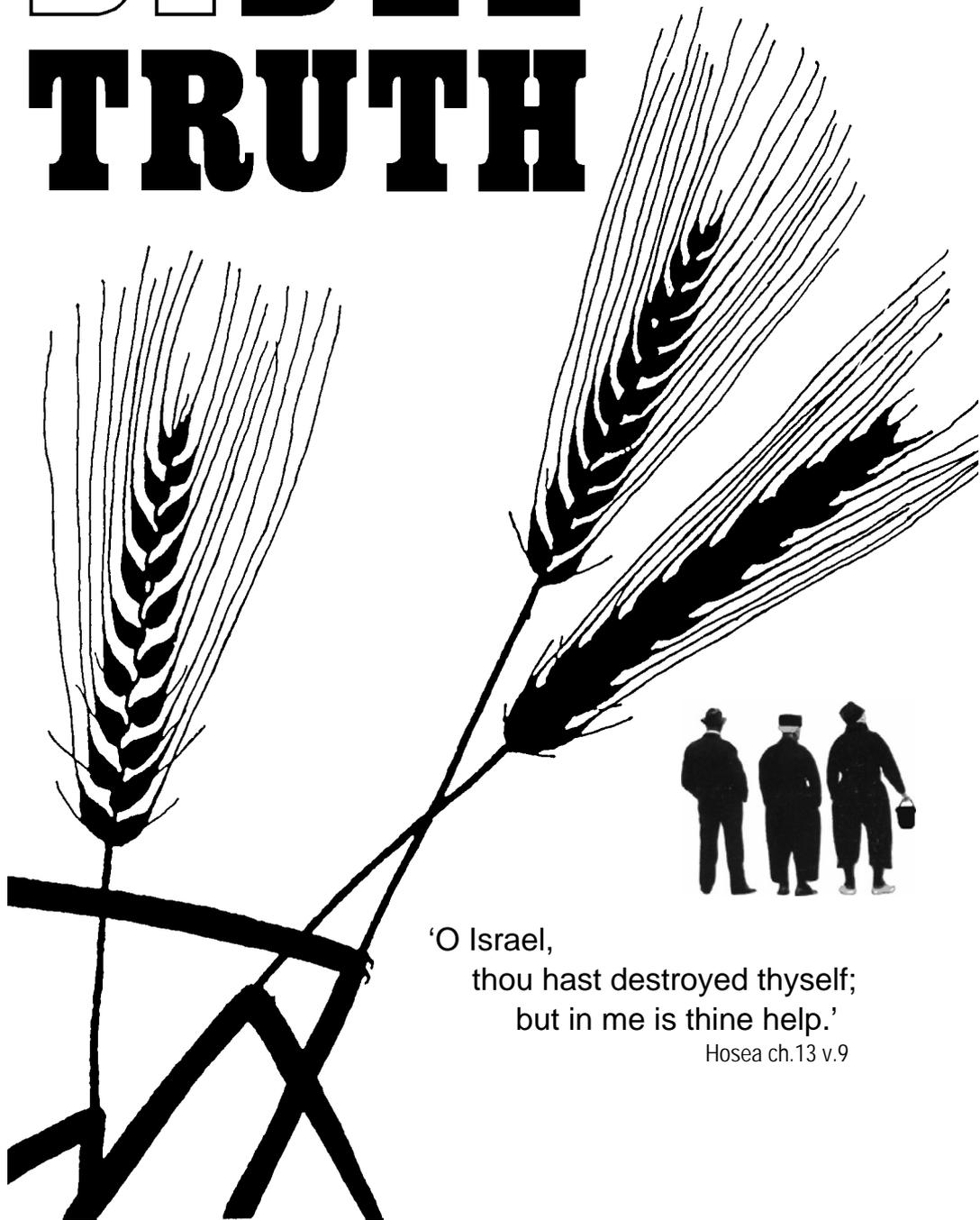


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'O Israel,
thou hast destroyed thyself;
but in me is thine help.'

Hosea ch.13 v.9

A Balanced Gospel for To-day

By the late Rev. C.S. McKelvey

In these days of doubt and confusion it is vital that the Christian message should go out with no uncertain sound. It must be based on a belief in the whole of the Bible as being the inspired Word of God. Above all, it must be a message for the age in which we live. The Bible message must be up to date. Its truth cannot change for it is the Eternal truth, but the presentation of that truth or some particular part of it must be straightforward and clear to meet present-day needs otherwise it will not satisfy the spiritual desires of the masses and must remain unattractive; at the same time it must be strongly proclaimed with firm conviction and not watered down to avoid controversy or be rendered ineffective on the lives and outlook of the hearers.

