

JERUSALEM: CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE



“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” — Psalm 122:6

In the continuing battle for Jerusalem, Israel occupies a precarious position. Her enemies are numerous and her friends are deserting her. This struggle for Jerusalem is not primarily political but religious, as Arabs, Jews—even some Christians—claim a God-given right to Jerusalem as their capital.

Concerning Israel in this end time, Jeremiah the prophet foretold: *“Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”* (Jer. 8:11) How true this is of the many peace talks which have repeatedly been interrupted by echoes of war throughout the city streets and countryside of Israel. Even other nations of the world are drawn into the conflict and are taking sides. A United Nations resolution and many Palestinian sympathizers have condemned Israel for military action against the Palestinian people. On the other hand, ninety-four United States Senators have signed a letter to President Clinton expressing solidarity with the State and people of Israel at this time of crisis. Their letter states a *“profound disappointment and frustration with PLO Chairman Arafat”* for ushering in *“a deliberate campaign of violence now, when the Government of Israel has been willing to consider unprecedented and painful compromises to achieve a final peace agreement, [which] can only cast deep and troubling doubts about his desire for peace.”* With so many conflicting and passionate claims . . .

WHICH SIDE OF THE BATTLE SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN SUPPORT?

We would, of course, like to be on the side which God supports. But, what is the proper Christian perspective? Should we just remain neutral? Considering the Holocaust, could lack of action lead to disastrous results? How much does the news media influence our perspective? Is the entire issue too enormous to make an informed and responsible decision?

GOD’S PLAN FOR ISRAEL

God states how important it is for Christians to know His plan for Israel. His word weaves a thread of understanding about the Nation of Israel from Genesis to Revelation. Four thousand years ago God expressed, as an oath, to Abraham, *“...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”* (Gen. 12:3) This oath-bound promise is the key to understanding prophecy, and as the central theme of the Bible, it is the key to understanding the importance of Israel in God’s plan. God chose Israel out of all other nations to be a channel of His blessings to the world. This oath was again confirmed to Jacob *“...in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”* That is, God’s blessings will flow through Israel—*“in thy seed”*—to the rest of the world. Gen. 28:14

To understand how God will use Israel to accomplish His purpose, we must review history to see the steps God has already taken toward His promise to Abraham. God repeated the promise, made to Abraham, to Isaac, then to Jacob, whom God renamed “Israel”, and confirmed it to Jacob’s twelve sons—fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Since that time, Israel’s history has been full of incidents in which God alternately blessed Israel to demonstrate their chosen status, and He also disciplined them when they neglected His laws. Israel had covenanted with God to remain separate from the world in every way. The disciplines dealt by God had the effect of developing a class of people who steadfastly hoped for the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. The most severe discipline of all, the dispersion or Diaspora, began about 70 A.D. and continued until 1878 A.D. when Zionism brought in a great regathering to Jerusalem. Jer. 16:12-15; Ezek. 36:24

REGATHERING THE SECOND TIME

Isaiah prophesied that Israel would regather a *second time*. “*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people... and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*” Isa. 11:11-12

Jeremiah presents a thrilling prophecy of both a second dispersion and a miraculous second regathering that is now being fulfilled. “*Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.*” Jer. 16:13-15

Never before has a nation been dead for nearly 2,000 years and then reborn in accordance with prophecies written over 2,500 years before. Our generation has witnessed this astounding fact, and we recognize that only God could accomplish such a miraculous work. The yearly prayer of the Jews, “*Next year in Jerusalem,*” is even now in process of fulfillment. Is it any wonder why Israel is so dear to the hearts of the Jewish people?

PROPHETIC BOUNDARIES ISRAEL IS TO POSSESS

The Bible defines the actual boundaries that the State of Israel is to possess. These boundaries are based upon God’s promise to Abraham and his *seed* or descendants. The promise was reiterated to Isaac (not to Ishmael his half brother) and then to Jacob—*Israel*. The children of Israel were promised to possess all of the land “*from the river of Egypt to the great river... Euphrates.*” (Gen. 15:18) In fulfillment of this prophecy, Israel must not only keep the land she now possesses, but she must also expand her territory.

