

God's First Born - Israel

INTRODUCTION

A story is told about a European emperor who asked a Christian missionary to summarize the Bible in one word.

"Your Majesty, you want me to summarize the 66 books of the Bible in one word?" the missionary asked.

"Yes," the emperor answered.

"Then, give me three days to fast and pray." Three days later the missionary came back to the Emperor. "Your Majesty, the Bible could be summarized in one word: Israel." "Elaborate," the emperor requested.

"In the book of Genesis we read about the beginning of Israel. In Exodus we read about the redemption of Israel. In Leviticus we read about the ordinances God gave to Israel. In the prophets, we read prophecies concerning Israel. When we come to the New Testament we read about the Jewish Messiah, the Savior of mankind. Coming to the final book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, we read about the one hundred and forty four thousand sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel. Your Majesty, from Genesis to Revelation, Israel is the focal point," the Christian missionary said.

The emperor, being a man with a great knowledge of the Bible, said, "You are perfectly right; you have passed the test."

The nation of Israel is very dear to the heart of God. It is the first and only nation chosen by God to witness for Him and to announce the coming of the Messiah. "Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43:10).



When the Lord called Moses, He said to him, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, 'thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born'" (Exodus 4:22). Again, we read what Moses said to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'Let my people go'" (Exodus 5:1). Israel is God's first born son, His people.

Again we read what God said concerning Israel to the prophet Zechariah, "...for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8).

We also read what God said to Israel in the book of Isaiah:

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when

thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him (Isaiah 43:1-7).

Israel's existence demonstrates the faithfulness of God, the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible and the sovereignty of God.

God has a great plan for the nation of Israel. However, in the fourth century John Chrysostom, who was the bishop of the church of Antioch (344 AD - 407 AD), blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus, and separated Christianity from its Jewish roots. His writings created hate toward the Jewish people and affected the teaching of many Christian denominations.

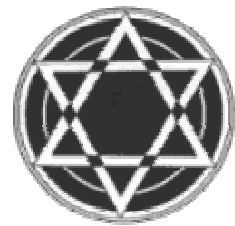
This book is written to enlighten its readers concerning the plan of God for Israel. It shows its miraculous formation, its foretold dispersion, its providential preservation, and its final restoration. It gives a glimpse of God's miracle nation.

September 7, 1997 Labib Mikhail Springfield, Virginia U.S.A.

ISRAEL - GOD'S MIRACLE NATION

CHAPTER ONE

Clarification of Names



It is important, first, to clarify a few matters concerning the names by which the nation of Israel has been known throughout its history. In Exodus 5:1 it is called My People; in Psalm 33:12 it is called God's Chosen Nation, in Exodus 1:15 its people are called Hebrews. In I Samuel 29:1 its people are called the Israelites. And in Esther 8:16 its people are called Jews.

What is the difference between the names Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew?

Abraham was the first person to be called a Hebrew. He was a Gentile. He lived in Chaldea, in the city of Ur. While he was in the land of Chaldea, God called him to leave his country to go into the land of Canaan. Only then did Abraham become a Hebrew.

The word "Hebrew" comes from the root word "Abar," which means to "cross over." Hebrew simply means one who has crossed over. It seems that Abraham was called by this name because he had come from his country, Chaldea, and crossed over the river Euphrates to come into the land of Canaan. Since Abraham was a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13), his descendants were also called

Hebrews. The name "Hebrews" today is applied only to the nation of Israel. And, technically speaking, Abraham was neither an Israelite nor a Jew.

The first person to actually be called an Israelite was Jacob, Abraham's grandson. He was called Jacob at birth, but God changed his name to "Israel" at Peniel, when He said to him:

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed (Genesis 32:28).

The nation which traced its ancestry back to the twelve sons of Jacob was variously referred to as "Israel" (Genesis 34:7), "the children/sons of Israel" (Genesis 32:32), or "the tribes of Israel" (Genesis 49:16). Again, we must keep in mind that Jacob was not a Jew.