It is not generally realised that the Biblical message is divided into three parts and that the importance of each part in relation to others, is determined by the time factor. These parts are as follows.

1. The message to each individual,
2. The message to the nation of Israel,
3. The prophetic message of the future.

From Adam to Moses there was family worship by sacrifice, with the head of the family acting as priest. From Moses to the time of Our Lord it was national worship under the priesthood of the House of Levi. The priests served in the Holy Place wherever Israel happened to be. Later the centre of worship was fixed in Jerusalem, the capital city, and nowhere else. The priests served in the Temple and ministered unto the Lord God for the nation and for the individual, while the school of the prophets told of those things which would come to pass; they foretold the periods in which great changes would take place and of events that would accompany such changes. Those who refused to heed the warnings of the prophets were condemned by the Lord, and those who refused to change habits, customs and traditions lost their place in the Kingdom of God. Thus it was in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to change the practice of worship that had been valid for hundreds of years.

The priests and Jewry would not have it. He proclaimed forgiveness of sins, through His own sacrifice without the offering of sacrifices in the Temple, as against the directions of Moses which were given to him by God, Himself, on Sinai. Again, they would have none of it. He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and they would not believe that it was for their day. He came from God to alter the whole system of worship and to end the Levitical ministry. They were so steeped in their offices and their pride that they said He was possessed of a devil. Thus, Jewry lost the kingdom and Jerusalem lost everything. Notice this, Jewry and the priesthood had been right, absolutely right, until Jesus came, but all the signs foretold by the prophets were fulfilled in Him and brought the warning that the time of change had come. Blind, foolish priests not to have known the days in which they lived. The Lord wept over Jerusalem and said,

‘... If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation’.

Luke ch.19 vv.42-44

There was no excuse, they should have known the time but they did not, and they paid a very heavy price. Jewry still refuses to accept the truth of that time and is still paying a very heavy price.

The Christian Age

The Christian age, which began at Pentecost, is now nearly two thousand years old. Like the church of the Old Testament, it has been concentrating on only one form of worship in the fact that it has taught that all worship must be offered to God through the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the price of sin by His one great sacrifice on the Cross. The national message has been held in abeyance while the prophetic message has been merely a matter of interest to the deep Bible student and not considered at all necessary as Church teaching. The Church was not interested in Israel. Jewry were in unbelief, if there were any other tribes they were lost, it was useless to look for them, and note that this attitude was perfectly correct. God hid Israel, they would not even know who they themselves were, and others would not know who they were, for we can take it for granted that if God hid them they would be well and truly hidden.

The Church was given one service and one message, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1 Timothy ch.1 v.15), and this was the message the Church took to the ends of the earth. For the proclaiming of this great fact that 'Jesus saves', they struggled, suffered and died. They gave all they had, and considered the price not to be too high. They lived in the certainty of sins forgiven and the hope of the world to come: they saw death as the entrance to eternal life and union with their beloved Lord: their eyes were fixed on heaven, and they lived in the message of their day, and the return of the Lord was, to them, a very remote event. The Church was everything, and so it should have been: they were right, gloriously right, and today they are still so unless we have come to a time of change corresponding to that which took place in the days of the first coming of the Lord. If we believed that the Lord would not be returning to the earth for over 50 years, then we would spend no time preaching 'Britain is Israel' even though we knew it to be true: we would not go into the study of prophecy concerning the coming of the Lord even though we knew it to be sure and certain: we, too would have but one message, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts ch.16 v.31). We, too, love this message, glory in its truth, and love to proclaim it. But have we come to a time of change, and are we, like Jewry of old, blind to the day in which we live?

The Day of Grace

The Church has always known that its teaching is only for a time. It has taught that, 'The acceptable year of the Lord' would be followed by 'the day of the vengeance of our God' (Isaiah ch.61 v.2); it has stressed the fact that 'Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation', but when do we pass from the acceptable year into the day of vengeance, and does the message of the Church remain exactly the same during both these periods, or does it change, and if so, how does it change? We know that the change cannot take place during the period known as 'the times of the gentiles'. We know that the change must take place when those times have come to an end, thus our task is made simple. The Lord said,

'... Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'.

Luke ch.21 v.24

He also said,

'... this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come'.

