

The Hope of Israel

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Have you seen their faces?

Have you heard their stories?

On October 7th 2023, nearly 1,200 people were massacred by Hamas in southern Israel; men, women, children and babies; at home, in their beds; on the street; many at a music festival; peaceniks and soldiers. We know the faces of many of the victims and have heard their stories, with lives, families and values that we would recognise here in the West: reasonable, peaceful people, loving life and wishing to find an even-handed accommodation with their Palestinian neighbours. The violence was shocking, designed to provoke, reminiscent of a medieval pogrom. It will go down as one of the most brutal terrorist atrocities in its history, its effects every bit as traumatic for the people of Israel as the 9/11 attacks were for the US.

And in reprisal, Israel launched a special military operation in Gaza to destroy Hamas and free the hostages. Since then, more than 25,000 people in Gaza have been killed with more than 63,000 wounded. Gaza is one of the most densely populated places in the world. The Norwegian Refugee Council described it as the world's largest open-air prison.¹ U.N. officials have said that 1.9 million people (over 85 percent of Gaza's population) are internally displaced, with conditions in the ever-shrinking southern area of the Gaza strip becoming ever-more apocalyptic. More than half of its northern civilian infrastructure, including housing, schools, hospitals, mosques, bakeries, water pipes, sewage and power networks have been destroyed. At the time of writing the Israeli government has just announced its decision to extend the action to central Gaza and says that its operation will continue for several months despite international pressure.

I have to admit that I haven't seen the faces of the Palestinian victims or know their stories. I'm not sure that their lives or beliefs correspond to those I've ascribed to the Israelis; or at least

¹ www.nrc.no/news/2018/april/gaza-the-worlds-largest-open-air-prison/

that's what I've been led to believe. And I have to confess to being relatively ignorant, perhaps willingly so, of the situation for the Palestinian People in Gaza and the West Bank:² ignorance fuelled by the story I told myself about the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland as the fulfilment of Bible prophecy, a story I still believe to be true. But now I find myself questioning some of the assumptions I'd made in tidily airbrushing the Palestinians out of the way as though they were like the idolatrous tribes of Canaan that Israel conquered in the book of Joshua. As though in the fullness of time, God hadn't sent his son into the world and two thousand years of history hadn't happened since then. As though God was still only concerned with groups and not with individuals from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.³

So, the question is, how do you feel? Are you team Israel or team Gaza? Are you naturally sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish people, because of their place in God's purpose, because "salvation is of the Jews", or have you suffered a moral injury, that the people who have known persecution for the last two thousand years have now inflicted the same suffering on the people of Gaza and the West Bank? That they have forgotten the injunction to *love the stranger because you were strangers in the land of Egypt*?⁴

I won't entertain the thought that any rational or sane person might be feeling glee at the collective suffering of Israelis and Palestinians because they think this heralds the time of the end and the return of Christ. Though, sadly, I am well aware of those who sit as arm-chair spectators, happy to believe that the judgments of God will fall on everybody else whilst they enjoy the best seat in the house waiting for the rapture.

So, let me re-phrase the question. As a Bible believing Christian, looking for the return of Christ, what's your reaction to all of this? Is it a grim sense of inevitability, satisfaction even? That this is the way it has to be because of the particular story we have told ourselves; the story in which Israel stands alone against all its enemies and in that moment of self-realisation turns to God, who then saves them with the return of Christ and inaugurates the Kingdom of God amongst the surviving wreckage of humanity?⁵

² www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001r7ft

³ Revelation 7:9

⁴ Exodus 22:21, 23:9; Leviticus 19:33 & 34; Deuteronomy 10:16-19, 24:14,15,17 & 18

⁵ Zechariah 12:10-14 & 14:1-21

But is it possible that God, our Heavenly Father, may actually have a different view of all of this? That he may be working to a different story? That his programme isn't in fact some grand nationalistic prophetic clockwork that will grind thousands, nay millions of people, between its gears, as it ticks remorselessly on to midnight? That, as we have seen from other parts of scripture, God's programme is at the very least based on a different set of assumptions and may even be subject to alteration because "God so loved the world".