The term "Jew" originally described an inhabitant of Judah (II Kings 16:6) and as such was employed in contemporary Assyrian texts (Laudaia) dating at least from the eighth century B.C. The *New Bible Dictionary* indicates that "the term 'Jew' was commonly used by non-Jews to refer to the Hebrews, or descendants of Abraham in general." By New Testament times the plural "Jews" had become a familiar term for all Israelites. The feminine form,

"Jewess," is used in Acts 16:1 and 24:24; and the adjective "Jewish" is found in Galatians 2:14 (NIV) and Titus 1:14.

For all practical purposes, therefore, we can use the terms Hebrews, Jews and Israelites interchangeably to mean the same people.

Now, the most important questions are:

Is the present nation of Israel, which was recognized as an independent state by the United Nations on May 14, 1948, the same historical Israel of the Old Testament? Is it true that the ten northern tribes of Israel were completely deported to Assyria in 722 BC and were lost throughout history? And that the Israelites, therefore, the inheritors of the birthright through Ephraim and Manasseh, are a different people from the Jews who are descended from the southern tribes? Is it true that the English-speaking peoples today - Britain and America - are actually the birthright tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh of the "lost" tribes of Israel?

Close inspection of the answers to these questions will reveal that the nation of Israel which exists today is really Israel and that the teaching about the "lost ten northern tribes" is not accurate.

We are quite certain that there are no "lost tribes" as some teach. Scripture reveals that Ephraim and Manasseh were in the land of Israel one hundred years after the deportation of the ten northern tribes. We read in II Chronicles 34:9 (NIV):

They went to Hilkiyah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the temple of God, which the Levites who were the doorkeepers had collected from the people of

Manasseh, Ephraim, and the entire remnant of Israel and from all the people of Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The book of Ezra confirms that all twelve of the tribes were represented at the dedication of Zerubbabel's temple two hundred years after the deportation. We read:

And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, and offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel (Ezra 6:16,17).



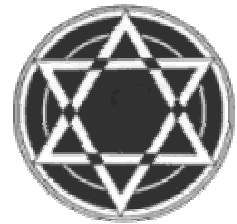
All the tribes that returned the first time continued to live in Israel until the second dispersion. James in his epistle which was written at that time states this fact:

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting (James 1;1)

Thus, we see that so-called teachings about the "ten lost tribes" are in error.

ISRAEL - GOD'S MIRACLE NATION

CHAPTER TWO



Survival of Old Testament Israel

The teaching that God is through with physical Israel and that all the Old Testament promises he made to Israel are now to be applied to the church is inaccurate. The apostle Paul says:

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God (I Cor.10:32).

Thus he divided humanity into these three distinct groups: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God.

Some argue that God has rejected Israel because of their transgressions and unbelief. God punished, and will punish, Israel for their transgressions. However, God will never forsake them

The prophet Jeremiah said:

For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel (Jeremiah 51:5). God punished Israel for their sin and He scattered them among the nations. But He will never forget His covenant with them:

Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the

covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord (Leviticus 26:44,45 NIV)

It is clear from what we read in the book of Revelation that Jews from all the tribes of Israel returned to Israel after it was recognized by the United Nations as an independent state and will remain in Israel until the great tribulation and the second coming of the Messiah. This is evident from what we read in Chapters 7 and 21 of Revelation.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand (Revelation 7:2-8)

Also we read concerning the Holy City, New Jerusalem:

And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel (Revelation 21:12).

Israel is still - and will always be - God's miracle nation.

CHAPTER THREE

Israel's Miraculous Formation

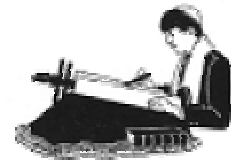
Israel is God's miracle nation because of its miraculous formation.

Although "good as dead" because he was about a hundred years old, Abraham did not waiver in his faith. Rather than focus on his age or on Sarah's deadness of womb, he grew strong in faith, being fully assured that what God had promised He was also able to perform:

And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? (Genesis 17:15-17).

