**The City of God**

The writer of the book of Hebrews says this about the city of Jerusalem: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Of course, Jerusalem is being used in a figurative sense to represent the church, the body of saved people in all places at all times. The citizens of that holy city are not ethnic Jews, but spiritual Israelites. In Galatians 3:27-29, Paul wrote, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.”

Perhaps the first glimpse we see of literal Jerusalem in Scripture is Genesis 14 when Abraham met Melchizedek, priest of the most high God and king of Salem (about 2,000 BC). About 400 years later, Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and Joshua led them in their quest to take the land of Canaan. While parceling out the territories to the twelve tribes, neither Judah nor Benjamin were able to drive the Jebusites out of Jebus (Jerusalem). It was not under Israelite control until David captured the city in 1048 BC and made it the capitol of his kingdom.

David’s son, Solomon, built a magnificent temple for Jehovah and Jerusalem became the political, cultural and religious center for the Israelites. Even after the kingdom split in 975 BC, Jerusalem remained the capitol of the Southern kingdom of Judah. Because of the wickedness and rebellion of the people, God sent Nebuchadezzar of Babylon in 586 BC to utterly destroy the city of Jerusalem and her beautiful temple.

After 70 years of Babylonian captivity, Cyrus the Great of Persia decreed for Jews who wished to return to rebuild God’s temple and to restore the city of Jerusalem. But the Jews never again gained true independence. Their history unfolded beneath the backdrop of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires. By the time Messiah came on the scene, the Romans were in control. Jesus focused on the Jews in His personal ministry, but the general response He received was rejection. This rejection was no surprise to God; just read Isaiah 53 sometime. Jesus Himself taught that, because of their rejection of God’s anointed, their house would be left to them desolate (Matthew 23:38). He continued in Matthew 24 to describe the destruction of Jerusalem in detail.

In 70 AD, the Roman army under the leadership of Titus, completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. But that wasn’t the end for the city of God. Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Which brings us back to the beginning of this article. It has been God’s plan all along to include folks from every nation under heaven as citizens in the Messianic kingdom (Jeremiah 3:17; Isaiah 2:2-3). You can become a spiritual Israelite by being baptized into Christ and when you do, God will rescue you from the domain of darkness and transfer you into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). You can come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The decision is yours.

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