

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

[Introduction](#)

[Part One - Israel: The Land, The People and The Covenants](#)

[Part Two - Jerusalem](#)

[Part Three - The Lord's Return to Earth and the Establishment of His Kingdom](#)

[Part Four - The Reign of the King](#)

[Part Five - Final thoughts](#)

INTRODUCTION

The name ISRAEL means different things to different people. To many it refers to a troublesome little nation in the Middle East, which keeps dominating News bulletins. For Christians it can lead to deep division, depending on their interpretation and understanding of Scripture. Innumerable books and articles have been written and pondered over; and it is certain that this little booklet will not bring those diverging views any closer.

The issue for Christians is whether the Israel of the Old Testament has been replaced in this present Age by the Church of Jesus Christ, and therefore it has no future as a people or nation; or if there will be a national regathering, cleansing and restoration when the Messiah returns in power and glory, and Israel will share the blessings in His Millennial Kingdom with millions of others who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

If it is the former, it would imply that the blessings promised to the patriarchs, kings, and prophets in Old Testament times have been transferred to believers who now form the Body of Christ, and therefore the present State of Israel is no longer relevant to Biblical prophecy.

However, this study takes the latter position and sees a glorious future for Israel, after times of deep sorrow and tribulation. Whilst it does not profess to be in depth or comprehensive, it may be instructive for enquiring readers to follow carefully the Scripture quotations. I have mainly used the Revised

Version of the Bible as this Translation may not be so familiar, and it is my prayer that this will help to stimulate a fresh contemplation of Israel, past, present, and future.

It should also be noted that there are only a few passing references to the church. The main emphasis is on Israel, its land, its people, its future, and its unique relationship to God and His Messiah, Jesus Christ.

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November 2007.

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PART ONE

ISRAEL: THE LAND, THE PEOPLE, AND THE COVENANTS

THE LAND

We are living in very interesting times; yet, because these “last days” have been predicted in Scripture, we can understand something of their significance and not be overwhelmed at the deteriorating condition of the world. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Middle East, and Israel in particular. Because Israel is unique among the nations, perhaps we should retrace what the Scriptures have to say on this subject. It is the only nation – both the people and the land itself – chosen by God to be His special possession:

... I will plead ... for MY PEOPLE and for MY HERITAGE Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted MY LAND. Joel 3:2.

In Isaiah 8:8 it is called Immanuel’s Land. In the light of contemporary arguments, it is important to remember who owns the Land and to keep this fact in the forefront of our minds. Jehovah’s affection and care for the land is recorded by Moses, Joel, the Psalmist, and by Ezekiel (perhaps the most inspiring description of all):

But the land, whither ye go over to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the

year even unto the end of the year. Deuteronomy 11:11-12.

Then was the Lord became jealous for His land ... Joel 2:18.

Lord, Thou hast been favourable unto Thy land: Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Psalm 85:1.

... a land I had searched out for them ... which is the glory of all lands. Ezekiel 20:6.

The land of Israel has a unique relationship with the Lord. Nowhere in Scripture does He call another land 'my land'. It was to Israel that God sent His Son, revealing Himself in flesh to accomplish the greatest act of love, the laying down of His life as a sacrifice for sin. Along with its capital, Jerusalem, Israel is THE land of the Bible. In 1948, after two thousand years of disintegration, it was recognised internationally as a Nation, and came to life again and into the limelight. Since then it has been the focus of controversy and debate, its very existence threatened by the surrounding hostile nations. But it will survive; and, after great sorrows and tribulation, it will become the focus for great prophetic events. Earth's last great battles will be fought there, culminating in the triumphant return of the Messiah, *the repentance and restoration of Israel*, and the introduction of His millennial kingdom.

THE PEOPLE

In a very definite way the Lord also spoke of His special relationship with the People of the Land. We cannot do better than use the words, which God spoke to Moses as they prepared to enter the Land:

... the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar (special) people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you or choose you because you were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loveth you ... Deuteronomy 7:6-9.

Many centuries later the Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of this special relationship:

... I would wish that I myself were anathema (accursed) from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ (The Messiah) as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Romans 9:3-5.

Irrespective of any personal views, one thing is certain: it is through this nation, the Jewish people, that the revelation of the one and only true God has been given to the world. Their long history has been one of departure from God, continuing to the present day. But it will not always be so. The Apostle Paul deals with this in some detail in Romans 9-11, which he summarises in 11:11-15:

I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? ... For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

In a future day, when this moment, which Paul describes, has come, it will be seen that God used Israel to bring blessing to the world. In anticipation of this, we can concur with the Apostle as he breaks out in a doxology of praise:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out! Romans 11:33.

THE COVENANTS

The original Covenants that God made in Scripture (apart from the one with Noah) were made with the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (renamed Israel, Genesis 32:28). The 'new covenant' given through Jeremiah (31:31-34) will also be with 'the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah'.

Abraham:

I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; ... Unto thy seed will I give this land. Genesis 12:2,7.

Isaac:

For unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father. Genesis 26:3.

Jacob:

... the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ... and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Genesis 28:13-14.

It has often been said that Genesis is the seed plot of Scripture: what is found there in germ form is expanded in later history and revelation. And so it is with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In Genesis 22:17 God says that Abraham's seed would be *as the stars in the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sand of the sea shore*, involving both a heavenly and an earthly people.

