

## Early Zionism And Jerusalem

'King David took the stronghold of Zion, the city of David ... David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David' (2 Samuel 5:7 & 9). 'The people will dwell in Zion at Jerusalem' (Isaiah 30:19).

From the days of King David, Jerusalem has been the capital city of Israel. Some people who are unaware of the history of the Jewish nation, claim Jerusalem is an occupied city and others think it lost the title of capital 2,000 years ago after it was destroyed and most of its Jewish inhabitants were exiled. People believe Jewish people suddenly arrived in 1967 and took Jerusalem from the Palestinians. They are all wrong. The truth about the Jewish people and Jerusalem is this; Jerusalem was established by King David 3,000 years ago as the capital of Israel, named after Jacob whose name was changed to Israel by God. God said to him, "Your name is Jacob. Your name will not be Jacob any more but your name will be Israel." God named Jacob, Israel. God said to him, "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will grow from your descendents and kings will come out of your body. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you and to your descendents after you" (Genesis 35:10 to 12). The Lord God Himself gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people as a perpetual homeland from the days of Abraham (Joel 3:20). 'The Lord appeared to Abram (later renamed Abraham) and said, "I will give this land to your descendents." Abram built an altar there to God Who appeared to him' (Genesis 12:7). Beersheba, near Jerusalem was where Abraham lived (Genesis 22:19) and since he was the nation's patriarch, Jerusalem was the unofficial capital. David made Jerusalem the official capital of Israel and it has been so ever since.

David's son King Solomon built the first temple at the exact same place where Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah in 2,000 BC (Genesis 22:2 to 18; 2 Chronicles 3:1). The Babylonians destroyed the first temple and abducted thousands of Jews in 586 BC but many Jewish people remained in Israel (2 Kings 25:12) to tend their farms (2 Kings chapters 24 & 25). 700 years later in 516 BC the Jews returned and rebuilt Jerusalem, Israel and the temple (Book of Nehemiah). Their reign lasted from 516 BC to 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the second temple as Jesus prophesied. 'The disciples were talking about the temple and how it was decorated with beautiful stones and gifts. Jesus said, "The days will come when there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down ... They (Jewish people) will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led captive into all nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled"' (Luke 21:5 & 6; 24).

The year 70 AD was not the end of Jews living in Jerusalem. Many Jews remained there and continued to speak Hebrew – their native language. In the 2,000 years that followed, many Gentiles trampled on Jerusalem – the Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Seljuks, Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans and finally the British Empire all invaded and occupied Jerusalem but none of them made Jerusalem their capital city. The Jews are the indigenous people of Jerusalem. In the second century AD the Bar Kohba Revolt took place as the Jews living in Israel tried to recapture Israel for the Jewish people but it was not God's time. In the fourth century there was an attempt to rebuild the temple but again, it was not yet God's time. The Jews ruled Jerusalem again in the tenth century but in the eleventh century the Crusaders massacred thousands of Jews and Christians living in Jerusalem. In the thirteenth century, three hundred rabbis moved to Jerusalem from Europe and they would have helped repopulate the city with devout Jews. In the fifteenth century, evil King Ferdinand expelled thousands of Jews from Spain and they all moved to Jerusalem. From that time onwards, Jews have consistently been returning to Jerusalem, their capital.

Over 1,000 years ago the Jews in Jerusalem constituted the majority of Jerusalem's population and Jews have remained the majority. Jerusalem was always the centre of Jewish life even for those living away in the far corners of the earth. Special fast days and rituals mourned the destruction of the city. Daily prayers expressed the hope that 'next year in Jerusalem'. Islam, a false religion established about 500 AD, have their devotees turn their backs on Jerusalem and face Mecca during prayers no matter what country they live in. They claim Jerusalem is their third holiest city after Mecca and Medina but it is not mentioned once in the Koran. Jerusalem (also known as Salem, City of David or Zion) is mentioned over 700 times in the Bible and is where the Jews face when in prayer no matter where they live. Jerusalem is the driving force, the heart and soul of the Jewish people. In 1948, Jordan conquered and illegally occupied East Jerusalem, dividing the city and expelling the Jews, destroying their homes and synagogues and cemeteries. West Jerusalem was re-established as Israel's capital while Jordan's capital remained Amman. In 1967 during the Six Day War, the Jews regained and united Jerusalem. Jerusalem is today a vibrant modern city in Israel, the only democracy in the entire Middle East.