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Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. (Luke 24:18-21)

We are the only species on this planet, as far as I am aware, that tell each other stories and live by stories. We make sense of the world through stories. They bring us comfort. We are the only species that will kill each other for our stories. For what are history, nationalism and religion, if not stories? Prophecy is a story about the future. So how do you cope with life, when the story isn't correct? Christ, Messiah, King of the Jews; the one who would redeem Israel from Roman occupation – the hope of Israel – crucified and buried.

But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. (Luke 24:21)

Stories can cloud our vision, in fact, they can prevent us from seeing the truth. The experience of Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection of Jesus is perhaps the most transformational journey in history. A Jesus they didn't recognise comes alongside them. A Jesus that they didn't know. The desire for liberation from Rome trumped everything. Even the testimony of the women who went to the tomb is questioned because if you've already got a story inside your head, it's very difficult to hear a new one. It's hard to fill a cup that's already full. That's why our stranger rebuked them:

O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses

and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

A Different Story

The stranger told them a different story based on the same scriptures. That when God made promises to Abraham, the good news (the gospel preached to him) was the promise that through his Seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed, Jews and Gentiles. That the land was promised to the Seed; that the Seed was the Christ. That he was before Abraham; that Abraham rejoiced to see his day and saw it and was glad. And when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar, that Abraham knew God would provide his own sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. And the promise of the Spirit for all nations, tongues and tribes.⁶

Yes, and that God delivered his people from their captivity, the night they killed the Passover Lamb and the first-born died. That they crossed the Red Sea and were baptised as they left their bondage; that *he ascended on high and led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men*. That it was Joshua and not Moses, who led Israel into the promised land by faith, by trusting in God. That God, when David had asked to find him a dwelling, promised him the Seed, who would sit on *God's* right hand; who David called Lord; and in whom the Gentiles would trust. That he was the Lord's anointed, the Son of God, and that he would not see corruption because God would raise him from the dead.⁷

That Isaiah spoke of him when he saw his glory, high and lifted up, as a life-giving spirit, sitting on a throne. That he was the beginning and the end of God's purpose: the last Adam. That Ezekiel saw him too, enthroned above the Cherubim of Glory, surrounded by the sign of God's mercy to every living creature, that he would not destroy the earth again even though they had polluted it with blood.⁸

That the Prophet Jonah, who was so reluctant to go and preach in Nineveh, was a sign to Israel, after spending three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. That he had to

⁶Cp Genesis 12:1-3, 22:18 & 26:4 with Acts 3:25 & 26 & Galatians 3:8; Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:6,7; Luke 20:13-15; Galatians 3:16; John 8:56-58 cp Genesis 22:14; James 2:21

⁷ Exodus 12:1-30; Ephesians 4:8 quoting Psalm 68:18; Hebrews 3:7-4:10; 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Acts 7:44-50; Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12; Acts 13:26-39

⁸ John 12:40 & 41 cp Isaiah 6:1-10; 1 Corinthians 15: 42-49; Genesis 6:11-13, 9:1-17; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Psalm 8 cp Hebrews 2:5-10; 2 Kings 21:16, 24:1-4; Ezekiel 7:23, 8:17, 9:9, 11:6, 22:1-31

learn that God didn't care just for the people of Israel but Nineveh too. And their cattle. Because God does not take pleasure in the death of any who die, not even the wicked, but wants them to have a new heart and spirit.⁹

And so, God promised a New Covenant, in which he would write the law into their minds and inward parts, so that they could be born from above. A covenant that had to be dedicated by a greater sacrifice than that of animals; a sacrifice that God himself would provide. And so, the stories went on. But these were the history of salvation and not the land, or holy places, or even nationalism. They were metaphors, echoes and promises of a much greater salvation to come.¹⁰

What did Cleopas and his companion think as they heard this stranger talk so persuasively, and with such passion, as he opened the scriptures to them and their hearts burned within them? And when Jesus was known to them in the breaking of bread, would they even have been able to grasp the thought, that something altogether bigger and more wonderful was happening? That God was indeed working a strange work in their days that they'd never considered?¹¹

They rushed back to Jerusalem, finding the eleven. And Jesus appeared to them again, this time unmistakably him. And then he told them again that his sufferings were part of a much bigger story, a bigger plan, one that involved all nations. And that they had to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Promise of his Father,¹² that the gift of the Spirit would be poured out on Jews and Gentiles through faith in him.