In Genesis 26:4, in the promise to Isaac concerning the increase of his seed, we see that it will be *as the stars of heaven*; there is no reference to the earthly element.

In Genesis 28:14 God tells Jacob that his seed will be *as the dust of the ground*, the emphasis being only on the earthly factor.

The Apostle Paul helps us to define these distinctions (Galatians 4:22-31). In reference to the covenant made with Isaac (Genesis 26:4) he contrasts the earthly Jerusalem associated with Hagar, to the heavenly Jerusalem associated with Isaac: *Jerusalem that is above is free ... we brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise (4:26,28)*. From this we are surely at liberty to identify the *sands of the seashore* and *dust of the ground*, in the covenant made with Jacob (Israel), as a continuing earthly people (nation). Both the Major and Minor Prophets also refer this to in detail.

Returning to the references to the Covenants, we come to Moses and his prophecy in Deuteronomy 4:23-31: *Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget*

the covenant of the Lord your God ... The nation is warned that if they disobey they will be scattered; but subsequently restored if *they search after him with all their heart and with all their soul*. Israel did disobey Him, and they suffered the consequences, which He promised they would. Many therefore believe that He has finished with them as a nation, and their blessings have been transferred to the Church. But their disobedience has not changed the everlasting Covenant made to the Patriarchs. The fact that Israel has been scattered on two occasions shows that God is still bound to His covenants with the Patriarchs and their seed: to the promises of blessing as well as cursing. The writer to the Hebrews alludes to this when he introduces the terms of the new covenant:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in my covenant ... (8:8, 9).

The Law given through Moses did not replace the Covenants made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but was added to them. Again, we are indebted to the Apostle Paul for an explanation:

A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. What then is the law? It was added because of the transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; ... Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid ... Galatians 3:17-21.

King David was in no doubt about God's faithfulness to His Covenants. God reiterated the terms of the Covenant to him and he responded in a prayer of deep appreciation for all that God had done for himself and for his people:

... O Lord God .. there is none like thee ... And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel ... and thou didst establish to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever ... 2 Samuel 7:22-29.

Many spiritualise this and refer it to the Church, but this does an injustice to

the context. When the Ark of the Covenant was recovered from the house of Obed-edom, there were great celebrations, and David reminded the people of the terms of the Covenant – notice the reference to 'the land':

.... ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones ... Remember his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations: the covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance ... 1 Chronicles 16:13,15-18; repeated in Psalm 105:8-11.

In 2 Samuel 7:16 it is said that *David's house and kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever* (NIV; NASB). This carries us forward to David's Greater Son, the Messiah of Israel in Psalm 2:6-9. At first reading, this may seem to transfer the literal, physical kingdom to a spiritual one, and appear to contradict what was said earlier. However, the Apostle Paul appears to be in no doubt about a future, physical reign of the Messiah on earth:

... Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles; on him shall the Gentiles (nations) hope. Romans 15:12.

The prophet Jeremiah refers to a covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. It is called a new covenant:

... This is the covenant that I will make ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people ... If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Jeremiah 31:33-36.

History tells us that the fulfilment of this covenant is still in the future for Israel. The writer to the Hebrews confirms this in 8:8-13, where he quotes from Jeremiah prophecy and maintains the future tense.

Before we comment on the terms of this covenant, we must note the words in Hebrews 8.7: *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.* This was referred to earlier in connection with

the covenant given to Moses. An explanation of the word 'first' is given in Hebrews 9. The writer refers to the functions of the Tabernacle and its offerings, which revealed God's purpose and plan in a parable (v.9), pointing forward to the Messiah:

But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands ... Hebrews 9:11.

Before there could be national salvation for Israel, (*all Israel shall be saved* – Romans 11:26), provision had to be made for personal forgiveness and cleansing of sin. Thus, on the night of His last Passover, the Messiah of Israel explained to His disciples that the new covenant would be ratified in Him:

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, that which is poured out for you. Luke 22:19-20.

Through the cross, Gentiles, referred to by the Lord as *other sheep ... not of this (Jewish) fold*, (John 10:16), have experienced the terms of this new, or superior, covenant. But this does not invalidate the future repentance and restoration of Israel as a nation, under the reign of their Messiah:

.. JESUS ... and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Luke 1:31, 33.

In this connection, the Apostle Paul has an interesting comment:

For I say that Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision (Israel) for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers. Romans 15:8.

When we consider all these Scriptures in their contexts, we must come to the settled conclusion with the Apostle Paul (Romans 11:29) that the choice of the Land, the People, and the Covenants are *without repentance* – irrevocable!

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PART TWO

JERUSALEM

The first Bible reference to 'Jerusalem' is in Genesis 14:18, in relation to Melchizedek, who is called King of 'Salem', the city of peace. Further references to it are Jerusalem ¹; Jebus ²; Ariel (Lion) ³; the holy city ⁴; Zion ⁵. Now with 5500 years of history, it was secured by King David as Israel's capital in 1004 BC.

1. Joshua 10:1, 2. Judges 19:10, 3. Isaiah 29:1, 4. Isaiah 52:1, 5. Isaiah 60:14

GEOGRAPHICAL CENTRE – LITERALLY

Thus saith the Lord God: This is Jerusalem: I have set her in the midst of the nations, and countries are round about her. Ezekiel 5:5.

