

The Kingdom of God - What will it be Like – 6

Israel's last Old Testament prophet warned them to watch for **the reappearing of Elijah** before **“the great and dreadful day of the LORD”** **6** he will **turn the hearts** of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” - **Malachi 4**.

- Elijah was occupied in an ongoing effort to move Israel away from idolatry - **1 Kings 17**. In the end there had been some progress in **turning their hearts** back to a knowledge and worship of God, but only a little. It was only the later destruction of the Jewish state by Babylon that finally cured the Jews of idol worship. Under the Persians Judea was restored with Jerusalem and the temple. 400 years later Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that he would **“suddenly come to his temple”** - **Malachi 3:1**, but most of the nation rejected his Messiahship. Their hearts were **still not right** with God.

It was with sorrow that the soon to be martyred Stephen had to say to them, **“You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you”** - **Acts 7:51**. But God was not finished with them, as Paul explains, **“...hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness* of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved...”** - **Romans 11:25**. *At the return of Jesus, the doorway to possession of Kingdom will be closed, signalling the end of God's **“taking out of the Gentiles a people for his name”** - **Acts 15:14** - which will be their **“fullness”**.

- Then will be the time when - **“Elijah...will restore all things”** - **Matthew 17:11**, when there will be a teaching mission before the **“great and dreadful day of the Lord”** to those in the land returned from their dispersion. Very much as John the Baptist came to **“prepare the way of the Lord”** at his first coming, **so will Elijah capture the attention of the Jews, to** prepare them for the second appearing of Jesus to Israel. Israel's awakening by Elijah to the imminent coming of Messiah, is to be followed by a test of their faith in God - **a united invasion of the Jewish state by her immediate neighbours** - **“They say, ‘... let the name of Israel be remembered no more.’ 5 They conspire with one accord... - 6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites ... 8 Assyria also has joined them...”** - **Psalm 83**.

In recent times, bands of fighters in support of the “Islamic State” occupied an area in Iraq whose ancient name was **Assyria**. The **leader of I.S.**, Abu Bakr, had remarkable success in attracting soldiers, both locally and further afield to establish his Caliphate, and is now **waiting** for a new opportunity to revive it. While I.S. has been rolled back militarily, the Islamists are **still present** there, and only await a **new rallying call**. That may be brought on by actions in Israel which will fire with religious zeal far more recruits for “the Assyrian” to **spearhead** an invasion of Israel.

- This will be **“the great and dreadful day of the LORD”** of Malachi's prophecy. But **“the One to be ruler in Israel ... 5 “this man” - the Lord Jesus Christ** - **“shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men”** - **Micah 5:2**. Crushing their attackers, - the new divine leaders of Israel, will lead the IDF to invade the territory of their invaders - **6 “And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he comes into our land, and when he treads within our borders”** - **Micah 5:2**. More next time, God willing.