

The miracle of Jewish conversion from unbelief to a deep and abiding faith in their God and in their true Messiah and King, Jesus Christ, will be plain for all peoples to see: "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever" (Isa. 59:20,21).

In the mercy and love of God the "times of refreshing" will surely come for His chosen people, "the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:19,21), when a repented, restored and sanctified Israel will become "the head, and not the tail" of the nations (Deut. 28:13), a time foreseen in the prophecy of Zechariah: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (8:23). The Jewish people will assume the moral leadership of the nations, no longer despised

and discriminated against, but admired and respected as the people of God, and worthy of emulation by all the nations.

The truly wonderful picture before us is completed in the portrayal of Christ the King enthroned in the temple upon Mount Zion: "Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (6:12,13).

The nature of the incomparable reward that awaits the faithful children of God and followers of Jesus Christ is conveyed to us in those truly exhilarating words of Jesus that should encourage us and stimulate our faith as together we walk towards the Kingdom in prayerful expectation of his return. Jesus said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). What a truly wonderful privilege and joy it will be for the saints as they assist in bringing "many people" to an understanding of the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

Referendum—yes or no?

Arthur East

OVER THE PAST fifty years members of our community in the Western world have experienced a developing sense of personal freedom, brought about by relative security, higher educational opportunity and society's greater sense of personal rights. Increasingly we seem to have a political point of view. This is often centred on the family. We comment on what we would and would not wish our children or grandchildren to experience, and attempt to shield them, in an artificial way, from perceived dangers.

These attitudes and this level of political awareness, however, make it easy for us to step into direct political involvement. We would do well to consider where we stand on this before the next politically charged issue is placed before us.

We are yet again entering a situation of change, and choices will have to be made. Pressure is on the British Government from its European part-

ners, from some sections of British business and from the need for political uniformity, to discard sterling in favour of the euro. Some may see the political implications of this change, others think it will merely be an inconvenience. Some may see this change as being beneficial when going on holiday or travelling in European countries, whilst many in business think a common currency will bring financial advantages and reduce administration costs.

In order to transfer the responsibility for any unpleasant side effect, Parliament will ask the British people to vote on which they would prefer. This poses the question as to whether we, as brethren and sisters of Christ, should take part in such a decision, or whether there is a higher power involved to which we have to defer.

When we discuss God's involvement in earth-bound political issues, two overall principles appear to come into play:

- The first principle was revealed to an extremely arrogant despot, and, given his mental state, involved a considerable change of heart in him, brought about through suffering and humiliation. He was taught that “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan. 4:32). In the use of the singular word “kingdom” we are being told not only that “the most High” rules from a single position of power but also that, given His omnipresence, He regards all the diverse human political systems as a single unit, something that He manipulates with ease in order to bring about His will and complete His ultimate purpose. This was a situation that Nebuchadnezzar was forced to accept, especially when he was told that both he personally and his empire would be superseded by others. So the first principle is: *God rules supreme.*
- The second principle involves the focus of God’s attention. Israel is still, even today, “beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (Rom. 11:28). God’s covenant of a “smoking furnace” cannot be disannulled (Gen. 15:17,18); God cannot lie. In that Romans passage Paul confirms God’s previously stated intention: “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance . . . He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance” (Deut. 32:8,9). Truly we have been drawn through faith into the covenants of promise: “And if [we are] Christ’s, then are [we] Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Our relationship with the Lord

Jesus has also given us access to the benefits promised by God to Abraham. So the second principle is: *Among the nations, Israel is the prime focus of God’s attention.*

Working on these two Scripturally based principles, we have to consider our position when it comes to taking part in referenda or any politically based voting. A number of questions surface:

- Are any of us in the Lord’s confidence to the extent that we are able to scan His overall purpose with the nations, other than in its broadest terms?
- Are we able to discriminate as to which is of the Lord’s hand, when He says, “I make peace, and create evil” (Isa. 45:7)?
- Do we have a measure of the degree to which God involves Himself in any or every political situation?
- Can we measure the extent and depth of the “time of trouble, such as never was” spoken of by Daniel (12:1)?
- Can we measure the degree of influence that individual and collective groups of nations have on the situation in Israel, which will only be finally resolved with the Master’s return?

I submit that each of these questions requires a negative response, given the fact that even the nations are “as the small dust of the balance” (Isa. 40:15) with God. Without appearing feeble-minded or happy to ‘pass the buck’, we should publicly testify that we leave these momentous matters in the very safe hands of the Lord God Almighty, thereby confirming that we do not take part in any form of political voting or referenda.

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