Some years ago Echoes of Service produced a wall map of the world, with Israel and Jerusalem as its centre. Radiating out in concentric circles to the extremities of all the landmasses, it showed that the outermost circle touched each one. On 3rd May 1996 in Hereford Cathedral, Queen Elizabeth II dedicated the restored Mappa Mundi. Originally painted in the 13th Century, it depicts the world with Jerusalem as its centre!

The uniqueness of the Land of Israel, with its capital Jerusalem, is one of the central themes of the Bible. For example, Jerusalem is mentioned thirty-two times in the Gospel of Luke!

SALVATION CENTRE – SPIRITUALLY

Luke 9:51 states: *He (Jesus) steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem;* and the bewildered travellers to Emmaus (Luke 24:18) said to their travelling Companion *dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?* Jerusalem is the place where the greatest transaction and triumph of this planet, indeed of the universe, were enacted. King David's greater Son, Messiah Jesus, entered through one of its

gates, symbolically as its king, and three days later He was crucified between two common criminals outside its walls, disrobed, destitute, and disgraced. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).*

The highest thing that men could see on the cross was His lovely name, *Jesus of Nazareth, The King of The Jews*. It was written in Hebrew, the language of religion and revelation; Greek, the language of culture and philosophy; and Latin, the language of law and government. All the world was represented at Golgotha outside Jerusalem when our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Messiah, died for our sins to bring us to God. You were there and so was I!

*Between the thieves on either side,
The Lord of Life was crucified.
Men wondered at the sight so rare,
And sitting down they watched Him there.
And none who saw could understand
Why darkness covered all the land.
And none who heard the cry, 'I thirst',
Knew why the Sinless One was cursed,
Nor understood those words so true,
'Forgive, they know not what they do.'
For God alone, and none beside,
Knew what was done when Jesus died.*

TROUBLE CENTRE – PROPHETICALLY

Long after the Babylonian Captivity, the prophet Zechariah wrote that Jerusalem would be *a cup of reeling unto all the peoples round about, and upon Judah also shall it be in the siege against Jerusalem . . . I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples; all that burden themselves*

with it shall be sore wounded (12:2-3). In 14:2 he refers to a coming day when all the nations will be gathered to battle against Jerusalem. Never before has there been a conflict such as he describes; and no battle in world history since could even remotely compare with it.

In our time the eyes and thoughts of the major nations are focused upon Israel. Peace Talks follow more Peace Talks, and they have all come to nothing. In the last fifty-plus years, hundreds of thousands of Jews have returned to their homeland from all over the world. Despite Israel's present great difficulties the build-up has begun, and the actors are taking the stage to perform the final scene. The significant stumbling block to peace is, and will continue to be, the status of Jerusalem! The conflict envisaged by Zechariah will be conventional and cruel, incorporating the time known as *Jacob's trouble* (Jeremiah 30:7), and *the Great Tribulation* (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14). It will commence on the human level, but quickly involve the supernatural:
Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations ... And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives ... Zechariah 14:3-4.

It will be the battle of all battles. A godless, self-centredness characterises the participants, as they counsel and cry for the overthrow of divine restraint:
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Psalm 2:2-3.

All their indignation is centred on Jerusalem, the City of God. It is where that unprecedented event, the return of the Lord Jesus to earth, will occur:

to take vengeance on them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

NERVE CENTRE – GOVERNMENTALLY

Isaiah also has much to tell us about this future day and the centrality of Jerusalem:

... out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples (2:3-4).

The disaster of our world is the increasing lawlessness, which the Bible tells us will characterise the Last Days. The shadow of the Antichrist can already be seen (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-9). Events in many nations can be described only as anarchy; but there is coming a day when all will be changed. The Antichrist will proclaim universal peace, and there will be a time of harmonious society, with regulated law and order. But it will only be with the direct intervention and reign of the Messiah that true peace shall exist.

Isaiah's prophecy clearly states that the Word of the Lord will go to the ends of the earth from Jerusalem. This has never happened before in Israel's history, and some have suggested that high tech information systems will carry the message. Israel will at last recognise their Messiah, and the remaining pieces of the prophetic jigsaw will be in place. The law will go out of Zion and, in contrast to people going their own way and doing their own thing, *the Lord will teach us ways, and we will walk in his paths*, Isaiah 2:3.

The raging seas of international unrest will be calmed. The Man who rules the wind and the waves will take control, and *the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15)*.

GLORY CENTRE – ULTIMATELY

This is a marvellous concept: it is out of this world! We are indebted to Zechariah for a glimpse of the new world order:

I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth; There shall yet old men and old woman dwell in the streets of Jerusalem ... And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof ... I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country: And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness (8:3-8).

Ever since the Creator formed Adam in His own image and placed him in

Eden's paradise, it has been His design and desire to dwell among men and women and have communion with them. Early scripture records *God walking with Adam in the cool of the day* (Genesis 3:8). Two thousand years later, the rise of Israel out from among the nations reinforced this desire. As God carefully laid out the plans for the Tabernacle, He said to Moses, *there I will meet with thee ... from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim* (Exodus 25:22). On its completion, Scripture records, *the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle* (Exodus 40:34).

