

The Kingdom of God - What will it be Like – 7

We saw last time how Israel's awakening by Elijah to the impending arrival of Messiah, is to be interrupted. **The Jewish state will be invaded** by Israel's immediate neighbours, led by fighters, possibly a corps of *mujahideen*, stationed in the territory in Iraq once called Assyria - **Micah 5:2**. The efforts of Elijah to prepare Israel - **Malachi 4:6** - will have **turned some hearts** back to the ways of their first ancestors; others will remain stiff-necked and faithless. The invasion becomes a trial and judgement for those in the land, after they have received Elijah's warnings.

This event can be connected with **Zechariah 13:8** - *"It shall come to pass in all the land, says the LORD, that **two thirds** in it shall be **cut off and die**, but **one third shall be left** in it: **9 I will bring the one third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them.**"* This third are evidently those who remain from among the ones who responded to Elijah's instruction, and have developed some degree of faith which the refining fire will test. **Malachi speaks of Messiah as "the messenger* of the covenant" who will test them** - **Malachi 3:1** *"...The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple...**2** ...He is like a refiner's fire...**3** He will ... **purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.**"*

The *messenger of the covenant is Jesus Christ; and when he appears he carries out a purifying work, as the founder separates silver and gold from the base elements - **Zechariah 14:2** - *"I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall **go into captivity**, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city."* Evidently in the midst of these troubles the remaining inhabitants, with their leaders, will **place their trust in God** to save them - **Zechariah 12:5**, *"And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength **in the LORD of hosts, their God**.'" These presumably are "the residue of the people not cut off from the city" - **Zech. 14:2**. Being strengthened by God, they fight at Jerusalem and gather in much spoil (**v. 14**). In chapter **12:6** they are likened to a torch of fire in a sheaf, *"and they **shall devour all the people round about**"*.*

It may be thought that it would be **unrealistic** to expect the nation of Israel in the land today could be **suddenly transformed** when Christ comes. But think of the amazing and sudden conversion of **the apostle Paul**, whose call to the first missionary journey came only after a period of re-education. After Israel's equally sudden recognition of Jesus, they also will be subject to a gradual moral regeneration through various stages. After the instruction by Elijah, followed by the testing of faith in the great invasion, will be their miraculous deliverance - **Zechariah 14:4** - *"**In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley... 5 ...Thus the LORD my God will come, and **all the saints with You.**"***

Witnessing these cataclysmic events and being rescued from otherwise certain overthrow by the invaders, the people of Judah and Jerusalem will be ready to meet their rescuer -

their true Messiah, and face up to the realization that he is the one crucified by their forefathers - **Zechariah 12:10** *"I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then **they will look on Me whom they have pierced**; they will **mourn** for Him... and **grieve** for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."*