Elder's Corner

Also today the Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, *and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made*, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God, just as He has spoken."
(Deut. 26:18, 19)

Anyone familiar with the Bible knows that **Israel** occupies a major portion of its content. Anyone familiar with newspapers and other news media know that since it became a recognized nation in 1948, **Israel** and its **people** are often front-page material. Currently **Israel** is involved in military conflict with both Iran and Lebanon, as well as with the terrorist group Hamas within its borders. As I read the verses above, they seemed so out of place when placed alongside the reality of what **Israel** and its **people** are experiencing today, and for that matter, what they have experienced through much of their history.

It was a simple verse that was included in the mid-week Bible study last night that came to mind when I read the verses above. In **Isa. 26:13** the prophet wrote, **"O Lord our God, masters besides You have had dominion over us, ..."** There were many such periods, beginning with the book of Judges, when **the children of Israel** were under **the dominion** of others, sometimes as long as **forty years (Judges 13:1 e.g.).** The **dominion** that Isaiah wrote of became greater and more enduring with the Babylonian captivity in 605 B.C. On His last visit to **Jerusalem** Jesus Christ made known the duration of the **dominion** others would have over **Israel, ". . . And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).** One source reminds us why this is happening to God's **covenant people,** "Through disobedience and rebellion, generation after generation of Israelites forfeited their right to be exalted over the nations."[1] Is there a warning here for us in the church today?

Forty years before the verses above, the **Lord God** made a similar promise to the Jews at Sinai:

> **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, *then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people;* for all the earth is Mine. (Exod. 19:5).**

Despite their continued unbelief, **Israel** and the Jewish **people,** wherever they may be, have this assurance from **the Lord God:**

> **"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (Ezek. 36:22-25)**

At that time the Lord will set Israel high above all nations, fulfilling the verses at the beginning of this article. A wonderful companion verse would be the last verse in Zephaniah (when was the last time you opened that book?).

> **At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; For I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, When I return your captives before your eyes," says the Lord. (Zeph. 3:20).**

That will be a **time** when, **". . . ten men of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zech. 8:23).** Maranatha.

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[1] Jack S. Deere, "Deuteronomy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 309.