Father knoweth me.

even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

We must necessarily conclude from the reading of these Scriptures that Israel's primary purpose has been served and that they no longer hold a favored position before God. The Jew rejected Jesus and consequently condemned themselves. But "God is able to graft them in again," so taught Paul in Romans 11:23. The individual Jew, just as an individual Gentile, has access to the redeeming blood of the Saviour when he will humble himself in obedience to God's revealed will in the Scriptures.

What is the meaning, then, of Paul's comments in Romans 11 about Israel and the clive trees and of Jesus in Luke 21 about Jerusalem? These references set-up signposts which, nineteen centuries later, would serve to allow Christians in our present day to better see how far along we are in God's time schedule and to encourage us in maintaining a proper stand.

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES ...

ABOUT FLATTERY

We that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. (Job 17:5)

Neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away. (Job 32:21,22)

Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher: they flatter with their tongue. (Psa. 5:8,9)

They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, (Psa. 12:2,3)

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. (Prov. 7:21)

Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.(Prov. 20:19)

A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin. (Prov. 26:28)

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. (Prov. 28:23)

A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet. (Prov. 29:5)

Whose unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. (Luke 6:26)

Their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. (Jude 16)

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS (A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

The day that Jesus arose from the dead was certainly a most eventful one. Not only was there astonishment, fear, and anticipation over seeing the stone away from the sepulcher entrance, but the various sightings of the risen Lord was definitely a shock to most of the disciples. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were

shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:19,24-25) We want to point out here the fact that Thomas missed several things by not being with the other disciples on this particular day.

Obviously he missed seeing the risen Christ. Yes, the following week Thomas did verily see and believe in the resurrected Lord. But what if he had died before the next gathering of the disciples? He would have missed out on the greatest sight ever witnessed here on earth!

By not being with the other disciples on the day Christ arose from the grave, Thomas also missed out on the following: the fellowship commonly shared between brethren; having his mind opened (Luke 24:44-45); and receiving the commission as stated in Luke 24:47-48.

These are just a few items that Thomas missed on that first day of the week. Where was he? What was he doing instead? The scriptures do not reveal any answers to these questions. All we know is that Thomas was not there, although he should have been!

In a similar fashion, those who do not show up for the evening church services (Sun, Wed, etc.) are missing a great deal! They miss the opportunity of: having fellowship with brethren of "like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1); singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" and "making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph.

5:19); offering our "petitions which we have asked of him"(1 John 5:15); and hearing "the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation"(Rom. 1:16).

Sometimes we may wonder where or what the other members of the church are doing when they miss the "assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10: 25). Perhaps they have a good reason. But the question really is: what are they missing by not being present? And do we ever let them know what they missed? Notice that this is exactly what the other disciples did to Thomas. In verse 25 of John 20 they told him what he missed: "We have seen the Lord." It is up to us to help our weaker brethren by encouraging their attendance at the Lord's house. Who knows what they will miss?

RAY

The coming King is at the door, Who once the cross for sinners bore, But now the righteous ones alone He comes to gather home.

The signs that show his coming near Are fast fulfilling year by year, And soon we'll hail the glorious dawn Of heaven's eternal morn.

Look not on earth for strife to cease, Look not below for joy and peace, Until the Saviour comes again To banish death and sin.

Then in the glorious earth made new We'll dwell the countless ages through; This mortal shall immortal be, And time, eternity.

Author Unknown