

Restoration Of Israel And Jerusalem

'Be glad you children of Zion and rejoice in your God ... I will restore to you the years the swarming locust has eaten, the great locust, the grasshopper and the caterpillar ... You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied, and will praise the name of your God Who has dealt wondrously with you. You will know I am in the midst of Israel. I am your God and there is no one else. My people will never again be disappointed' (Joel 2:23, 25 to 27). 'Behold, in those days and in that time I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem' (Joel 3:1).

'Behold, I (the Lord God) will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the surrounding peoples and on Judah will it be in the siege against Jerusalem. It will happen in that day, I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples. All who burden themselves with it will be severely wounded and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against it' (Zachariah 12:2 & 3).

'I (the Lord) will bring My people Israel back from captivity. They will rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them. They will make gardens and eat the fruit of them. I will plant them on their land and they will never again be plucked up out of their land I have given them' (Amos 9:14 & 15).

'Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Will a land be born in one day? Will a nation be brought forth at once? As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children ... Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her all you who love her. Rejoice for joy with her all you who mourn over her' (Isaiah 66:8 & 10). 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Those who love you will prosper' (Psalm 122:6).

The above verse infers Israel was born in one day and in a way it was but actually it took fifty years for the land falsely known as Palestine to become Israel again. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Jewish people began to slowly return to their ancient homeland. Their return began as a trickle then slowly became a flood. The name of the nation of Israel was changed to Falastina (in Latin) or Palestine by the evil, bloodthirsty Emperor Hadrian in 132 AD after the Jewish arch-enemies, the Philistines. Hadrian tried to destroy all memories of Judea and Israel. Two thousand years later Prime Minister Golda Meir often declared, "There is no such nation as Palestine." Syrian President once declared, "There is no such things as a Palestinian people. There is no Palestinian entity." Many people who claim to be Palestinians are actually Arabs. In 1929 and again in 1936 the Arabs living in the area massacred thousands of Jewish people in and around Hebron. Only two hundred years ago, Jerusalem and Judea were so desolate and isolated, a couple of so-called theologians stated, "Even the Almighty Himself could not resurrect this place." Mark Twain wrote, "Galilee, these unpeopled deserts, rusty mounds of barrenness, the melancholy ruin of Capernaum, there was never another human being, Bethlehem and Bethany in their poverty, the hallowed place where the shepherds watched their flocks by night, where angels sang, 'Peace on earth,' is void of any living creature, Bethsaida, Chorazin, Jezreel are no more. Not a solitary village in either direction. It is desolate and unlovely." Jewish people and genuine Christians always referred to Israel as Israel. God's chosen land should never be referred to as Palestine. The land was named after Abraham's grandson Jacob who had his name changed to Israel. God said, "Your name will no longer be called Jacob but Israel because you have fought with God and with men and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28). God said, "Your name is Jacob. Your name will not be Jacob any more but your name will be Israel. I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you and kings will come out of your body. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and to your descendants after you, will I give the land" (Genesis 35:10 to 12). Jacob has two meanings, 'May God Protect' and 'Supplanter'. The name Israel also has two meanings, 'He who struggles with God' and 'God will prevail'.

Although Israel was a barren land at that time, the prophecies of a fruitful land, flowers in the desert and on the hilltops seemed an impossible dream. 'In days to come, Jacob will take root. Israel will blossom and bud. They will fill the surface of the world with fruit' (Isaiah 27:6). 'The wilderness and the desert will be glad. The desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose. It will blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing' (Isaiah 35:1 & 2). 'I will be like the dew to Israel. He will blossom like the lily and send down his roots. His branches will spread, his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like cedar. Men will dwell in his shade. They will revive like the grain and blossom like the vine. Their fragrance will be sweet' (Hosea 14:5 to 7). Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will take the Children of Israel from among the nations where they are scattered and will gather them on every side to bring them into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel. One King (the Lord God) will be King to them all and they will not be two nations, neither will they be divided into two kingdoms any more. They will not defile themselves with their idols or with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions but I will save them out of all their dwelling places where they have sinned and will cleanse them so they will be My people and I will be their God. My servant David will be King over them and they will have one shepherd (Prime Minister) they will also walk in My ordinances, observe My statutes and do them. They will dwell in the land (Israel) I have given to

Jacob My servant where your forefathers lived and they will dwell there, they and their children, and their grandchildren forever. David My Servant will be their Prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It will be an everlasting covenant with them and I will place them, multiply them and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My tent will be with them. I will be their God and they will be My people. The nations will know I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary will be in the midst of them forevermore' (Ezekiel 37:21 to 28).