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waiver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised (Romans 4:18-21 NIV).

Abraham, against all hope in human ability, hoped in the power and ability of God to perform what He promised. Thus Isaac was born, and a miracle nation was born.



It is of great interest to note that many years before Isaac was born, the Lord made a covenant of blood with Abraham that the land of Canaan would be given to Abraham's seed from Isaac, and that, through Isaac, Abraham's seed would be called according to God's Word:

... for in Isaac shall thy seed be called (Gen. 21:12).

The story of that blood covenant is written in Genesis 15:1-21:

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." And Abram said, "Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." And he brought him forth abroad, and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them:" and he said unto him, "So shall thy seed be." And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, "I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it" And he said, "Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" And he said unto him, "Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shall go to thy fathers in peace; thou shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the

Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perrizites, and the the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

During that great vision, God told Abraham that his seed would be strangers in a land that does not belong to them, and that they would be afflicted for four hundred years. What God said, He fulfilled, the seed of Abraham from Isaac spent four hundred years in Egypt before Moses got them out, and a nation was born.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Foretold Dispersion

Israel is God's miracle nation because of its dispersion.

Israel's dispersion was prophesied long before Israel became a nation and before the people of Israel entered the land. God spoke to Israel through Moses saying:

And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste (Leviticus 26:33).

And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone (Deuteronomy 28:64).

How extraordinary! God tells us about Israel's dispersion even before it became a nation.

After Israel became a nation, Ezekiel wrote:

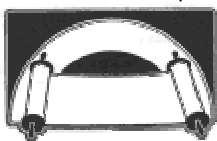
And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations and disperse them in the countries (Ezekiel 12:15).

And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee (Ezekiel 22:15).

God kept His word and the Jews went into dispersion twice. The last dispersion was in 70 AD by the Romans.

The Jews never forgot Jerusalem while they were in Babylon during their first dispersion. They sang the words of the following psalm:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If



I do not remember thee, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy (Psalm 137:1-6).

After their second dispersion by the Romans, until they returned to their land in 1948, they were always confident that one day they would return to their land. Every year at the celebration of Passover, they greeted each other with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem."

The Jews never forgot Jerusalem, it was always dear to their hearts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Israel's Miraculous Preservation

Israel is God's miracle nation because of its miraculous preservation.

The nation of Israel is indestructible. Even though its people were dispersed to the four corners of the earth, God has not permitted any power to exterminate them entirely. Throughout history, several attempts to destroy Israel and to annihilate the Jews ended in utter failure, defeat, and humiliation.

The first attempt was during their 400 years sojourn as strangers in the land of ancient Egypt:

And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, "When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live (Exodus 1:7-16).

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive" (Exodus 1:21,22).

It is of great interest to notice that the nation which ordered to cast every Hebrew male child into the river had its own army thrown into the Red Sea when Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt.

The second attempt is recorded in the book of Esther during the reign of King Ahasuerus. Haman decided to do away with them but instead he was hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai the Jew (see Esther 7:10).

More recently, during the second World War, Hitler attempted to annihilate the Jews and he declared to the world that he would resolve what he called the "Jewish problem." He murdered six million Jews in concentration camps. He ended the war with total defeat to his nation. Germany was divided and he committed suicide. On the other hand, and almost at the same time, Israel was reborn, and God's people were preserved.

Almost twenty years later in 1967, Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Egypt's president, along with the Syrians and Jordanians, mustered a strong Arab army for the sole purpose of throwing Israel into the sea. The outcome once again was humiliating defeat for the Arabs and a return of all of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel.

The preservation of Israel - through all of its sufferings, wars, and afflictions over the centuries - is further evidence that Israel is God's miracle nation.

CHAPTER SIX

Israel's First Restoration

Israel is God's miracle nation because of its first restoration.

God promised to restore Israel to its land:

Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock" (Jeremiah 31:10).

Therefore say, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Therefore say Thus saith the Lord GOD; "I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 11:16,17).