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY THE GREAT CHRISTIAN MISTAKE

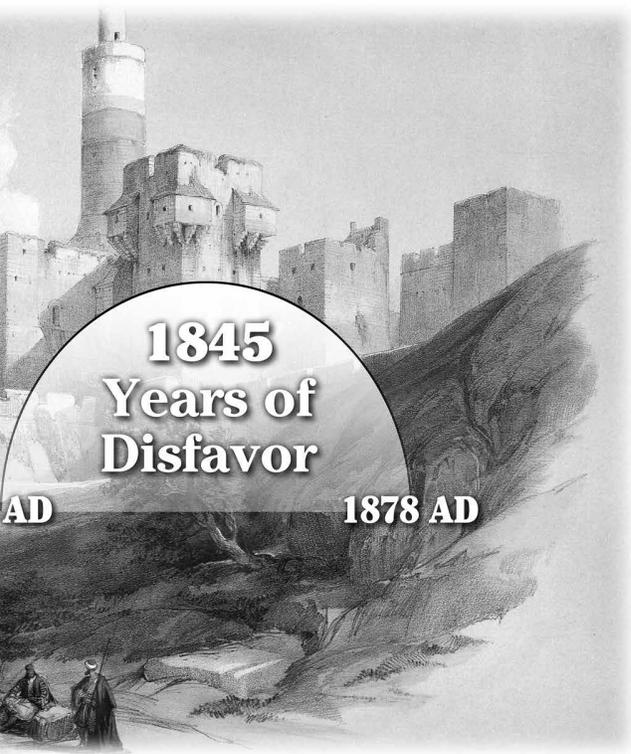
Some have the idea that Israel lost her *chosen* status when she, as a nation, did not accept Jesus as her long promised Messiah. These Christians apply all prophetic scriptures about Israel to themselves, hence, *replacement theology*. However, the Apostle warns against such a mistake, “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is*



Favor to Israel began in 1812 BC at the death of Jacob. *A desolate.*” (Matt. 23:28) In 1878 AD the Berlin Congress created the first Jewish colony, Petach Tikvah, “*Gate of Hope*

written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes . . . these also now believed not, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.” (Rom. 11:25-32) Many theologians today preach that only 144,000 Jews will be saved; however, this statement of Paul indicates that Israel as a whole will be blessed and granted an opportunity for salvation once the Church is complete.

God foreknew that Israel as a nation would reject Jesus as their Messiah. But God did not allow this to preclude their receiving the promises of the original and everlasting oath-bound covenant through Abraham. The concept of Israel’s permanent forfeiture of their land and relationship with God is refuted by the prophet Jeremiah. “*Thus saith the LORD...if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob... for I will cause their captivity to return [Hebrew-return from exile] and have mercy on them.*” (Jer. 31:35-37; 33:25-26) Then Jeremiah shows, “*That the city [Old Jerusalem] shall be built to the Lord*” by the returned Jews and, furthermore, “*It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down anymore forever.*” (Jer. 31:38-40) The descendants of Israel



At 33 AD Jesus pronounced, “*your house is left unto you desolate*,” and the League of Nations opened the land to Jewish colonization, and the “*double*” was established by Jewish refugees from Russia.

(Jacob)—not Ishmael or Esau—will receive the city of Jerusalem—including East Jerusalem—forever.

A GOD-GIVEN RIGHT

Some disagree that the Jews now have a God-given right to the land of Israel. They argue if God wanted them to have the land, why did he allow the Jews to be expelled from Israel by the Romans? Why was the door to Israel (renamed *Palestine* by the Romans) generally shut to Jews for so many centuries? Jesus gave the truth of the matter. Shortly after presenting himself to Israel as King (in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9), he judged Israel because they killed the prophets and failed to accept him. Jesus said, “*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*” (Matt. 23:37-38) Similarly, Zechariah predicted that the LORD would render *double* (Hebrew *mishneh*, an equal portion) because they did not turn to Jesus, their *stronghold*. **Israel would need to experience a period of disfavor equal to their prior period of favor from the Lord.** (Zech. 9:12) Regarding that equal portion of time in the disfavor of God, Jeremiah predicted that God’s “*recompense [for] their iniquity and their sin double*” would be accomplished before the current massive regathering of the Jews to their land. “... *and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many*

fishers [Zionist movement], saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters [the Holocaust and anti-semitism], and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from mine eyes...” Jer. 16:15-17

The Old Testament prophets and the Apostle Paul recognized what present day Christians sometimes miss—that the Jewish people would be brought back into God’s favor after their time of punishment was completed.