As King David approached the end of his reign, he wanted to build a permanent sanctuary to the Lord. He felt that the 'tent', which had been the centre for Israel's worship for centuries, was no longer appropriate. He would build something more solid and beautiful, befitting the worship and service of the Lord. But David had to be content to gather the materials. God decreed that it would be Solomon, his son, who would have the honour of building and beautifying the Temple. When the Ark was brought into the temple, 1 Kings 8:11 records that *the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord*. The Temple remained the symbol of the presence of God on earth until the day dawned when the literal and physical presence of God appeared. Joseph was told that His name shall be called *Immanuel, God with us* (Matthew 1:23). Writing many years after the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle John recalled, *And the Word became flesh and tabernacled (made His home) among us* (1:14). All previous symbols were but faint expressions of this reality.

But the story of God's intervention in the affairs of men does not stop there. Scripture predicts that, in a day to come, the Lord Jesus will actually and physically return to Jerusalem (Acts 1:11; Zechariah 14:4). The One who was despised and rejected will appear as King, to claim from the world His rightful crown. He will *do it in Jerusalem: I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, Zechariah 8:3*.

THE CHURCH'S WORSHIP-CENTRE – PRESENTLY

Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... Hebrews 12:22.

We must note the present tense, 'are come', as this is our present position in Christ in this Day of Grace. We are not exhorted to make a pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem. From the right hand of the majesty on high, our resurrected Lord has decreed that He is in the midst of His people, *the church of the firstborn!* The wild (Gentile) olive branches are being grafted into the very heart and purposes of the God, who in His sovereign choice *foreordained us unto adoption as sons (Ephesians 1:5).*

The church of Jesus Christ now worships where He is: *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,* Matthew 18:20. How can we ever grasp the significance of the Lord being ever-present, as His obedient and submissive people gather together around Him?

The concept of worship in a 'heavenly' Jerusalem was revealed by Jesus in a theological discussion with a Samaritan woman (John 4). As they talked together at Sychar's Well, the Lord said to her that the time would come when people would neither worship in Mount Gerizim (the worship-centre of the Samaritans), nor in Jerusalem (the worship-centre of the Jews); but *the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23).*

He was pointing forward to the replacement of the Temple, or any other building, large or small, as the focal point for worship in this present age. Believers use a wide variety of buildings as places to worship, because it is a sensible way to be separated from surrounding distractions. But we need to emphasise that the building is not the church, but the place where a local church meets. Over the centuries men and woman have met to worship God in forests, caves, and in the mountains. This was, and is, a measure of true devotion.

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PART THREE

THE LORD'S RETURN TO EARTH AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS KINGDOM

The prophet Zechariah comments in some detail about the events surrounding the fulfilment of the angels' prediction in Acts 1:11, *this same Jesus shall return in like manner as ye have seen him go.* Zechariah writes, *his feet shall*

stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (14:4), and he makes it clear that he is referring to a future, literal event. The “residue” in v.2 is not the church of the New Testament, but a Jewish remnant; and that has been the underlying theme in his entire Prophecy. Its message is completely eschatological. In Acts 1:11 the angels confirmed to the disciples that their Master would return in the same manner as He had left them. They emphasised that there would be a physical, personal, public, literal, and visible return of the Messiah to earth in His glorified body – the body in which He had left Olivet.

It is important to notice the question, which the disciples asked their Master before He left them: *Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* (Acts 1:6). To which kingdom were they referring – a literal kingdom, or a spiritual one? In Matthew 20:21, it is recorded that the mother of James and John requested that her sons should sit on either side of Jesus in His kingdom. What sort of kingdom had she in mind? Also, we remember the request of the dying malefactor: *Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom* (Luke 23:42). Where did their knowledge of a kingdom come from? Who gave them the information? There is only one answer – their Hebrew Prophets!

It is interesting and relevant to our quest to ascertain what kind of kingdom the disciples were asking about. In the opening chapters of Luke’s Gospel, it is helpful to examine the references to a literal, earthly kingdom made by the priest Zacharias. Before we cite this and other statements, we need to remember that four hundred years have elapsed since Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesied. This gap in time has often been referred to as ‘the silent years’, when there was no message from God to the Jewish remnant. But in the Gospel of Luke, when we are introduced to Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and the prophetess Anna, it is evident that they and some of their ancestors had been diligent in maintaining the fear of the Lord and fellowship with one another. Malachi (3:16) records that *the Lord hearkened and heard*.

Now, four hundred years later, from the Temple, which was still functioning, the priest Zacharias speaks:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people, And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets ...) and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he aware unto Abraham our father, To grant unto us that being delivered out of the hand of our enemies should serve him without fear. Luke 1:68-74.

Serve whom? The Messiah! Serve Him, where? The answer must be, here on earth! The angel in his announcement to Mary said that Messiah (Jehovah's anointed King) would occupy *the throne of his father David*, Luke 1:32-33. And, as if to emphasise that the promises made to the Patriarchs and the Prophets were not going to be transferred to the Church, we are introduced to Simeon as one who was *looking for the consolation of Israel* (Luke 2:25). The Holy Spirit had revealed to him *that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah*. He prophesied: *this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel* (v.34). The prophetess Anna, who never left the Temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers, at that moment joined Simeon, Mary, Joseph, and *the child Jesus*, and began *giving thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem* (v.38).

