

**WHAT MUST PRECEDE
THE RETURN OF
YESHUA?****by Daniel Botkin**

In Matthew 24, Yeshua stated several things that would precede His return at the end of this age. Things preceding His return include false messiahs, wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, persecution, and false prophets whose teachings result in the abounding of antinomianism. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," Yeshua said, "and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14).

All of the above-mentioned events take place without the help or cooperation of God's people, except for the last one - the preaching of the gospel to all nations. As the Apostle Paul put it, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14)

Chronologically we are between the Messiah's first coming and His second coming. During this in-between time, God is taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. (Acts 15:14) The Messianic Kingdom will be made up of "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9). One very important nation which also must hear the gospel is not a Gentile nation, but a nation which has as its capital the city of Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," Yeshua lamented, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye say, 'Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord'" (Mt. 23:37ff).

In what way is Yeshua's return dependent on the Jewish people?

The answer to this question lies in the implication of the statement "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." The phrase "blessed is he that comes" is a literal translation of two Hebrew words, *baruch ha-ba*. In Hebrew *baruch ha-ba* is an idiom that means "Welcome." What is significant about this? The significance lies in the fact that Yeshua must be welcomed by the people who have Jerusalem as their capital. He clearly stated that Jerusalem will not see Him again until the inhabitants of that city say to Him, "*Baruch ha-ba!* Welcome!" And since Jerusalem is the city to which He will return (Zech. 14), we can safely say that He will not return to this earth until the Jewish people (or at least a significant enough portion of them) welcome Him as their Messiah.

Preaching the gospel to all ethnic groups is important, but the Jewish people must not be ignored. Taking the gospel to the Jewish people presents a great challenge, because Jewish people, unlike any non-Christian Gentile group, already have a religion which has its roots in Divine revelation. The Torah was given by God, and Orthodox Jews know this, as do many non-Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews view Christianity as a foreign, pagan religion, and they are partly correct, because Christianity has incorporated into its worship many practices which have their roots in pagan idolatry. These practices must be abandoned. They are an offense to God and they are major stumbling stones that hinder Jewish people from believing in their Messiah.

The Apostle Paul said that one important role of the Gentile Church is "to provoke them [the Jewish people] to jealousy" (Rom. 11:11). Over the centuries the Church has done a very successful job of provoking the Jews, but it has not been a provocation that makes them want to embrace Jesus Christ as their Messiah. On the contrary, the Church has done more to drive Jews away from their Messiah than it has done to draw them to their Messiah. Orthodox Jews have the Torah, which they know is from God. They see a Church filled with white-

washed paganism and hear the Church say, "Why don't you Jews abandon that heavy yoke of Torah? Quit keeping the Sabbath, come over here to our church on Sundays, and have a ham sandwich with us." Until recent centuries the Church added, "And if you don't, we'll kill you." And the Church often carried out these threats in the most monstrous ways possible. Put yourself into the shoes of an Orthodox Jew. What would you see in Christianity that would attract you and provoke you to jealousy?

Christians who are eager for the return of Jesus need to be aware of the facts. The city to which Jesus will return is Jerusalem. Jerusalem will not see Him again until a significant proportion of the Jewish people say *baruch ha-ba* and welcome Him as their Messiah. For hundreds of years the Church has misrepresented the Messiah, which makes it very difficult for Jewish people to even consider saying *baruch ha-ba* to Jesus Christ.

If the Church is going to be instrumental in provoking the Jewish people to jealousy, then the Church must quit misrepresenting the Messiah as a Gentilized Jesus who came to abolish the Torah and start a new religion which would absorb and white-wash the practices and superstitions of pagan idolatry. The Church must present the Messiah as He is: Yeshua, the Torah-honoring Rabbi from Nazareth, who taught His disciples to honor and obey the Torah, and then told them to teach the Gentile nations to obey the Torah. (Mt. 5:17-19; 23:1-3; 28:18ff) If the Church wants to present Him as He truly is, then the Church must begin to honor and obey the Torah. Otherwise, we cannot claim to be His disciples. □