The Bible reveals how angry the Lord is because Israel has been divided so many times. It is now only a small place compared to what it should be. "Behold, in those days and in that time when I (the Lord) restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem. I will gather all nations and will bring them down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat. I will execute judgment on them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they (Gentiles) have scattered among the nations. They have divided My land and have cast lots for My people (sold them into slavery) and have given a boy for a prostitute and sold a girl for wine so they may drink. Yes, and what are you to Me, Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? ... Because you have taken My silver and My gold and have carried My finest treasures into your temples, and have sold the Children of Judah and the Children of Jerusalem to the sons of the Gentiles so you may remove them far from their border (Israel). Behold, I will stir them up out of the place where you have sold them and will return your repayment on your heads" (Joel 3:1 to 7). 'They brought the golden vessels taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem, the king, his lords, his wives and his concubines drank from them' (Daniel 5:3).

On 29th August 1897 a dedicated Zionist Dr Theodore Herzl held the first Zionist Congress in Switzerland. He claimed, "I founded the Jewish State. In five years, perhaps in fifty years, the world will see it." Dr Herzl was correct. Fifty years later on 29th November 1947 the United Nations voted to award the Jewish people a small portion of their homeland. On 14th May 1948, Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion declared Israel as an independent nation. The Children of Israel were slowly returning to their homeland after two thousand years of exile or Diaspora. On 4th June 1967 Jerusalem once again became the capital of Israel after the miraculous six-day war and they raised their flag embolden with the 'Star of David'. When Jerusalem was reclaimed by the Jewish people in 1967 they wept, prayed, praised the Lord and rejoiced. Israel became a nation because God wants it and He promised them so. The Jewish people want it and they never allowed their faith to falter. Genuine Bible believing Christians want it because Jesus is going to return to Jerusalem. He will stand on the Mount of Olives, cause an earthquake and the Mount will split in half. 'The Messiah's feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, before Jerusalem on the east. The Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, making a very great valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north and half of it toward the south ... My God will come and all the holy ones with you. It will happen in that day, there will not be light, cold, or frost. It will be a unique day which is known only to the Lord. Not day and not night but it will come to pass, at evening time there will be light. It will happen in that day, living waters will go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea, in summer and in winter will it be. The Lord God will be King over all the earth' (Zachariah 14:4 to 9).

Jerusalem (meaning House of Peace) is mentioned in the Bible about eight hundred times plus hundreds of other times by its various titles. It is situated at 31 degrees North Latitude/ 35 degrees East Longitude. It is 2,500 feet above sea level on the Judean Mountain summit. Four deep valleys divide the elevated plateau. One valley is Kidron Brook (John 18:1) or Jehoshaphat (named after the king, 1 Kings 15:24) beginning north of Jerusalem, runs south east then turns south and quickly deepens cutting off Jerusalem from the Olive ridge to the east, crosses the Judean Desert and opens out west of the Dead Sea. Valley of Jehoshaphat is just a few minutes walk outside of Jerusalem where Jesus often crossed over to go to the Mount of Olives to pray. The second valley, Hinnom (Joshua 15:8), begins west of Jerusalem and joins the first valley about one kilometre south of Jerusalem. A third valley begins in the north of Jerusalem and becoming deeper cuts through Jerusalem and enters Kidron just above the mouth of the Valley Hinnom. A smaller valley cuts at right angles from west to east. That means Jerusalem is built on four hills. Mount Zion is holy and Mount Moriah is the highest hill and was the site of the temples. Moriah is where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac and where Jesus was crucified. Jerusalem is in the heart of every Jewish person.