Matthew ch.24 v.14

There is not a nation in the world that has not had the gospel preached to it as a witness. Added to this we have the statement of St Paul,

'Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ... Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, ...'.

2 Thessalonians ch.2 vv.1 & 3

Look around the world today and observe the spread of unbelief, and atheistic communism casting its mantle of darkness over the nations. See Christian organisations being forced out of whole continents and then face the question, 'Has the time come'? If the answer is 'yes', then we can proceed to study the question as to the teaching for today. This should be a very carefully balanced combination of all three parts of the Word.

- a. The Gospel of Salvation, because we are in the closing stages of the 'day of Grace', and this fact gives added importance to the individual message of the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
- b. The national teaching from the Bible of Israel being found amongst the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples should be revealed and the Church must take its rightful place at the head of the Israel commonwealth of nations.
- c. Prophecy, which foreshadows what is happening in the world at the present time, a knowledge of which can save the elect from being deceived. We are undoubtedly in the age of the great deception, and the Lord has warned us that unless we are watching we could be trapped by it.

Thus, all three parts are of vital importance today. If the Lord is at hand we are in the days when prophecy will be revealed and understood by the servants of the Lord.

It is almost a challenge to the wisdom of God to say that He went to the trouble unnecessarily of revealing to the prophets so much over such a long period of time, and took up so much space in His Holy Word to cover such a short period of time. Obviously, He intended it to be understood and to be helpful to His people in the days when these very prophecies would be passing into history. St John tells us in Revelation ch.10 vv.5 & 6,

'And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, ...'.

What a mighty oath this is! The angel swore by the personality of the Creator, the Lord, Christ; 'All things were made by him and for him' (Colossians ch.1 v.16). So the angel swore by the Creator a mighty oath concerning His creation, and it is a proclamation from heaven concerning the end of the acceptable year of the Lord. Thus He proceeds with the pre-sworn statement,

'... there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets'.

Revelation ch.10 vv.6 & 7

Are we not already in these days, and therefore it is sinful for us not to study, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what it is the Lord has so thoroughly hidden for so long and is now about to reveal? Moreover, is it not sinful to know these things and keep such revelation to ourselves? We dare not hide what God is making manifest.

We are not, however, left in any doubt as to what we should be teaching at this time, for the Lord has given us a message for today, and as we should expect, it is a different message to each part of the community and proclaims the changes which must be made by each section in its outlook and teaching. We propose to turn to The Book of Isaiah ch.50 v.10 onwards and study each of the five sections, one by one, and then we shall see not only the selective message for each one but also the collective message to all, and having seen the instructions of the Lord we can go forth in His name to do His will and proclaim the truth, be it popular or otherwise; always remembering, of course, that the more deeply we preach the Word, the fewer will be the hearers even as it was in the days of our Lord. First, the great multitudes followed Him and He was a very popular preacher, but then the crowds fell away as the deeper things of God were explained. When He pointed to Himself as the life that must be lived, His followers the crowds vanished leaving only His few disciples to whom He said, 'Will ye also go away?' (John ch.6 v.67). They said unto Him 'to whom shall we go, for thou hast the words of eternal life?' (v.68). The popular evangelist may draw the crowds, and we would not have it otherwise; our course lies in a different avenue of the deeper things of God, and until the day comes upon us we do not expect to attract the

masses, but we shall indeed be sowing the seed for that great awakening which we consider to be now so very near.

The first message is addressed to the following,

‘Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?’

Isaiah ch.50 v.10

Will we be very far wrong if we suggest that these are those who belong to the various churches and who never study the Word for themselves, who take for granted everything taught by their pastors of their particular denomination without question, and are quite content to have it so; in fact, who think it sinful even to listen to anything concerning God’s Word which does not come from the authority over them? With these we can do nothing, and, as far as we are concerned, we have no message to give them except that which is given to us in the latter part of the same verse,

‘... let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God’.

The second message is for all the ‘cults’ that will not accept the full teaching of the Christian faith, those that bypass the virgin birth and the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and do not see Him as the only mediator between God and man. To this section there is the warning of condemnation. Verse 11 reads,

‘Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow’.

These think they are walking in God’s own light while all the time they are walking in the glimmer of their own doctrines, many of them are within the scope of the seven false churches, that we are told would be in existence prior to the Lord’s return, and according to Isaiah ch.4, they are saying,

‘... We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach’.