In Matthew 16, when Simon Peter confessed that his Master was *the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God*, it is quite clear that he believed that Jesus had come to establish the kingdom promised years before by the prophets. The Lord confirmed that this had been revealed to Peter *by my Father, which is in heaven* (v.16, 17). When He continued, *And I also say ... I will build my church*, He was announcing something new, additional to all that the prophets had said. After His ascension, this would be expanded upon to his Apostles Peter and Paul through direct revelation by the Holy Spirit, and they would pass it on in their letters.

To return to Acts chapter 1, as the disciples stood with their Master on the Mount of Olives, we can now perhaps see more clearly what they had in their minds. They were convinced that He was the Messiah. So, had the time now arrived that they had been waiting for, when the occupying powers that for

centuries had afflicted their land would be defeated? If they were mistaken, and there was to be no earthly and literal kingdom, their Master could easily have told them so there and then. But notice His reply (v.7): ... *it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father hath set within his known authority*. He could have gently rebuked them, as He did the two on the Emmaus Road, calling them foolish and slow of heart for not fully understanding the Scriptures! Why didn't He? Because He accepted their statement that He would restore the kingdom; but pointed out that it was not for them to know the timing of these things.

Instead, He repeated to them His 'great commission' to be His witnesses to the remotest part of the earth (see also Matthew 28.19-20). In other words, before there could be an earthly kingdom and national salvation for Israel, the offer of personal salvation and forgiveness of sins through His death, burial and resurrection must be extended to the whole world, beginning at Jerusalem.

God will keep His covenant promises made to Israel through Jeremiah (31:31-34), and cleanse them from their iniquity and remember their sins no more; but it will not happen until salvation is offered on identical terms to the whole world. Any person, Jew or Gentile, who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, shall be saved. As Peter told the crowds in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 4:12): *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (AV)*.

In Romans 11:25-27 the Apostle Paul further reinforces this special relationship with Israel:

... He (Jehovah) will turn away the ungodliness from Jacob (not the Church): And this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

But we shall return to this later in the study.

This lengthy preamble to Zechariah 14 is important. Zechariah describes the fulfilment of the promise later made by the angels in Acts 1 that the Lord Jesus would return to the earth again. The events outlined in ch. 14 amplify the words of 13:7-9, which refer to the tribulation described by Jeremiah:

... how awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for

Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. Jeremiah 30:7 NIV.

The end of chapter 13 refers to a specific remnant in Israel who shall be saved. Only one-third of the nation will come through the fire and be refined as gold. Then chapter 14:1 reveals to us the sudden intervention of the Lord, and the invisible Jehovah will be manifested in His long promised Messiah, Jesus. When He was on earth He referred to His intervention at this precise time

For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world, until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Matthew 24:21, 22.

So in 14:2 we are introduced to the End Times: *I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken ...* This verse describes the last triumph of the nations over Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus said that the city would be *trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled* (Luke 21:24). As the siege and captivity proceed, they lead us up to 'the Day of the Lord', when He will go out and fight against the nations (14:3).

Daniel 7:23-25 refers to a specific number of nations who will be responsible for the afflicting and treading down of Jerusalem. The Roman world will be divided into ten kingdoms, and they will be the last to ever exercise power against the city. In terms of prophecy, they could be referred to as the countries that will be controlled by the Antichrist. They include most of present-day Europe, parts of the Middle East, and the whole of North Africa. It is this entire area, and not just what has been called the United States of Europe, that will at some time in the future make up the Ten Kingdoms under the control of the Antichrist (Revelation 17:12-17).

Despite the horrendous results of the attack, Zechariah refers to the sparing of *the residue* (v.2). J. A. Bengel, the 18th century historian, confirms that this event is yet future: "When the Romans last took Jerusalem in the time of Hadrian, not a single Jew was left in the city." But Zechariah tells us that on this occasion the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city, for salvation from the Lord shall intervene: *Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations ...* (v.3). The clear objective of Antichrist is to annihilate

Israel, like so many before him: *Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance, Psalm 83:4.* This call comes loud and clear today from some of the modern day enemies of Israel. But all, including Antichrist, will discover that, while the name and power of Jehovah remain, the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel will continue on the earth.

It would appear that as we approach Zechariah 14:4, we are being taken from the natural to the supernatural, when for the second time in human history there will be a physical and literal intervention of the Lord in the person of His Son, the Messiah of Israel, Jesus: *And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives.* As if to emphasise its exact geographical location, Zechariah adds, *which is before Jerusalem on the east.* "The topography," says Bengel, "is accurately given, and to explain it figuratively would be wickedness." This may seem very extreme language, but it is hard to disagree with the facts as stated by Zechariah. The Mount of Olives was the final place on which His feet had stood on earth, so it will be the first when He returns. What will be the geographical results?

...the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and towards the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south (14:4).

His arrival will result in an earthquake, the mount will split in two, and a great valley will be created. The fact that the present structure of the mountain is just as it was when Jesus was on earth, is another proof that this event is still future. Some have connected this to the seventh bowl of judgement (Revelation 16:17-21). This newly formed valley will enlarge the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where God will judge the invading nations that survive the Great tribulation. The prophet Joel refers to this (3:2,12-16):

I will gather all nations and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land ...

Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat:

for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about ... the winepress is full ... for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of the Lord is near ... And the Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be a refuge unto his people, and a strong hold to the children of Israel.

The details of how the Lord will execute judgement are given by Zechariah 14:12, and they are a sharp contrast to the safety provided to the remnant of Israel:

the plague ... will smite all the people that have warred against Jerusalem: their flesh shall consume away while they stand on their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouths.