EARTHLY AGENTS OF BLESSING

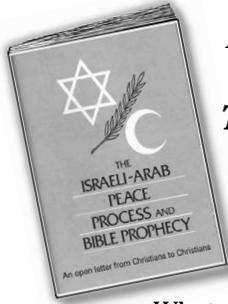
Many do not see the depth of meaning in God’s promise to Abraham: “*I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore.*” (Gen. 22:17) Note the two parts to this covenant referring to two different aspects of Abraham’s offspring—the channel of God’s blessings. The heavenly or spiritual part (alluded to metaphorically as the “*stars of heaven*”) will be the faithful Christians whom God has been selecting for the last 2000 years of the Gospel Age. And the earthly part (“*the sand of the seashore*”) will be the regathered Nation of Israel. God plans to bless everyone who has ever lived through these two classes working together—the faithful Christians as heavenly agents of blessing and the regathered Nation of Israel as earthly agents of blessing. Gal. 3:8

In God’s Kingdom, the fathers of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Samuel, Elijah and the many other faithful—will constitute the government of Israel and will be *princes* on earth, *children* of the King and of his *Bride* (Psa. 45:10-16). God will restore (by raising from the dead) their “*judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning.*” (Isa. 1:25-26) That which has its beginning as God’s Kingdom on earth in Israel will eventually extend to the ends of the earth. “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [Kingdom] of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion [the spiritual seed of blessing] shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem [the natural seed of blessing].*” Isa. 2:2-3

The whole world—the Arab peoples too—will come up to worship the God of Jacob in Jerusalem. Peoples of all national tongues will come to pray to the LORD God of Israel because they will understand God is blessing Israel: “...*Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain...O house of Judah and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing; fear not, but let your hands be strong...It shall yet come to pass that... ten men shall take hold out of all the 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.*” Zech. 8:3, 21-23

Yes, Israel, a **nation of miracles**, will share her blessings with her Arab neighbors and all nations: “*In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*” (Isa. 19:24-25) God’s own peace process will succeed when man’s has failed. The peace God will give Israel and the whole world will be all-comprehensive and permanent. All the peoples of the earth, including Jews and Arabs, who faithfully drink of the “*water of life freely*” and who overcome “*shall be blessed.*” Rev. 22:17; Gen. 28:14

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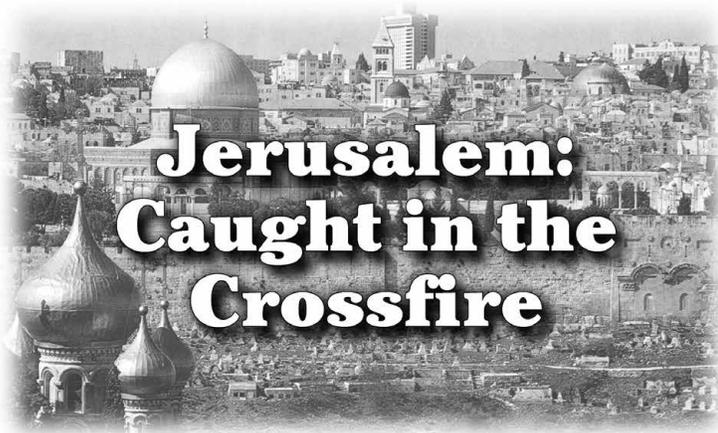


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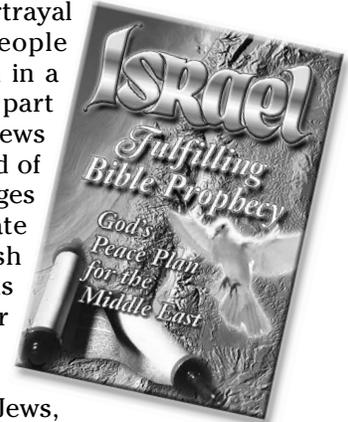
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