God passionately loves Jerusalem and is jealous over her. 'The angel who talked with me (Zechariah) said to me, "Proclaim saying, 'Thus says the Lord of Heavenly Armies, "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. I am very angry with the nations that are at ease (take Jerusalem lightly) for I was a little displeased but they added to the calamity. I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy. My house will be

built in it and a line will be stretched over Jerusalem. My cities will again overflow with prosperity and God will again comfort Zion and will again choose Jerusalem” (Zechariah 1:14 to 17). God is not impressed by the way Gentiles have divided His land and defiled Jewish children (Joel 3:2, 3 & 6). He has a purpose and a plan for redemption for the Jewish people who in reality, belong in Israel. God promised them, one day He would restore them to their ancient homeland and He has slowly been bringing His people back home since the fifteenth century.

In the early years of Martin Luther, he was very positive towards the Jewish people, Judaism and Israel but as an older man he changed his attitude and that led to terrible persecution of the Jews. However, his reforms began the non-Catholic movement called Protestant Christianity as they protested against the errors within the Catholic teaching. Luther believed correctly, the Bible is the one and only source of God’s communication with mankind revealing His authority, power, mercy and grace that should result in salvation by faith, and the Bible should be available to all mankind. Luther’s ideas were revolutionary and he opened the way for all believers to have a personal encounter with the Lord God through the blood and cross of Jesus. Sadly, Luther infected the Catholic and Protestant churches with the wicked ‘Replacement Theology’ and anti-Semitism but genuine Christians should be able to see how important the Jewish people and Israel are to God and how heretical the Replacement Theory is. As the Protestant movement grew across the world so too, many believers with a heart after God began to see the parallels between the church and Israel in our modern world.

In the early 1800’s American, British and French Bible scholars initiated studies of Biblical archaeology and geography. Other countries opened their consulates in Jerusalem. Telegraphic and postal connections were established. Roads connecting Jerusalem to other parts of Israel were laid. The Jewish people living in Israel prospered and their population grew, giving Jerusalem an increased Jewish majority and they mostly spoke Hebrew. By 1860, Jerusalem began to be overcrowded so the Jews had to start building their suburbs outside the walls of Jerusalem. Zionism was the next step.

In 1897, in Basel, Switzerland a man named Theodor Herzl and 200 of the world’s most prominent Jewish leaders discussed ways to establish Israel as the homeland for the Jewish people once again. They even debated whether or not they should call their nation Israel or Judea, but the name Israel won the vote. Finally, after 2,000 years it was God’s perfect time to restore the Jewish people to Israel and to restore Israel as a prosperous nation once again. Zionism began as a determined organization to bring God’s people the Jews back to their homeland, this time they would never be uprooted again (Jeremiah chapter 31). God began fulfilling His promises to the Jewish people who had been waiting for 2,000 years. Herzl prophesied, the State of Israel would exist within fifty years of that initial meeting in 1897.

In 1917, twenty years after the first Zionist meeting, Britain’s Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, a genuine Bible-believing Christian, wrote to Walter Rothschild, a well-known leader in Britain’s Jewish community. The letter was to be passed on to the Jewish Federation of England and Ireland. In the letter, Balfour revealed the commitment of the British Government to establish Israel as the homeland for the Jewish people. Israel was then known as Palestine. A few weeks later, the Australian Light Horsemen liberated Bathsheba then British soldiers liberated Jerusalem but Israel remained under British control.

In 1947, exactly fifty years after the first Zionist meeting, the United Nations voted on a plan to give the Jewish people ‘Palestine’ as their homeland and the land was given the name the Lord had chosen for His land thousands of years before – the State of Israel. The vote was called the ‘Partition Plan’. Fifty-six countries voted. Thirty-three voted in favour of Israel. Thirteen voted against and ten nations abstained from casting their vote. In 1967 after the miraculous Six Day War, Israel finally became an independent nation. In six days, Israel’s enemies were defeated and Jewish leaders governed Israel for the first time since 70 AD. The Lord will not allow Jerusalem to be overthrown again. Just as Israel was a nation when Jesus came the first time born as a baby, so Israel needs to be a strong nation when Jesus comes the second time but when He comes, He will not be a humble child, He will be our eternal warrior King and Messiah Who will rule the earth. ‘His eyes are a flame of fire and on His head are many crowns. He has names written and a (special) name written which no one knows but He Himself. He is clothed in a garment sprinkled with His own blood. His name is called “The Word of God.” The armies in heaven followed Him on white horses clothed in white, pure, fine linen. Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp, double-edged sword (the Bible) with which He should strike the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron. He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:12 to 16).

Amen and God bless you.

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