God calls the land of Israel, "My land" (Ezekiel 38:16), and He gave it to Israel by a blood covenant that cannot be changed.

The land of Israel has been assigned by God to the children of Israel. God never cancelled what He assigned.

There are two restorations described in the Bible: The first occurred after the 70 years of exile, during the time of Cyrus, king of Persia, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. In this restoration, only 42,360 Israelites returned to their homeland (Ezra 2:64).

That first restoration was to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, so that the prophecies concerning His birth in Bethlehem Ephrathah, and His crucifixion at Calvary in Jerusalem, would be fulfilled. The prophet Micah wrote:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratha, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).
The sovereign God moved Caesar Augustus to issue a decree for the entire Roman world so that the prophecy concerning the birthplace of Jesus Christ be fulfilled. During that period Rome governed the land of Israel.

Luke wrote:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria). And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:1-7 NIV).

The child who was born of the Virgin Mary was Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Jerusalem, Israel, was the place where Jesus Christ crucifixion took place:

Daniel prophesied concerning the death of Christ in Jerusalem, which he called the "Holy City." Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined (Daniel 9:24-26).



Then we read in the Gospel of Luke:

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. And they will scourge Him and put Him to death. And the third day He will rise again" (Luke 18:31-33 NKJ).
Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies written about him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Israel's Final Restoration

Israel is God's miracle nation because of its final restoration

The first restoration was to fulfill the prophecies concerning the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The second and final restoration took place in 1948. It took two world wars to convince the Jews to return to their land. At the end of the first World War, on November 2, 1917, a statement by A. J. Balfour declared that Britain would support the establishment of a national home for Jews in Palestine. This statement is known as the "Balfour Declaration." Palestine was ready for the return of the Jews. But they did not want to go back to their homeland at that time, they were living comfortably in many countries.

Then in 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany and wanted to resolve what he called the "Jewish problem" by exterminating the Jewish race. He killed six million Jews in what is known as the "Holocaust."

After the second World War and the mass killing of Jews by the Nazi regime, the Jewish people knew that they should return to their homeland. What Hitler did during World War II moved the Jews to return to their land, thus the prophetic word was fulfilled to the letter.

And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, "We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone." "As I live," saith the Lord God, "surely with a mighty hand, and with stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out" (Ezekiel 20: 32-34).

It is no coincidence that out of the Holocaust was born the nation of Israel. This second and final restoration was mentioned in the book of Isaiah:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:11,12).

It is of great interest to notice that Isaiah predicted that the people of Israel would return to their homeland by airplanes, hundreds of years before the invention of airplanes.

Who are these that fly along like the clouds, like doves to their nests? (Isaiah 60:8 NIV).

He also predicted that they would return by ships.

Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee (Isaiah 60:9). Isaiah foresaw that the second restoration of Israel would be in the days of air transportation. This is to be Israel's final restoration. There is no third restoration mentioned anywhere in the Bible.

Physical Israel will never again be rooted out of its land, according to God's promise:

And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God (Amos 9:14,15).

This final restoration of the Jews to their homeland is a demonstration of the truthfulness of the Bible and the faithfulness of God.

Someone might argue that the restoration of the Jews to their land is not divine restoration but that it is the work of political Zionism. It was Theodore Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, and the first Zionists who brought back the Jewish people to their homeland. God always uses men to fulfill his sovereign plan and purposes. He chose Herzl and Ben-Gurion to bring Israel to their land just as He chose Moses to get them out of the land of Egypt.

Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10 NKJ).

After the first dispersion, God used a gentile man, Cyrus King of Persia, to bring back the Israelites to their land.

Now in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin and the priests, and the Levites with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is . in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-5).

In modern days, God is still using Zionism to fulfill His word. If God used men of flesh and blood like Samson and Gideon, why should we think it strange to use men like Herzl, Weizmann, Ben- Gurion, Begin, and Dayan to demonstrate His eternal faithfulness and to fulfill His promises to the patriarchs and to the prophets?