What a transition to make in less than a day, in a little more than seven miles! That the Gentiles, whom they hated, would become their fellow heirs, their brothers and sisters, in the salvation, not of Israel from Rome, but the whole world from sin!

The Promise of the Father

The story that Jesus had been telling them all through his ministry had been a very different one than they expected. Jesus was never the revolutionary leader they wanted. He didn't promise them deliverance from Rome or even their own oppressive rulers, despite the fact that most

⁹ Matthew 12:38-40; Jonah 4:11; Ezekiel 18:23, 31, 32

¹⁰ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 9:11-28; John 4:21-23; Acts 6:11-7:53

¹¹ Cp Acts 13:41 with Habakkuk 1:5 & 3:2

¹² Luke 24: 44-49; Acts 1:4-8

ordinary people were living hand to mouth under the collective burden of tribute, taxes and offerings. The indebtedness of small farmers and expropriation of their land were hallmarks of this Roman epoch.¹³ In 4BCE when Herod 1st died after a long and oppressive rule, there was a general revolt in Galilee and Judea, with royal fortresses and storehouses being attacked and raided as desperate people sought to take back the goods that had been seized from them. This revolt was brutally crushed by the Romans, with the crucifixion of thousands in the general area around Nazareth before Jesus came to live there as a child. We cannot imagine the collective trauma of village communities pillaged and burned, with family members slaughtered and enslaved. First century Galilee was a deeply troubled place.¹⁴

Events like these leave a deep and lasting impression in the collective memory of a people. You can see it in the story of Jesus's return to Nazareth, after his baptism and temptations in the wilderness. Here, on the sabbath, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah,¹⁵ announcing himself as the Hope of Israel by proclaiming the year of the LORD's favour – that special time when debts were cancelled, land was returned to its original owners and slaves were freed. A year of Jubilee.

This would have been deeply significant to those who heard him; along with all the blessings he announced on the poor, the broken hearted, the enslaved, the blind and oppressed. These were the resonant “words of grace” they marvelled at. But Jubilee wasn't just a case of receiving divine grace, it was also a demand to forgive and remit the debts of others.¹⁶ Jesus's appearance at the synagogue in Nazareth didn't end well. He excoriated them for their lack of faith, and told them a different story: that foreigners had been more prepared to hear the word of God than Israel. Evidently, their sufferings weren't enough to sanctify them in the eyes of Jesus. It's a testament to just how visceral their hatred of the Gentiles was, that they were prepared to take 'Joseph's son', whom they'd known from childhood, and push him off a cliff.

It's always easy to blame others for our own problems. But Jesus's diagnosis of their problems was radically different to their own. He told them that they had to be born again. They

¹³ Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:22, 22; E. W. & W Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, p111-113

¹⁴ Matthew 4:12-17; R.A. Horsley, *Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel*, p1205-1209

¹⁵ Isaiah 61:1-3 cp Luke 4:16-30

¹⁶ Leviticus 25:8-55; Deuteronomy 15:1-18 cp Jeremiah 34:8-22

wanted to change the world around them, the system, their situation. To kick the Romans out. This is what we all want.

But the good news that Jesus taught was that God wanted to change them. And he wants to change us too. He wants us all to be born from above, whether Israel, the Jewish people, the Romans, Samaritans, Palestinians, the whole world in fact. If we want the world to be different, we have to be different first.¹⁷

Jesus had been telling them this story all the way through his ministry but the problem is, if you've already got a story inside your head, it's very difficult to hear a new one. It's hard to fill a cup that's already full. This is how the story that Jesus told them right at the beginning of his ministry began:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled. (Matt 5:3-6)*

These are the "Beatitudes" or the blessings from the Sermon on the Mount. The word *blessed*, means favoured, fortunate, happy, or even congratulated. What Jesus was saying is that these are the people that God has favoured. They begin and end with the same blessing: that theirs is the Kingdom of God. You can see that they're divided into two groups:

- The first four: poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and the hungry; who are unhappy with themselves or their situations; and,
- The second four beatitudes: the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and persecuted; who represent what they, and what we, have to become.

The journey that the broken, grieving and powerless have to make is not to one of being powerful, victorious and triumphant; but rather to that of being compassionate, innocent and

¹⁷John 3:1-7; Matthew 16:24-27; Mark 8:34-38, 10:21; Luke 9:23-26

peacemakers. Rather than seeking justice, they have to practice justice by being right with God. This is the journey we all have to make, no matter who we are.