Jerusalem is the one and only city in the entire world that carries the name of God. 'Jerusalem, the City God had been chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put His name there' (1 Kings 14:21; Deuteronomy 12:11). It is the eternal capital of Israel. 'As we have heard so we have seen, in the City of YHWH of Heavenly Armies, in the City of our God. God will establish it forever' (Psalm 48:8). Jerusalem is known by several Scriptural names as we have just read from Psalm 48:8. There are many other names like, the Holy City (Daniel 9:24), Salem (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 76:2), Mount Zion (Psalm 48:2), the City of our God (Psalm 48:1), Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1), His Holy Mountain (Psalm 48:1), The City of the Great King (Psalm 48:2), City of David (2 Chronicles 21:20; Luke 2:11), My Holy Mountain Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:20), and many others.

There is currently a lot of tension over Jerusalem just as the Lord said there would be. 'A cup of reeling to the surrounding peoples' (Zachariah 12:2), the 'surrounding peoples' are of course the other descendants of Abraham; his seven sons, Ishmael son of Hagar (Genesis 16:15) plus Keturah's six sons (1 Chronicles 1:32), Jacob's twin brother Esau (Genesis 25:26) plus the two sons of Lot, Moab and Ben Ammi (Genesis 19:37 & 38). These ten tribes were jealous of Isaac in his day and are still jealous of the descendants of Isaac. The ruins of Solomon's Temple are still in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the original temple in August 586 BC or in the Jewish calendar, Av 9. Seventy years later the temple was rebuilt. To impress the Jewish people living in Israel before Jesus was born, Herod had the temple upgraded. When Jesus was on earth the temple was magnificent. 'As Jesus went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what kind of stones and what kind of building this is" (Mark 13:1). 'Some people were talking about the temple and how it was decorated with beautiful stones and gifts' (Luke 21:5). Jesus did not seem impressed by it and warned, "As for these things which you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down" (Luke 21:6). In August 70 AD the Roman Emperor Titus had the temple destroyed a second time, again the date was Av 9. As it burned the Roman soldiers prised the stones apart to glean the melted gold that ran between the stones leaving only two portions of the temple standing. The Western Wall and one small part of a wall is all that is left. About seven hundred years later the mosque was built on the vacant burned out site. Sadly, no Jewish person or Christian can enter the Lord's holy area where the mosques are without special permission because it could cause another outbreak of senseless violence and hatred. One day, in God's perfect timing, the mosques will be torn down and the holy area will be cleansed and will be used by the Lord of Glory and His chosen people. Watching the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem is like watching a miracle unfold right in front of our eyes. It is very exciting.

The only miracle greater than Israel becoming a nation, is the miracle of the Jewish people still being uniquely Jewish after thousands of years of exile all over the world. Here are some interesting facts about the Jewish people, chosen by God Himself to represent Him. No other nation or peoples on earth were chosen by God to bring His oracles to the entire earth (Romans 3:2). No other nation was built from one man (Abraham) to bring forth the earth's Messiah and Saviour (Luke 2:11). Gentiles can be grafted into the faith as adopted children but we will never be as unique as God's only chosen people (Romans 11:17 to 24). The Lord God has the Jewish people engraved onto the palms of His great hands (Isaiah 49:16). God will create a new heaven and a new earth on which only righteous can dwell (Isaiah 65:17 to 19; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13). The newly created Jerusalem will still be the capital, adorned and beautiful (Revelation 21:1 to 3). The newly created Jerusalem on the newly created earth has twelve gates, each gate inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12). On the foundations of the gates are the names of the twelve original apostles, chosen by Jesus Himself (Revelation 21:14). One hundred and forty four thousand Jewish men, holy and pure, specially sealed on their foreheads, twelve thousand from each of the tribes of the Children of Israel write new songs for the Lord and follow Him wherever He goes (Revelation 7:4 to 8; 14:1 to 5). The Jewish people are the blood family of Jesus and when Gentiles help the Jewish people Jesus takes that personally, and when Gentiles ignore, slight or persecute the Jewish people, Jesus takes that just as personally ... Jesus said, "Surely I tell you, when you do these things for one of the least of these My brothers (family) you do it for Me," and "Surely I tell you, when you do not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for Me" (Matthew 25:40 & 45).

The Lord God said to the Gentiles, "Comfort, comfort My people. Speak words of comfort to Jerusalem" (Isaiah 40:1 & 2).

Amen and God bless you.

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