(One is reminded of similar results on the population of Hiroshima, when the atomic bomb was dropped in Japan in 1945.) Those that survive this plague will turn in panic (v.13), one against the other, in scenes of terrible confusion and destruction.

It would seem that those who fled from Jerusalem (v.5) will return (v.14); and with the Lord's help they shall *fight 'at' Jerusalem* (a better translation than 'against'). The consequence of this judgement upon the invading nations will result in their utter defeat. This is often called *Armageddon*, which means 'place of gathering,' and refers to the Esdraelon Plain to the north west of Jerusalem. It is possibly where the actual battle will commence, and then extend to the valley of Jehoshaphat at Jerusalem.

At present Azel (v.5) cannot be positively identified. The valley to be created will be large enough to allow a terrified population (the remnant) to flee from the holocaust in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Later, they will return and fight, as we have just seen from v.14.

We now continue to look at the topographical changes that will take place when the Messiah arrives on Olivet. The reference in v.4 to the north and the south receding, as well as east and west, indicates the flattening of the land,

and this is confirmed in v.10: *All the land shall be turned as the Arabah from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem.* Northward, the plain will extend to Geba in Benjamin, a distance of six miles; and Rimmon is thirty-five miles to the southwest of Jerusalem. This means that the Judean Hills will be flattened and the new valley will join up with the existing desert region known as the Arabah, a very flat area that extends for a hundred miles between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (in Israel known as the Gulf of Eilat), which, according to Isaiah 11.15, will disappear. This is a large gulf of the Red Sea, located to the east of the Sinai Peninsula and west of the Arabian mainland. Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia all have coastlines on the Gulf of Aqaba. What is certain is that this earthquake will not be a small localised tremor, but a complete alteration of the topography of Israel, probably including Jerusalem: *Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place* (v.10). In other words, the city will be prominent and pre-eminent – the centre from which Messiah shall reign. Some teachers, when describing the entry of Messiah from Olivet into Jerusalem, seem to overlook these dramatic changes, and describe His journey using the landscape as it exists at present.

Zechariah describes the introduction of a newly created vast watercourse that will accompany this upheaval:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea (the Dead Sea), and half of them towards the western sea (the Mediterranean Sea): in summer and winter shall it be. Zechariah 14:8.

This further reinforces the argument that we are dealing with unusual climatic seasons that will endure until the dissolution of the present Creation. The massive waterway that shall spring up in Jerusalem and flow down in two directions, south-eastward and westward, would appear to be that described by the prophet Ezekiel. He speaks of *waters issuing.. out of the house* (47:1), the house being the Temple which he describes in great detail in chapters 40-47. There is much controversy about this Temple, often referred to as the Millennial Temple. Anti-millennialism sees it as figurative. However, the descriptions of detail filling these seven chapters are so comprehensive that we

must wonder why, if it is not a literal Temple.

With reference to the waters, Ezekiel (47:8-11) uses similar, but more fulsome, language to Zechariah; and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they are referring to one and the same thing. And if we take the view that Zechariah 14 is literal, then we must reach the same conclusion in Ezekiel. As an aside, the word 'living' indicates a fresh springing-up, in contrast to a well, or stagnant pool. It would teach us that, through converted Israel, the stream of life-giving water will flow to all nations, causing *all the ends of the earth to fear him*. This is a quotation from Psalm 67, a Messianic song extolling the blessings of the Millennial age. During His public ministry the Lord Jesus gave the term *living water* a spiritual significance which will apply to a cleansed and restored nation.

Ezekiel 47 describes in detail the resulting fruitfulness and blessings that flow from these newly created waters, especially in relation to the Arabah (v.8), and the Dead Sea (v.10).

There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live ... from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. (v.9-11, NIV).

To emphasise the literal aspect of the narrative more details are given in v.12:

Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing

Isaiah takes two chapters (34 and 35) to describe the future judgments on their enemies and kingdom blessings for regathered Israel. He describes how the waterway will irrigate the entire desert, which we presently call the Negev:

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose ... for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. (35:1, 6).

In addition to what is happening on earth, Zechariah 14:6-7 depicts extraordinary changes that will take place in the heavens, and our Lord explains it further in Matthew 24, in His Olivet Discourse: *But immediately, after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light* (v.29). But into this awful scene of darkness, where all natural light has ceased, a brightness appears which is too excellent and terrible to describe. The glory of heaven will be revealed, with the angels and saints, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man Himself, at the centre of that majestic sight. The Apostle Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 describes this event as *the manifestation of His coming*.

Before we look further at the far-reaching changes and rule, which the Messiah will introduce, we must ask what lies at the heart of why He should return to earth. As well as the destruction of the nations led by Antichrist and inspired by Satan, He must come to fulfil His promise to procure the national salvation of His people, Israel! We have already referred to the tribulation days being shortened, *for the elect's sake* (Matthew 24:22). The Apostle Paul takes up the same theme when he writes to the Roman believers:

... a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; And so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: And this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. Romans 11:25-27.

