

relation to the Jews. 1656 is generally recognised now as the year in which the period of expulsion, which began in 1290, came to an end.

Conclusion

We know from prophecy that Jerusalem is to be “a burdensome stone for all people” (Zech. 12:3). Jerusalem and the Jews are at the centre of God’s purpose with the earth. As we have seen, it was this belief that encouraged a more favourable attitude towards the Jews in seventeenth-century England. However, it is ironic that in his interview the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, attempts to play down the role of the Jews in the world. In speaking of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict he argues: “to make this [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict—where the two sides have worked now for 12 years in a process of peace—the epicentre of

global politics is not merely wrong . . . but it is also quite troubling”.⁴ Yet Israel is to become the epicentre, for God will “gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle” (14:2).

Menasseh ben Israel acknowledged that the Jews were being punished for wickedness, something which Sacks does not appear to do. However, Menasseh ben Israel did not go as far as to say that Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified was the Messiah, the Son of God. Yet there will come a time when “they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (12:10). When this occurs then the Millennium will truly be able to begin.

4. *Op cit.*

God our strength

Charles Morgan

This article, first published in July 1947, considers how God provides help and strength to believers in their walk to the Kingdom.

GOD WAS THE strength of His people Israel. In the beginning of their history He brought them out of a hopeless bondage to be a people for Himself, and He delivered them as a nation, time after time, when they appeared to be at the mercy of their enemies. There are sure grounds for confidence in the strength that God has made available for His people in all ages and in every race, and reflection upon its individual aspect is necessary and inspiring.

From a physical point of view, strength of body and strength of mind are priceless possessions for which, with all good gifts, we are dependent upon God. Strength as a term expressive of our natural powers is relative. Men are apt to pride themselves upon their fitness and strength; but they are so unreliable, and they so soon fade away entirely, that we know it to be true that “every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Ps. 39:5).

“Power [mg. strength] belongeth unto God” (62:11). This statement by the psalmist needs no reservation. God is omnipotent, and, as His creatures, we are dependent upon Him. From Him we receive the strength that is necessary to meet the ordinary needs of natural life. In days gone

by, God gave men strength to meet extraordinary demands upon their physical powers. We are able to read of occasions, such as the experience of the friends of Daniel, when more than human strength and endurance were necessary if deliverance was to be effected.

There are other ways, apart from miraculous deliverance and apart from deeds of physical prowess, in which God has been, is, and will be the strength of His people. We refer to a strength of spirit, sustained and fortified by faith in God, which in times of trouble and adversity has enabled men to be loyal to their God and their faith, even unto death itself. Men and women shine forth from the living page of history, who, though frail in body, have endured persecution, torture and the fires of the stake, steadfast in purpose to the end. To such noble characters the words of the inspired writer apply: “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb. 11:34). The secret of their strength lay in their ability to draw upon the source of all strength.

In so far as we receive the strength that is available from God, thus far shall we be successful in the things of the Spirit. We are conscious that our life is beset with difficulty and that we are subject to all kinds of limitations. Wherever there is human nature, there is weakness and the knowledge of sin. It follows that, since strength belongs to God, the strength which He gives to

men and women is confined, for the time, within certain narrow limits. Now is not the time for human beings to experience unlimited strength. Nevertheless, where there is true consciousness of God, there is for human experience a strength from God which is always adequate to the need. It was God's assurance to the Apostle Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Precisely in what ways God's strength is exerted on behalf of men and women it is not possible to describe. It is a truth to be received and valued by all who trust God's promise. There are, however, certain things that can be affirmed with confidence. If our object in life is to serve God according to His Word, then His strength will be with us as we pursue that object in all the circumstances that may arise. Equally certain it is that God's strength does not compel, in the sense of making us godly against our will. True, in His love and mercy, God may bring circumstances to bear upon our life to help us to recognise Him and retrace our steps if need be. God asks our heart, and, in so far as we give it to Him, He supports us and strengthens us in the way. As our trust in God's strength grows, so our reliance upon self

diminishes and human strength ceases to be of first moment.

The great Apostle Paul once counselled a young man: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1). It is presented as a personal duty to grow strong, in grace. There is indicated a strength which is God-given, and our personal duty consists in seeking it from Him Who is the great source. That strength will be cultivated by meditation upon God's Word, receiving cheer from the friendship and sympathy of Jesus, inspiration from his example and encouragement in anticipation of the coming day.

We have said that God's strength for men and women is confined for the present within comparatively narrow limits. It will not always be so. The psalmist says, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the high ways to Zion . . . They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth before God in Zion" (Ps. 84:5,7, RV). When the Redeemer comes to Zion, God's strength will be imparted to His children in fullest measure, for "the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (v. 11).

New series

An exposition of Revelation 21

1. A new heaven and a new earth

Mark Allfree

In this series we examine in detail the vision of the "new heaven and a new earth" that the Apostle John saw in Revelation 21. We shall see that this chapter speaks of great blessings that God has in store for those that love Him and keep His commandments. It is hoped that our consideration of this vision that John saw will encourage us in our discipleship as we seek to overcome, so that ultimately, in the grace of God, we may "inherit all things", and be invited to drink "of the fountain of the water of life freely" (vv. 6,7).

REVELATION 21 falls readily into two unequal parts, each of which will be dealt with in two articles:

- verses 1-8, where John sees "a new heaven and a new earth"
- verses 9-27, where John sees a vision of "holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God". John gives to us a very dramatic description of this apocalyptic city.

A new heaven and a new earth

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (v. 1). In seeking to understand the significance of what John saw, we must begin at first principles, and establish what the prophetic scriptures signify when they speak of heaven and earth.

It is well established that, in symbolic terms, the heaven represents rulership and the earth