

The Rebirth of Israel

In verse 7 there seems at first to be a rather sharp change from the note of vengeance to that of joy and blessing. Actually, however, it is merely turning the attention to another phase of the same subject. The voice of the Lord speaks doom to His enemies, but to the remnant of grace it means hope and joy. Surely the greatest consolation that could be given them would be the assurance that their numbers would be greatly increased and that God's mercy would again be poured out upon the nation. Verses 7 to 9 begin to explain the great joy that is to come to the remnant at the return of Christ. They will cease to be a mere remnant and will become a nation born in a day.

These verses are given in such rhetorical language that there might be difficulty at first in determining exactly what they mean. This is particularly true of verse 8 in which rhetorical questions are asked. "Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?" If these two questions stood alone it would be possible to answer, "Why, no, of course not! Before a nation can be born there must be a long period of travail and misery leading up to so glorious a result." Yet the thought of the three verses seems to be quite different from this.

Verse 7 says in unmistakable language that the change is to be accomplished with startling rapidity, and the end of verse 8 fits with this teaching. "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child ... for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

The translation "as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth" is not a literal rendering of the Hebrew, but seems to express its meaning quite accurately. The sentence has been rendered in this form by most modern interpreters. The stress is upon a wonderful promise that a great sudden change will occur -- something that one could hardly believe would occur. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? A nation is to be born in a day!

In verse 9 the Lord declares that He is able to accomplish this great thing. He says that His purposes are yet going to be fulfilled. One may see no sign of them in Isaiah's day or