

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#04-10101

The Scepter of Judah

August 23, 2010

It can be said without much doubt that many Christians think of modern Israel as a Jewish nation filled with descendants of the twelve tribes of Jacob that returned to the ancient land of Israel through a miracle of God. When Christians see the terms *Israel* and *Jew*, many think of modern Israel as if the descendants of Jacob-Isaac-Abraham according to flesh are being reunited there so they can become the head of the nations in the next age as God miraculously saves them from all their enemies. Have you ever considered that, perhaps, they themselves are the enemy of God? After all, they are **enemies of the cross of Christ** (Philippians 3:18). Of course, Christians generally acknowledge that all have not returned to the land, but the ones that are there today are representative of all twelve tribes. Another way of stating this is that modern Israel is seen as the reunited Kingdom of Israel. I recognize that they might not use these exact terms; nevertheless, their thinking is along these lines.

Now, in the next issue I want to begin looking at the lost house of Israel, but before doing so, there are a few points that need to be made in this issue to tie up some loose ends from previous issues.

First, I realize that some, perhaps many, Christians believe that modern Israel's very existence is a miracle of God and that this is proof they are God's chosen nation. I have read some of the stories of how the hand of God was miraculously revealed during the many battles that the Israelites have fought. They are truly amazing stories. But does this mean that they are the chosen nation of God? After all, Jesus cursed the fig tree that rejected Him and prophesied that it would come alive again with leaves; however, He never said that the curse would be lifted and it would bear fruit. It was barren then and it is barren today, for it continues to reject Christ and rely on the arm of the flesh for its defense.

Second, it appears to me that the reason there is a modern Jewish state on the land today is to fulfill prophecy relating to the evil figs, Edom, and Ishmael. I have explained this in the previous issues. God has miraculously kept this people and Jerusalem for the **appointed time of judgment** in order to fulfill prophecy. Since their 2006 battle in Lebanon, their victories have not been as decisive as in the past, as if the hand of God is being lifted from an unrepentant nation.

Third, the names of each of the twelve tribes of Jacob-Israel were retained by the prince of the tribe. In other words, if a person left a tribe and joined another, he identified with the tribe he joined, not the one he left. Wherever the prince of the tribe resided, so did the rest of the tribe. When Jesus came the first time, He came as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He was a descendant of David who was of the line of Judah, and Judah was given the scepter as prophesied by Jacob-Israel.

(8) "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. (9) Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? (10) The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Genesis 49:8-10 NASB)

The reason the Lord returned a remnant to Judea-Jerusalem after they had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians was so there would be a Judah nation on the land when the rightful head of the tribe of Judah arrived on the scene. Jesus is that rightful head. He is the Prince of Judah.

The Jews who demanded Jesus' death and became responsible for killing Him refused to declare Him the King of the Jews or the King of Judah. They didn't deny Jesus' claim, but they refused to accept it. However, Pilate sensed the truth more than they did. When questioned over the inscription he had placed on Jesus' cross, Pilate held his ground.

(19) Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, 'JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.' (20) Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. (21) So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" (22) Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." (John 19:19-22 NASB)

The word *Jew* refers to one belonging to *Jehudah* or to *Judah*. In other words, Jesus was and still is the King of Judah. In fulfillment of the prophecy made over Jacob's fourth son, Judah, Jesus came the first time to take the scepter of Judah, and He now possesses the ruler's staff.

Thus, a remnant of Judah had to be back on the land of Israel when Jesus came the first time so that He could take the scepter as the King of Judah and become the Prince of Judah. Consequently, wherever the Prince is, so is the tribe of Judah or, if you will, the nation of Judah.

Fourth, the Jews that believed in Jesus as Savior and King never left the good fig tree of Judah. There was no need for them to be grafted into it, for they represented the good figs prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 24). They became known as Christians, and all who have believed in Jesus from the Cross on, regardless of flesh or genealogy, have been grafted into this good fig tree of Judah with Jesus as the Prince.

In issue #04-1075, July 28, 2010, *Dualism – Two Distinct Lines?*, I posed the question: Is there one line upon which God is working, or are there two? My answer is that there is one line, but it is manifested in a variety of ways. One way that it is manifested is in this metaphor of a fig tree. The good fig tree has not been lost or halted in history; it has never stopped growing, for there have always been some who have had the faith to remain obedient to and follow the Lord.

For example, of Caleb, who was from the tribe of Judah, the Lord said: **"But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it"** (Numbers 14:24 NASB).

Of David, who was from the tribe of Judah, it is said: **He raised up to them David for a king, to whom He also said, witnessing, "I found David" the son of Jesse "to be a man according to My own heart, who will do all My will"** (Acts 13:22 LITV; also 1 Samuel 13:14).

Of course, there are others down through the centuries from the other tribes that constituted the good fig tree, for they too had hearts for the Lord and faith to obey Him. When Jeremiah prophesied of the basket of figs, he was speaking to the house of Judah. However, over time, regardless of tribe or genealogy, those who believe in Jesus and by faith obey Him are grafted into the good fig tree of Judah because He is the rightful Prince of the tribe, having taken the scepter given to Him by His Father.

(6) "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." (7) "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. (8) Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. (9) 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" (Psalm 2:6-9 NASB)

Jesus, the Son of God, is the King of Judah, and all who accept Him as King are part of His nation that bears the fruit of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 21:43). They are not a cursed fig tree (i.e., nation) but a blessed one. Wherever He is, so are they. It is no longer a matter of location, as it is with modern Israel that rejects Him, but of heart. Where Christ has been sanctified as Lord in a heart (1 Peter 3:15), there He is as the King of Judah holding the scepter.

Finally, today, some of the apparent Jews that have returned to the land possibly could represent the twelve tribes according to flesh, but they have returned as individuals and not as a united kingdom or as the lost house of Israel. The national identity of the house of Israel continues to be lost among the nations. This is Christ's treasure that He found and hid again in the world (Matthew 13:44), waiting to be revealed when He comes the second time. This leads to the subject of the following issues.