Isaiah ch.4 v.1

They will find no lasting consolation and happiness in their false creeds and doctrines and will end in deep sorrow of spiritual malnutrition and starvation.

The third message is to the true Church not yet having found the full light, and is therefore prefixed with, ‘Hearken unto me’. These three words are missing from the two former messages as though the Lord knew that these to whom they were addressed would not heed

His words, and now they appear before each of the remaining three sections yet to be dealt with.

‘Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: ...’

Isaiah ch.51 v.1

Surely this is addressed to the Evangelical Church which for so long has stood true to the message of individual salvation, and has taught ‘Christ and him crucified’.

Now the message must be enlarged in order that its adherents may obtain that for which they have sought for so long, namely, a full knowledge of the Lord and that which they have followed after namely, His righteousness. Here is the message for them.

‘... look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.’

Isaiah ch.51 vv.1-2

For a long time the Church has ignored the claims of Abraham in connection with the kingdom. The Bible teaches that believers in the Lord have their place in the kingdom because of their relationship to Abraham (see Galatians ch.3 vv.6-9). Now we have come to the days when the kingdom will be set up in its fulness, and the Church must see the national implication that the kingdom belongs to Israel, the descendants of Abraham and Sarah and cannot be taken away from Israel. The Church cannot inherit the kingdom except they are, or become the descendants of Abraham. Here is the great parallel. The Lord Jesus Christ is the root of the House of David, but the promise is that the seed of David shall be the king of the kingdom, therefore, the Lord cannot become king over the kingdom except as a descendant of David, thus it is written,

‘... the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end’.

Luke ch.1 vv.32-33

He cannot reign over the house of Jacob unless he is descended from Jacob. He cannot take over the kingdom unless he is a descendant of Abraham.

‘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.’

Galatians ch.3 v.16

Those who are born again of the Spirit are therefore accounted as being one with Him, and in Him become the descendants of Abraham; thus, they become joint-heirs with Christ. St Paul sums this up in the statement,

‘... if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise’.

Galatians ch.3 v.29

It was not a very urgent point for the Church of the Christian dispensation, for the inheritance was a long way off, but the time has now come when Israel with the Church must take possession of the inheritance, and therefore the union between the two is now of the first importance, and the relationship between the Church and the nation must be made known.

Even in everyday life young children are brought up in ignorance of their inheritance, but when the time comes for them to take over they have to be informed, and in like manner the Church must now see its inheritance in its Israel relationship, and because of this must see that even the centre of worship will be changed. In the day of the Lord the centre of worship was the place of the High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem, for ‘salvation is of the Jews’ (John ch.4 v.22). The Lord became our great High Priest, not as a descendant of Levi for the priesthood alone was the inheritance of the Levites, for He was a descendant of Judah, but after the order of Melchisedec, that is of the higher priesthood which combined priesthood with kingship, thus He was ‘king of Salem, priest of the most high God’ (Hebrews ch.7 v.1). The Lord is at the right hand of the Father, therefore, our High Priest is in heaven and is the centre of our worship, so much so that all prayer and supplication must be made through Him and in His name. When the Lord Jesus comes to the earth He will be ‘King of Peace’ and ‘Priest of the Most High God’, and then again the centre of worship will be in Jerusalem, the city of peace. The re-establishment of Jerusalem is, therefore, the reason why the Church, that is the true Church, must now see its calling in Abraham. Thus the passage reads,

‘Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody’.

Isaiah ch.51 vv.2-3

Notice, the Church is given the invitation to study this matter, and it is not a command but if it is wise it will follow the Lord's instruction. Let us make it clear that we use the word 'Church' in the biblical sense to cover those who proclaim the Lord Jesus to be their Lord and Saviour.

The fourth message is to the people and the nation of God. Here, the message is even more imperative and commanding.

'Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation:'
Isaiah ch.51 v.4a

The Church has already received its message, but now the nation of Israel, the people of God, must be instructed, but before the message is uttered we are given the reason for the proclamation,

'... for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people'.

Isaiah ch.51 v.4

Here is the New Testament or Covenant that is to be applied to the Israel nation in which they are re-covenanted with God, through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, and for this reason the judgment, or rulership of the Lord rests lightly upon the people and is easy to bear, even as the Lord said,

'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light'.

Matthew ch.11 vv.29-30

This we are able to enjoy now if we belong to Him. The nation will enjoy it in the day of redemption.

Now for the message itself,

'My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust'.

