

FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING FROM

Derek Prince
M I N I S T R I E S



Israel's Restoration

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It was in September 2000 that I decided to take up residence once again in Israel, and since that time I have faced some of the greatest physical challenges of my life. They are not unconnected, believe me. When you set out to do something in Israel for the Lord, you stir up a lot of opposition. I have had more different kinds of sickness than I can count, among them cancer, polymyalgia rheumatica, and double pneumonia. But by the grace of God, I am making good progress.

I do not mean to boast when I say that I am not unsettled by a crisis here. I have seldom been in Israel when there wasn't a crisis. There are certain Bible verses that I resort to in times like these that I would like to share with you. Jeremiah 31:10 says:

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
And declare it in the isles afar off, and say . . .
“He who scattered Israel will gather him,
And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.”

God is speaking here to the nations other than Israel. He is saying, in effect: “I am planning to restore My Jewish people to the land that I gave them. If you seek to hinder or oppose what I am doing, I will have to treat you as My enemies.”

This is now a fact of history. He who scattered Israel, not merely *will* gather him, but *is* gathering him. Remember, those words were spoken well over two thousand years ago. But they exactly describe the contemporary situation in Israel. The language used is particularly appropriate. Hebrew uses just one word to say *will gather him*, and that word is from the same root as *kibbutz*. A kibbutz is a special type of community that came into being when the Jews began to return to this land. So we could amplify that statement, “*He who scattered Israel will gather him in kibbutzim.*” This is a remarkable example of God's prophetic insight revealed in Scripture. Personally, I do not believe that Israel would have survived the last 54 years without the kibbutzim.

Whenever there is a crisis, my reaction is to reaffirm, “*He who scattered Israel not merely will gather him, but is gathering him and will keep him—or protect him.*” The use of the phrase “*will keep* [or protect] *him*” is indicative that there is going to be a time of crisis, not a normal, peaceful situation. So whenever somebody turns on the news and I hear about another crisis, I say to myself, “*He who scattered Israel is gathering him and will keep him.*”

Personally, I do not panic in such times of crisis. I seek to make a realistic assessment and I take reasonable precautions. But this does not shake my conviction that “*He who scattered Israel will protect him.*”

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A Prayer of the Afflicted

In times of pressure, I often turn to Psalm 102. The New King James Version calls this psalm “*A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD.*” Certainly it is a cry of desperation, but it also contains some precious jewels. The first two verses reveal a heart of desperation:

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come to You.
Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day that I call, answer me speedily.

Here is a desperate person who knows that he has no help but in God. I like the way the psalmists are so frank; they do not cover anything up: “If You don’t listen, Lord, I’ve got no other help. I’m sunk.” Then the psalmist goes on in verses three and four to describe his own pitiful condition:

For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned like a hearth.
My heart is stricken and withered like grass,
So that I forget to eat my bread.

This is a person in desperation, who cannot even remember to eat and who keeps losing weight. The psalmist continues in verses five through seven:

Because of the sound of my groaning
My bones cling to my skin.
I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am like an owl of the desert.
I lie awake,
And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.

The pelican and the owl are two birds that seldom seem happy. And what is the problem with that sparrow? He’s *alone*. He has lost his mate.

In verses eight through ten we get to the heart of the matter:

**I have learned something
about the reasons why
people suffer. I have
learned that the hardest,
most painful form of
suffering is rejection.
Rejection is, I believe, the
deepest wound of the
human heart.**

My enemies reproach me all day long,
And those who deride me swear an oath against me.
For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
Because of Your indignation and Your wrath;
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.

To me, that is the core of the man’s suffering: “You have lifted me up and cast me away. You raised me up. You gave me prominence, and then You threw me aside.” I believe that is the most bitter statement anybody can make.

Speaking as a Gentile, I see this as the root agony of the Jewish people. God lifted them up 2,400 years ago. Back then, if you wanted to know the truth about God, to whom did you go?

To a Jew. If you wanted to know the true forms of worship, to whom did you go? To a Jew. If you wanted to meet God in person, where did you go? To Jerusalem.

