

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE:

THE LIBERATION OF JERUSALEM -
A PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

by

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The point of departure in this analysis is the observation that the Lucan form of Jesus's eschatological discourse (Luke 21:5-36) is more original and much nearer to the earliest written sources than that of Mark (ch. 13), while the Matthean form (Matt. 24:1-36) depends largely on Mark. It can be shown that Mark has eliminated all political allusions to the impending destruction of Jerusalem in spite of the fact that the discourse can only have been at base a prophecy of the destruction of the Temple. Mark's changes of the earlier prophecy are thoroughly apocalyptic and result in an essential revision of the theme, from that of the coming Jewish judgement and tragedy, as well as eschatological redemption, to that of the future of the Christian 'Elect'.

Even in its earlier stage the discourse was probably a complex based on various sayings of Jesus. The prophecy about the conquest of Jerusalem and its final, eschatological liberation is found in Luke 21:20-28, and there is every reason to believe that in essence the entire passage represents Jesus's *ipsissima verba*. Jesus here says that 'Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'. When these things 'begin to take place you are to look up and raise your heads, for your redemption is drawing near'.

It is clear that Jesus's disciples shared the same hopes and fears as other Jews of the period and that Jesus himself felt closely tied to the emotions of his compatriots. Jesus's disciples were, of course, both committed to him personally and to their own nation. Thus, the prophecy fits the Jewish context perfectly and also adheres to the scheme of similar prophecies in the Old Testament. It also has a relevant parallel in Revelation 11:1-2.

In Acts 1:6-8, the hope for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel is also expressed. The resurrected Jesus there states that it is not possible for his disciples to know the time of the national redemption; their imme-

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(Eretz Israel, Volume X in honour of Zalman Shazar, Jerusalem, 1971.)

diate task is simply to bring the Christian message 'to the ends of the earth'. Behind this Lucan story in the Book of Acts lies the idea apparently that the kingdom will yet be restored to Israel but that until this happens 'this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come' (Matt. 24:14). This latter quotation suggests that the earlier words 'until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (Luke 21:24), in fact pointing to the final liberation of Jerusalem from the hands of the Gentiles, were wrongly understood by the Christian missionaries to mean either 'Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled and they also will reach salvation', or – as is proved by a variant in some manuscripts of Luke – 'Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until it is fulfilled, and then there will come the times of the Gentiles'.

It is almost certain that Paul knew, either directly or indirectly, the Lucan form of Jesus's words concerning Israel's doom, 'until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled', and that he, or his contemporaries, understood this sentence to be saying that Israel would at last come to salvation, after the Gentiles had been converted to the message of the Gospel. Hence his famous words, 'A hardening has come upon part of Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved' (Romans 11: 25-26). In this way the original prophecy of the final liberation of Jerusalem from the yoke of the Gentiles and the eschatological national redemption of Israel was eventually interpreted as a prophecy of the acceptance of faith in Christ by both the Gentiles and Israel.

Summary by E. Grafman;
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