Isaiah ch.51 v.5

The salvation of God has already gone forth; it operates in the 'whosoever will'. Already, under the salvation of God, Israel has been brought back into favour, even though she is ignorant of her identity as a nation. Already she has received part of the inheritance that is hers by right as a descendant of Abraham; as a company of nations and a great people; a greater empire than that of Babylon, the head of the nations, etc. This has come to us as a people living nationally under the salvation of the Lord, for we proclaim ourselves to be a Christian community. It is the nation in the isles, however, that must wait to be clothed with the righteousness of God. No one would say that at present we are a righteous nation, but the Lord calls upon

Britain to awake because His righteousness is near and will soon be accepted. As a result the Isles will trust on the arm of the Lord. This situation has not yet materialised, if it had, this would not have been written. In that day of awakening the Lord says,

‘... they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, ...’

Jeremiah ch.31 v.34

‘... I will put my law in their inward parts, ...’

Jeremiah ch.31 v.33

In other words, the law will proceed from God and will take up its abode in the hearts of the people of Israel, and the moment this has happened they will in reality become possessors of the righteousness of God and so qualify for the possession of the kingdom of God on earth.

This great declaration to Israel is followed by a most marvellous guarantee; the Covenant will never be removed from Israel, and both the salvation and the righteousness will be everlasting, rendering the kingdom of Israel a permanency. Here is the great assurance,

‘Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished’.

Isaiah ch.51 v.6

This is the national message for today, the message to a people lost in the knowledge of their identity now knowing who they are.

As to the fifth and last section, the message is addressed to a people who know the righteousness of God and who have already a love for the law of the Lord, or according to the teaching of St Paul, a people who have reached the fifth and final stage of Christian growth, having ‘tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,’ (Hebrews ch.6 v.5). These, having fixed their minds on the kingdom as it will be under the rule of the Lord Jesus, are now living in that glorious hope.

‘Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.’

Isaiah ch.51 v.7-8

No need to tell them about the future, they are already living for it. They need assurance concerning the present, therefore, be not afraid of the evil men around you. The chapter now continues to deal with the immediate future, with a call to the Lord to bring the present age to a close.

'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?'

Isaiah ch.51 vv.9-10

Here is Israel's call to God to demonstrate His power in the midst of His people. As the Lord will only do this to a people who have been brought unto Him, it shows that Israel has been redeemed, and this fact is brought out in the assurances of the following verse.

'Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; ...'

Please note the order here; first, Israel is redeemed, and then proceeds to Zion as a very happy people returning to the homeland. Many would reverse this order to make the prophecies fit in with their contention that Jewry constitutes all Israel: such is not the case: Israel is redeemed outside of Palestine, in the Isles, and then returns to the land that was given unto the fathers.

'... everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

Isaiah ch.35 v.10

Under the new Covenant then operating, even death will be unknown, therefore, mourning shall flee away.

All these statements made by the Lord point in one direction, to the glorious future state of the City of God, Jerusalem; and so, as one would expect, the final messages are addressed to Jerusalem as the centre of worship, and to Zion as the centre of the world-wide administration of the kingdom. What glorious news for Palestine, now in the agony of woe!

'Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, ...'

Isaiah ch.51 v.17

Yes, Jerusalem has been sitting in the dust for a long, long while; thank the Lord she soon will be standing up once again.

'Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: ...'

Isaiah ch.52 v.1

This is a call to Jerusalem to put on her wedding garments, as it is written in another place,

‘For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee’.

Isaiah ch.62 v.5

What are these beautiful garments?

‘And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.’

Revelation ch.19 v.8

As in all good sermons there is always ‘in conclusion’, after the ‘finally brethren’. Thus we now come to the ‘in conclusion’ which presents you with the grand picture of the Church and Israel, united and one with the Lord, the Lord Himself, carrying on His great mission in the world. To quote two passages only,

‘Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!’

Isaiah ch.52 vv.6-7

‘Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.’

Isaiah ch.52 vv.13-15

The balanced gospel for today is the whole of God’s Word. It covers the individual, the national and the prophetic, and by the grace of God this will be our witness in the closing stages of the age.

Finally, since I have been obliged to omit many verses, I suggest it would be most profitable if readers would take these three glorious chapters of Isaiah, chs 50, 51 & 52, and read them through at one sitting so as to get a bird’s eye view of the end of the age when Israel is being reunited to her Lord, and when her divorce is being dis-annulled—the theme of the first part of Isaiah’s prophecy.