It is important to note that the Apostle uses the words 'in part.' Quoting Isaiah, he says *it is the remnant that shall be saved* (Romans 9:27). Again in 11:5-7: *there is a remnant according to the election of grace ... That which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened.* Right through the days of Malachi, through the four hundred inter-Testament years, and even up to the present day, there has been a remnant in Israel. Despite a mainly humanistic government, there is a growing remnant: sons of Israel, Jews, who have recognised in the despised Nazarene, the Jesus of Golgotha, their Messiah, Lord, and Saviour. It may be that in the near future their believing offspring, redeemed by the blood of their Messiah,

will form the "residue" of the nation that shall be brought through the time of Jacob's Trouble to enter the Millennial kingdom.

When Jehovah establishes the kingdom through His Messiah, He alone will be the rightful Ruler over the entire earth:

The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall the Lord be one, and his name one. Zechariah 14:9.

The people and the land of Israel will be at the centre of the Messiah's attention, and there will be international repercussions; but all nations will come under the authority and rule of the One whom Revelation 19:16 describes as KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

In referring to the remnant of Israel who will survive the Great Tribulation and the subsequent destruction of the invading nations, Zechariah records:

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (12:10).

This will be a moment of unbelievable astonishment. Jesus of Nazareth now appears in bodily presence before them! The very same One for whose blood they had cried, and had screamed *Away with him, crucify him, we will not have this man to reign over us*. They shall see on His body the scars of crucifixion. The intervening centuries have not diminished the awful reality of what they have done. What a moment! What a revelation!

We get a further insight into this mourning when we listen to Isaiah in his song of Israel's national confession and repentance:

He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ... he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ... But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ... and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:3-6.

And at that moment of repentance, the words of the apostle Paul will be fulfilled:

And so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: And this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins ... For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance (irrevocable). Romans 11:26-29.

We should bear in mind, however, that there are not two levels of salvation: one for the church and a different one for Israel. Acts 4:12 settles that!

Isaiah describes the great celebrations that follow, and it is significant to notice that they take place on earth:

Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once? ... Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn over her ... For thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream ... I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and shall see my glory ... And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. Isaiah 66:8-23.

[\[top\]](#)

PART FOUR

THE REIGN OF THE KING

Isaiah 66:8-23 refers to the inauguration of the Messianic Reign. Speaking to his twelve disciples, the Lord Jesus also emphasised its literal nature:

Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28.

Saved Israel will be joined by those who were martyred for their faith during the Tribulation and are now resurrected, ... *and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years* (Revelation 20:4). We also learn that the saints who accompany Christ at His return will fill a place of responsibility and nearness to

Him: *Thou madest them ... to be a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth* (Revelation 5:10). Then the Lord Jesus further tells us:

... then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:30-31.

Such language is quite beyond our finite minds to grasp, and we remind our hearts that *now we see through a glass darkly* (1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV); but we can be sure that His unerring word shall be fulfilled.

Redeemed ones who enter the Kingdom will find that the changes in them will correspond to the new spiritual and physical conditions, not only in Israel but also throughout the entire earth. Those new living conditions will be compatible with the new climatic activity and the whole moral change that will result from the authority and rule of the King.

Another very significant event will be the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3). For one thousand years, men and woman will not be held captive by him at his will. The controller of all the forces of evil that have dominated earth's history since the Fall in Eden will be temporarily imprisoned in the abyss. This is not the Eternal State; it will be glorious but still imperfect. At the end of the thousand years, when Satan is released, he instigates a final rebellion on earth. His ability to once again gather support will reveal that the human heart has not changed:

And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall come forth to deceive the nations ... to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea ... and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire ... Revelation 20:7-10.

We must conclude that God allowed the rebellion of Satan between the end of the Millennium and the creation of the new heavens and a new earth (commonly referred to as the commencement of the Eternal State) to

emphasis the utter incapability of the arch-deceiver to upset His purposes for the everlasting reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall now look at what Scripture has to say about the new order of life on earth during the Millennium. Comments on the various passages quoted have deliberately been kept to a minimum, so that each reader may be personally guided by the Holy Spirit to interpret and understand what is written.

We have already referred to the geological changes outlined in Zechariah 14: and according to Isaiah 11:15-16 these will extend from Assyria in the north to Egypt in the south. Many aspects of creation will change: the environment, human life, animal life, and agriculture, to mention a few.

The following quotations are from the Prophecy of Isaiah:

The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose ... streams in the desert ... the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water (35:1,6,7).

... the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing (35:5-6).

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon (35:9).

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain (11:6-9).

In days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom and bud: and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit (27:6).

Then Solomon tells us:

There shall be an abundance of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon ...(Psalm 72:16).

And the prophet Amos also foretells:

The days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop

sweet wine ... they shall plant vineyards ... they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them. (9:13-14).

Perhaps the most significant change is to the character and longevity of human life:

There shall be no more thence an infant of days ... for the child shall die an hundred years old (Isaiah 65:20).

Thus saith the Lord of hosts: There shall yet old men and old woman dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets** of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing ... Zechariah 8:4-5.*

*We learn from this that nature will continue to take its course, and the walking stick will still be in use!

**To us today this is a truly remarkable picture, because the streets of our cities are far from safe.

Mention has been made that this is not an era of perfection. In Isaiah 65:20 the prophet refers to 'death' and 'the sinner'. Over the many centuries of this wonderful age there will be an increasing number who will not accept the rule of the King. However their activities will be kept under His control, and erupt into open rebellion only when Satan is unbound (Revelation 20:7-9).