This final restoration is to accomplish two things:

First: To prepare the stage for the battle of Armageddon.



In the book of Revelation we read:

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16).

Armageddon is in the land of Israel. Second: So that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, might come to end that terrible battle, and his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

A day of the Lord is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. . . (Zechariah 14:1-3 NIV).

We have to keep in mind that the second coming of Jesus, the Messiah, will not take place in London, or Athens, or Paris, or Washington, DC. But His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Israel.

Some years ago I was coming from London, England, to Washington, DC. On the plane a man was sitting on the seat next to me. I introduced myself to him as a Baptist preacher. In the course of the conversation, he told me that he was a Cambridge graduate. He also said in a challenging voice, "I am an atheist."

"Atheist?" I exclaimed.

"Yes" He answered. "Prove to me that there is a God," he demanded.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands," I said.

"Besides who gave us a conscience? Why do we feel guilty when we do wrong? Look at your eye, the iris, cornea, conjunctiva, sclera, pupil, optic nerve, retina, lens; are all these the creation of chance?"

"It could be," he answered quietly.

"Chance is nothing sir, and nothing can only create nothing," I said. Then I prayed in my heart for a proof that he could not refute. The Lord gave it to me. "Sir," I said ... "I am Egyptian. I

immigrated to the United States with all my family ... I have grandchildren who were born in America. Do you think that those grandchildren will form a nation and go back to Egypt after two hundred years?"

"I doubt very much that they will do that," he answered.

"Now, what do you think about the Jews, who were dispersed to the four corners of the earth for almost 2500 years and who are now in the land of Israel? And what do you think about an old book which predicted their return to their land thousands of years before their restoration? Who wrote that book? Who inspired it? How can you explain the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning their return written in that book?"

"Well, I have no explanation," he said.

"The only logical explanation is that there is a God who knows the end from the beginning, who inspired His prophets to write those prophecies, who is sovereign over history," I said.

The man grew silent. The survival of the Jews, and their restoration to their land is a vivid demonstration of the faithfulness of God, and the truthfulness of the Bible.

The author Mark Twain wrote in 1899:

If the statistics are correct, the Jews represent merely one percent of humanity - an irrelevant spark in the light of the Milky Way. Normally speaking, the Jews should hardly be heard of, and yet we heard and hear of them again and again. They can rival any people on earth in fame, and their significance in economy and trade are in no ratio to their population. Their contribution to the list of great names in literature, natural science, art, music, finance, medicine and profound learning is just as amazing. They have done extremely well in this world - with their hands tied behind their backs. They could rightly be proud of themselves. The Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians came into power, filled the earth with their glory, but perished. The Greeks and Romans followed, "made a lot of noise," and then disappeared. Other nations rose up, their torches burned for a while, and then they were extinguished, and today they sit in the twilight or have completely disappeared. The Jews saw it all. They beat them all, and are today what they always were, showing no decay, no aging, no weakening, no decline of energy, no blunting of their wide-awake dynamic spirit. Everything is mortal except the Jew. All other powers perish but he remains. What is the mystery of his immortality?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Israel and God's Plan of Redemption

Israel is God's miracle nation because, through Israel, God fulfilled His plan of redemption.

The plan of redemption was designed by the Triune God before the foundation of the world.

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:18-20 NKJ).

That lamb without blemish or defect, who was foreordained before the foundation of the world, is the Jewish Messiah, the son of David according to the flesh. John the Baptist, pointing to him, said:

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The Messiah was called the Lamb of God, because He was the Lamb prepared and chosen by God to take away the sin of the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the Samaritan woman:

You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22 NIV).

All the prophecies concerning the coming Savior, the Messiah, were given to the Jewish prophets. In fact, prophethood is strictly confined to the Jews. Any prophet who comes outside of the Jews is absolutely rejected.

The apostle Paul wrote concerning the Jews:

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:1,2).

Again, he wrote about all the privileges given to them:

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth 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 as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Romans 9:4,5).

