

CHAPTER 3

MESSIAH TO BE A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

Today there are people all over the world who believe that the Jewish Bible is the Word of God and that it speaks of the Messiah who would suffer and die for our sins and rise again from the dead. In the name of the Messiah Yeshua, Jesus, they receive pardon for sins and eternal life. He will enlighten them by the Holy Spirit to know the blessing of God as they enter into the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31.31-4)

This is a fulfilment of many passages in the Tenach. The Lord told Abraham:

“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22.18)

A descendant of Abraham would bring blessing to all nations.

In Isaiah 49.5-6, one of the Servant songs of Isaiah, we read:

*“And now the Lord says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, ... It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, **that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.**”*

In this passage the Hebrew for ‘My salvation’ is my Yeshua, the Hebrew name of Jesus, which means salvation. This passage shows that the work of the Messiah is to reach to the ends of the earth with the message of salvation.

Isaiah 45 also speaks of the universal mission of the Lord to bring the message of God as Creator and Saviour to all nations.

‘Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. ... To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him. In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.’ (Isaiah 45.18-25)

According to this passage, God is offering justification to Israel and the way of salvation to all nations. This is what God is offering in the New Testament, through Yeshua, Jesus the Messiah. The last words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples before He ascended into heaven were:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28.18-20)

In Acts 1.8, He says:

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Here He tells them that their mission is a worldwide one, to teach all nations about His kingdom. He promises them that they will receive the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish this mission and that He will be with them always, even to the end of the age.

Rachmiel Frydland, a Messianic Jewish writer, draws attention to a rabbinic story which also contains an idea of the Messiah going into all the world:

‘The study of our greatest sages brought them to the conclusion that if the dates in the Scriptures are correct, then Messiah should have come in the first century of our era, or thereabouts.

The many Messiahs who flourished during that period claiming to be redeemers, were all great disappointments. Finally, Simon Bar Kozibah, whom R. Akiba called 'Bar Kokhba' (The Star), came. Though he was active in the first half of the second century, R. Akiba adjusted him to the Messianic claim by making reference to Haggai 2:6. For the majority of the Jewish people Bar Kozibah was a tragedy and a disappointment. Apart from the loss of tens of thousands of Jews at his defeat in Betar A.D. 135, his activities resulted in untold sufferings for the surviving Jews.

In an 11th century rabbinic portion we read, 'Woe for the salvation of Israel has perished! But a voice came from heaven saying, 'Elijah, it is not as you think, but He will be 400 years in the Great Sea (Mediterranean), and eighty years with the Sons of Korah where the smoke ascends, and eighty years at Rome's gate, **and the rest of the years He will travel about the great Cities until the end.**' (Bereshit Rabbati p 130-131).

In another rabbinic portion, based in part upon a scripture in the book of Lamentations, 'she has none to comfort (which connects to the name 'Menachem') of all her friends, the name of the Messiah is identified as Menachem Ben Amiel. (Messiah Texts at 26-27, 122-123). Messiah then is clearly 'alive and well' for the last nineteen hundred years, according to these rabbinic writings. His name is Menachem (the Comforter) ben Amiel (God is with his people). **He started to work around the great Mediterranean Sea, went to Samaria (Korah), then Rome and the ends of the world.'**

('What the Rabbis know about the Messiah' Rachmiel Frydland, p 74-5)

There is no historical person who can be identified as 'Menachem,' but this does indicate that the Messiah should go to the 'great cities' of the world (i.e. the ends of the earth). In reality the message of the Messiah has gone to the ends of the earth. Where the message of the Gospel has gone, Jesus has gone, for He says:

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst." (Matthew 18.20)

And: *"Lo I am with you even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28.20)

The fact that the message of the Gospel was to go to all nations did not mean that Yeshua meant His followers to turn away from or against the Jewish people. Interestingly the passage in Jeremiah speaking of the coming new covenant is followed by the Lord promising that as long as the sun, moon and stars are shining in the sky, so long will Israel be a *'nation before Me.'* (Jeremiah 31.35-36)

In Acts 1 He told the disciples:

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Their mission was to begin in Jerusalem amongst the Jewish people and spread out through Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth. Paul wrote that the Gospel / good news is the power of God unto salvation *'to the Jew first and also to the Greek* (Gentile) (Romans .1.16). God's purpose was to bring Jew and Gentile together in worship of His name, through Yeshua the Messiah and to bring the light of His truth to the ends of the earth. Paul writes how those Gentiles who come to faith in the Messiah should pray for the salvation of Israel and love the Jewish people from whom the Messiah came (Romans 9-11).

Sadly many Jewish people have experienced the opposite of love and salvation at the hands of so called Christians. A corrupted church arose in the form of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which became a curse, not a blessing to Israel. Jews were accused of killing Jesus and persecuted in His name, the very opposite of the will of God in the Messiah. (For more on this go to our article: 'Who killed Jesus?' <http://messiahfactor.com/page26.html>).

The false church was also prophesied in the New Testament, seen as the 'Whore of Babylon' in Revelation 17. This church oppressed the people and suppressed the true message of the Gospel. In the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic Church had power over much of Europe, those who sought to teach people the true message of salvation faced persecution and those who sought to translate the Bible into the common language of the people were often put to death by the Roman Catholic Church (as was William Tyndale).

Through the Reformation and following events much of the original message of the Gospel was recovered and the Gospel was preached to the ends of the earth. Now there are those who have received salvation and have come to know God and to read His Word all over the world. Much of the professing church may

have misrepresented their Saviour, but true believers in Jesus have gone into all the world to bring blessing to the nations.

The whole of the Bible has been translated into 405 languages, all the major languages of the world. The New Testament has been translated into 1034 languages, and portions of the Bible into a further 864 languages. As a result there are people all over the world who look to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for salvation, which they have received through the Messiah to whom the Prophets bore witness before He came in the flesh. This has happened because of the faithful witness of the first Jewish disciples in Jesus who obeyed His command to -

‘Go into the world and preach the Gospel.’ (Matthew 28:18-20)

The Messiah came the first time to bear the sins of the world and offer Himself as the atoning sacrifice for all mankind. Through Him both Jews and Gentiles may partake of the promises given by God to Israel and be reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:11-18) and join the believing church. In the original Greek of the New Testament the word for church, ‘ekklesia’, means ‘the called out ones’, in other words people who have been called out of the world to believe in Jesus as Messiah. It never means a building or a religious organisation. It always means a group of people. The purpose of the true church in this age is to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth as Jesus told them to.

This does not mean that all will receive it. Jesus taught that this message will bring division between those who accept it and those who reject it:

” And this is the judgement that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light that it may clearly be seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.”

(John 3:19-21)

Those who do accept the Lord through coming to the point of genuine repentance and faith in Him experience the ‘new birth’ which Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus:

“Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

(John 3:3)

In this present age the message of the 'good news' is to go out into all the world before the coming again of the Messiah. In the days before His return, as we have already seen, there will be a time of great trouble on the earth. When Jesus comes again He will judge the world in righteousness according to our response to His message. That is why we need to repent and believe the Gospel now so that we may be ready for His return.

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