This was the Good News that Jesus taught: a vision of the Kingdom of God that turned everything that Rome stood for upside down. It remains the most radical program in history: that of remaking humanity in the image of God.¹⁸

Jesus was a revolutionary of the heart, and so he could not avoid facing his own human condition. In the midst of his own struggle for a new world he found that he was fighting his own fears and false ambitions, his own nature. And this he put to death on the cross: “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” That’s why Jesus told Nicodemus, that Jewishness wasn’t enough:

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5-6)

All the New Testament writers came to appreciate this. Their attitude to the Gentiles became radically different. Many other Jewish believers struggled with it: “how can they be the same as us without being circumcised?” They had to re-learn their own story, their own history, that it was only through faith, by trusting in God like Abraham, that they could receive the promise of the Spirit and become the children of God.¹⁹

Saul’s worldview was dramatically shattered on the Damascus Road, so that for three days he neither eat or drank. But he prayed. He had to unlearn everything, because you can’t fill a cup that’s already full. Later, in Ephesians, Paul would write:

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” (Eph 4:7-8)

God “gave gifts to men” – not a free independent Jewish state but the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Psalm Paul quotes is actually about the giving the Law at Sinai fifty days after the Passover in Egypt. In a great parallel, Jesus raised from the dead by the “glory of the Father” at Passover and the Holy Spirit was outpoured fifty days after the resurrection in Jerusalem. Peter then

¹⁸ Ephesians 3:14-21; Colossians 3:10 & 11; 2Peter 1:1-4; 1John 1:1-4

¹⁹ Galatians 3:14, 26-29

witnessed the same gift fall on Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, and those with him. These events demonstrated that the gift of the New Covenant, the Promise of the Father, was the Spirit of God to Jews and Gentiles so that they could be, *delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*²⁰

This is how salvation works for both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus offered Israel the possibility of a personal relationship with God as their Heavenly Father; a tangible reality rather than just an idea. The coming of Jesus was the age of majority for the Jewish people.²¹ Whereas Old Sinai Covenant had had the effect of infantilising them, the New Covenant was a covenant of the Spirit so that they could share the same DNA, the same characteristics, the same Holy Spirit, as God. This is what Paul meant when he said:

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Gal 4:6-7)

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:26-29)

The Wisdom from Above

After nearly two thousand years of exile, the Jewish People returned to their ancient homeland and re-founded the State of Israel. Many Bible students had expected this, even that they would return in a state of unbelief. As the prophet Ezekiel foresaw, the dry bones would be reconstituted again. Jesus himself predicted that the times of the Gentiles would end before his second coming.²² The question is, that having returned to the land, how do we see events playing out?

²⁰ Romans 6:1-14; Acts 2:1-47; Acts 10:24-48, 11:1-18; Romans 8:21

²¹ Matthew 5-7; John 4:21-26; Galatians 4:1-5

²² Ezekiel 36:16-24; Luke 21:24

Two thousand years have elapsed and the world around Israel has profoundly changed. The Gospel has been preached to every nation, and there are now three traditions that claim to be descended from Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham's name is truly great.

Two thousand years may have gone by but the same feelings of existential uncertainty remain for Israel. Since its re-establishment, Israel has fought nine wars with its neighbours. The conflict over the possession of the land has been radicalised by religion and its stories – Hamas on one side and religious Jewish settlers on the other – who see no place for each other, either in their stories or in their land.

There is a depressing predictability to what's currently happening in the Middle-East. *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* – something that Jesus warned about in the Sermon on the Mount. Israel under Roman occupation was the original context of those words. If you live like that, the whole world ends up blind and whole world ends up toothless. But how do you break the cycle of violence? (And do we wish to?) Jesus, didn't lead a violent revolt against the Roman Empire; he didn't attack other religions. He criticised his fellow Jews for their hypocrisy and taught his disciples to be meek, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, to love their enemies, to lose their lives and take up the cross.²³