We Gentiles can hardly empathize with all that the Jewish people have gone through. The psalmist says,

“*You cast me away.*” As evidence, a Muslim mosque now stands where the Temple once stood.

Through my experiences in ministering to people who need deliverance from demons, I have learned something about the reasons why people suffer. I have learned that the hardest, most painful form of suffering is rejection. Rejection is, I believe, the deepest wound of the human heart.

In our society today we are surrounded by people who have been rejected. I believe human beings were designed to encounter love. But when a little child does not encounter love from father or mother, there is a deep wound of rejection. After that, many other wounds may follow. People are reaching out for love continually. But where they meet the opposite, the result is often a desperately deep wound.

I believe the root problem of the Jewish people is rejection, and they do not even know it. If you have ever dealt with a rejected person, you will know they often tend to be aggressive. But that is just a cover-up. The truth of the matter is, they are longing to be loved. This is true of the Jewish people; they are longing for acceptance.

The psalmist says, “*You have lifted me up and cast me away.*” I could refer to several other passages that say the same thing about Israel. God certainly lifted them up, He made them the head of the nations, He gave them a place of prominence—and then He cast them away! He did not cast them away forever, though, but you must have faith to lay hold of that.

Verse twelve is where we find hope. Here is the biblical response to rejection:

But You, O LORD, shall endure forever,
And the remembrance of Your name to all generations.

“*But You, O LORD.*” Turn your mind away from yourself, your problems, your sufferings, your failures. There is no help to be found there. The only source of hope and help is the Lord. You can blame other people for your situation (which may be perfectly correct), but they have no solution to offer you. There is only one solution: the Lord—and He is always there.

A Time of Restoration

Our walk through Psalm 102 has taken a turn in the right direction. The psalmist has chosen to trust in God’s love and mercy. Verse 13:

You will arise and have mercy on Zion;
For the time to favor her,
Yes, the set time, has come.

The current restoration of the Jewish people is a unique mark of God’s favor. In God’s calendar, there is a set time to favor Zion. I believe we are either living in it now or we are approaching it.

There are two words in that verse that describe something we can never earn: *favor* and *mercy*. The very fact that we need mercy means we cannot earn it. Here, I believe, is a focal problem with religious people like you or me. If we cannot earn it, we do not want it. Most of us have been brought up to think that religion is earning something. If you achieve certain standards or satisfy certain requirements, you will get certain benefits. I do believe there is an element of that in the life of faith, but this is not what we are talking about. You cannot earn favor, and you cannot earn mercy. By definition, they cannot be earned. If you need mercy, that means you have not earned it.

In ministering to the body of Christ, I have discovered that many Christians find fault with God because He is restoring the Jewish people—and they feel the Jews don’t deserve it. But that is the very essence of favor: *getting what you don’t deserve*. One result of that way of thinking is “replacement theology,” which claims that because the Jews have fallen out of favor with God, all of their promises default to the church.

By implication, “the church” *does* deserve God’s favor. But this leaves me with an unresolved problem. In more than sixty years of ministry, I have yet to discover a church that actually does deserve God’s favor.

The current restoration of the Jewish people is a unique mark of God’s favor. In God’s calendar, there is a set time to favor Zion. I believe we are either living in it now or we are approaching it.

In verse 16, Psalm 102 moves on to an exciting climax:

For the LORD shall build up Zion;
He shall appear in His glory.

The King James Version says, "*When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" The upbuilding of Zion is one of the most exciting contemporary signs that the Lord is getting ready to return.

Psalm 102:18 says, "*This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.*" I was sharing this verse with a Jewish friend, and he pointed out the Hebrew does not say "the generation to come;" it says "the *last* generation." So, this is written for the last generation.

What is God looking for then? A people to praise Him, and if necessary He is going to have to create them. I believe that is just what God is doing at the present, creating a people who will offer Him the praise that He deserves. And in that people, there will be both Jews and Gentiles.

For further study we recommend audio cassette 4403, "Israel in the Headlines."

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