This leads us to consider the Theocratic rule that will be in place:

It shall come to pass in the latter days ... many peoples shall go and say.. let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house (temple) of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples ... Isaiah 2:2-4.

Never before could it have been said that the word of the Lord will go to the ends of the earth from Jerusalem.

The Psalmist makes remarkable pronouncements about the equity, the compassionate yet controlling and overpowering influence, of the King's rule.

His authority will be unrivalled.

He shall judge thy people with righteousness ...

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee while the sun endureth, and so long as the moon, throughout all generations ...

In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace, till the moon be no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth. Psalm 72:2, 4-8.

This will be true world government, characterised by peace. It will be a regulated society, centred upon law and order for the benefit humanity everywhere. Such a contrast to the lawlessness of this present age, which is similar to the time of the Judges when *every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (Judges 21:25).

Let's return now to Zechariah 14:

... every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem (perhaps the various representatives) shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to the keep feast of tabernacles. vs.16-17.

We might ask why it is necessary for redeemed Gentiles to celebrate this Jewish feast. The Feast of Tabernacles was the last of Israel's seven annual festivals, and the most joyful. It spoke of the wilderness trials being past, and of resting in the land promised to the patriarchs. Zechariah is looking forward to the time when the centuries of persecution and wandering are over, and the covenant promises made to Israel are fulfilled to the letter. Would any deny them that celebration? The joining in of Gentile nations will be to acknowledge the faithfulness of God to His people, and to recognise Israel's national supremacy under their Messiah King. It will be a test of their allegiance to the Lord God of Israel. The Millennium is an earthly dispensation, and so Israel will retain her distinctiveness as God's special people on earth. The celebrations do not add to the redemption of those who worship, any more than Baptism or the Lord's Supper secure our present salvation and spiritual blessings.

Finally, let us remind our hearts that only those who have been redeemed

through the Saviour's atoning work on the cross will enter this Kingdom. 'Holiness' will be the watchword, the badge of the Kingdom. It will characterise secular life, as represented by *the bells of the horses*; religious life, as seen in *the vessels in the Lord's house*; and private life, as seen in *every pot in Jerusalem and Judah* (vs. 20, 21).

The last words of the chapter summarise all that has gone before:

In that day there shall be no more a Canaanite (idolatrous invader) in the house of the Lord of hosts.

It has been suggested that this could be referring to the Palestinian population presently living in the Land, but whether this is so or not remains to be seen.

The closing words of the great Messianic Psalm 72, the final Psalm, are glorious:

His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him happy. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things: And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.

[\[top\]](#)

PART FIVE

FINAL THOUGHTS

For over two thousand years, since the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, the nation of Israel has been scattered around the world, as predicted by the prophet Ezekiel:

I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries. Ezekiel 22:15.

The movement back to the Land, a trickle at first, began at the end of the 19th Century and continued slowly until the establishment of Israel as a nation in May 1948. Over the past sixty-plus years the nation has been rebuilt and continues to grow. Indeed, it has become the focus of world attention – and not always for the right reasons. Today, contemporary Israel is in denial of the

covenants of promise.

We learn from the Prophets that the return and restoration of Israel will be in two stages: a physical return, followed by a spiritual revival. One major piece of prophecy is from Ezekiel 37, his allegory of the Valley of Dry Bones. The body is reassembled, but without breath. Ezekiel is asked, *Can these bones live?* (v.3), and the answer comes:

I will bring you into the land of Israel ... and I will put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord. Ezekiel 37.12,14.

At present the nation is progressing through the first stage in unbelief and still blinded: ... *a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; And so all Israel shall be saved* (Romans 11:25, 26). As we saw earlier, the words 'in part' are important. Since the reestablishment of the nation there has been an ever-growing number of Jews in the Land coming to the Lord. They have heard and believed the message, accepting the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as both their Lord and Messiah. The 'remnant' principle of God applies to them, and they now form part of the church of Jesus Christ. Many are persecuted by their peers, and certainly by Jewish orthodoxy. It is a thrill to know that in some areas throughout Israel converted Jews and Arabs, united in Christ, meet in fellowship for prayer and worship, illustrating the marvellous truth of Ephesians 2:14, *For he is our peace, who hath made both one* (Jew and Gentile).

The events leading up to the final and full regathering and restoration of Israel will involve great sorrow:

Then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now ... And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's (Israel's) sake those days shall be shortened. Matthew 24:21-22.

This time is also described by Jeremiah as "*the time of Jacob's trouble*" (Jeremiah 30:7). As we examined in Part Three of this study, it will be the literal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ that will shorten those days.

As we saw in Part Four, a reborn Israel shall then enter their Messiah's Millennial Kingdom. At the end of the Millennium, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison and once more deceive the nations, gathering them together to war. It is worth noting that even in the final days of this world's history the city of Jerusalem is still the focus for attack:

And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. Revelation 20:9.

After the dissolution of the present creation, the Last Judgment will take place at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15), following which will be the inauguration of the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1-7). This is generally referred to as the Eternal State. Further detailed comments are now outside the scope of this study.

Our comprehension of the great and glorious future for the redeemed, and the unspeakable torment for the innumerable multitude of the lost, is very limited. However, we have the assurance that the purposes of God and His Christ will ultimately be fulfilled.

To Him be glory throughout the ages. Amen.

DREW CRAIG

[TOP OF PAGE](#)