In Jesus's day, Galilean and Judaeen resentment was not just directed towards the Romans and their collaborators, but also towards the Samaritans who claimed a more authentic tradition rivalling the one centred on the Jerusalem temple. But rather than attacking them, Jesus taught them *that you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Worshipping in spirit and in truth* is not about tribal alliances. He offered them living water rather than the temporary satisfaction of Jacob's well. He used a Samaritan, and not a fellow Jew, to exemplify compassion to anyone in need. Compassion is an expression of God's character, his name, and along with his graciousness, and steadfast love, the basis of God's purpose with humanity.²⁴

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all recognise the name, attributes or the character of God. What separate these 'religions' is their confessional events or stories but all three would agree, for instance, that in the days of Noah, the divine reaction to the earth being filled with violence and corruption was one of profound grief because all human life is sanctified through the image of

²³ Matthew 10:38 & 39, 16:24-27; see Psalm 37 in this context

²⁴ John 4:1-26; Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 6:9 & 10

God. How can these three traditions that espouse the same core ideals be so indifferent to the value of each other's lives?²⁵

That being the case, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conduct and Godliness in the reading of the scriptures, and the situation that confronts Israel today?²⁶ Can we simply divide the world into light and dark along tribal and national lines? Recall that Jesus told Nicodemus, the most devout Jewish representative of his day, *Unless one is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God*, and the Apostle Paul wrote, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. So what should we be praying for?

The same offer that God made the Jewish People two thousand years ago is even more urgent and pressing now: the possibility of a grown-up and personal relationship with God as their Heavenly Father; a tangible reality rather than just an idea. Only by becoming a child of God can you inherit the Kingdom. This was what Jesus taught when he said:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:7-10)

This 'wisdom that comes from above', was embodied by Jesus himself. James refers to this in his letter when directing his readers' minds to Jesus's words in the Beatitudes:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13-18)

²⁵ John Hicks, *An Interpretation of Religion*, Second Edition, p321-325

²⁶ 2Peter 3:11&12; Matthew 12:38-42, 16:1-4

These things are the very life of God himself. That's why they are referred to as the *wisdom from above*. This is God's Holy Spirit, the antithesis of earthly, sensual, and demonic wisdom that comes from the desires that rage in our members. There is a decisive choice presented here in James' and Jesus' teaching. A choice that can lead us to life or destruction. The narrow way that leads to life is a difficult path; which is why most would rather take the broad way and consign the teachings of Jesus to the realm of the unattainable, naïve or idealistic.²⁷

And yet, it seems that the spiritual realism of the Sermon on the Mount is exactly what Israel and the world needs right now; what it has always needed. Not credal Christianity; not formal religion. Not just *believing in* God but *trusting* God. This is what building on the rock means: hearing and living.

The moment of crisis is the real test of who we are: whether we are born from above or beneath; rooted in rock or sand.²⁸ We can all do the right thing when things are calm, but the real challenge is when our worlds are falling apart around us. This is why we need to pray for the wisdom that comes from above. The one thing that humanity lacks, that we all lack, is wisdom. Do we suffer from such an abundance, such an excess of wisdom that we can afford not to pray for it? Do we doubt that our Heavenly Father would do this for us if we ask him in faith?

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:9-13, Matt 7:7-12)

Jesus believed profoundly in the generosity of his Heavenly Father. Does his spirit cry out in our hearts, *Abba, Father*? It should, because the Apostle Paul goes so far as to say:

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (Rom 8:9)

²⁷ James 4:1-4; Matthew 7:13-29

²⁸ Psalm 37; John 8:23

Jesus's summons to ask, seek and knock, through prayer and faith, is an urgent and pressing one. Let us de-throne ourselves and enthrone God. Let's empty the cup and re-fill it. He offers us living water and not Jacob's well, bread and not stones. All he asks is that we be generous to others in return.²⁹ Perhaps we should actually believe the stories that Jesus taught us and that he, and not the land, was always the hope of Israel.

A Prayer for Israel

Our heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel should be that they may be saved; that they should have a new heart and spirit; that they should become sons and daughters of the living God. Because if their fall led to the enrichment of the world, and their failure, riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! If their being cast away was the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?³⁰

So let us pray that whatever lies ahead, as the whole creation groans and labours in travail,³¹ that the days are shortened and that all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

*The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.” (Rom 11:26-27)*

Amen.

²⁹ Luke 6:27-38

³⁰ Ezekiel 18:31-32; Hosea 2:23 cp Romans 9:29; Romans 11:12,15

³¹ Romans 8:22-23