Jesus' birth took place in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah. The Messiah was crucified at a place called Golgotha (which means the Place of the Skull) outside Jerusalem.

It is of great interest to notice that the Messiah was crucified at a place called the "skull". A skull is a symbol of death, and by His death the Messiah conquered death. On the cross the Messiah completed the plan of God for redemption and cried out "it is finished" (John 19:30).

The prophet Isaiah wrote about the sufferings, the death, and the burial of the Messiah:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:3-12).

All the prophecies in that chapter were fulfilled to the letter in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER NINE

Events in the Land of Israel before and during the great Tribulation

Israel is God's miracle nation because of the events which will take place in its land before and during the great Tribulation.

While we recognize that the Bible speaks of a spiritual Israel, it supports the reality of a physical Israel which is comprised of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

The Bible foretold several end time events, all to take place in the restored land of Israel.

A prophecy which must take place in the end times is recorded by Asaph in Psalm 83:

Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* (Italics are mine)

For they have consulted together with one consent:

they are confederate against thee:

The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth.

Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. (Italics are mine).

O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.

Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

In this ancient prophecy we read about the Islamic nations around Israel. We read about their decision: "*Let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance*" (verse 4).

We read about their desire: "*Who said, let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession*" (verse 12). (The A1-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock are on the very place where the Temple used to stand).

Finally, we read about their destruction: "*O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind*" (verse 13).

For the reader to understand fully this prophecy, he or she should read Judges 7:25 and 8:12,21.

Another prophecy uttered by Ezekiel must take place in the land of Israel.

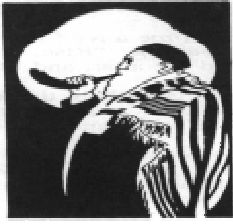
Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, "and say, `Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.

"I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.

"Persia, Ethiopia [Cush], and Libya are with them, all of them with shields and helmet;

"Gomer and its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops - many people are with you.

"Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them.



"After many days you will be visited. In the latter years (*italics are mine*) you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. "You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you."

`Thus says the Lord God: "On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan:

"You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates' -

"to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.

"Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?'

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord God; "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? "Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. "You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes." `Thus says the Lord God: "Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?

"And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord God, "that My fury will show in My face. "For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.

`so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.' "I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains " says the Lord God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. "And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. "Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord" ' (Ezekiel 38 NKJ).

It is amazing that in his prophecy Ezekiel, who lived almost 2,600 years ago, mentions the Islamic countries which will be allied with Gog to invade Israel.

Ezekiel mentions Persia (Iran), Cush (the black race of Ethiopia, Africa, including Eastern Sudan), Put (Libya), Gomer (Ukraine province, former Western U.S.S.R.) Beth-togarmah (Southwestern U.S.S.R. and Eastern Turkey) and many other nations with them. Ezekiel also mentions that this great battle will take place "after many days, in the latter years"(verse 8). Then he said, "in the latter days" (verse 16).

The armies mentioned in this prophecy will be defeated by God's intervention in the physical land of Israel.

It is not our intention to identify who Gog is in this treatise, but this battle might be identified with Armageddon where the kings of the earth and their armies will join the coming world dictator (the beast coming out of the sea - Revelation 13:1) and gather to make war against the coming Messiah and His army. This all takes place on the physical land of Israel (Zechariah 14:1-4, Revelation 16:13- 16 and 19:19, 20).

We have to keep in mind that more than half of the Scriptures are prophecies. If we do not study prophecy, then we are ignorant of more than fifty percent of the Bible.

The final event which will take place in Jerusalem is mentioned in the book of Revelation in the following words:

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not: for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:1-8).

We have to remember that during the fulfilment of this prophecy the Jewish temple will be rebuilt and will stand in Jerusalem. No one will destroy it again.

All the above mentioned events will take place, each in its time, in the land of Israel.

CHAPTER TEN

Israel's Coming Salvation

Israel is God's miracle nation because of its coming salvation.

Zechariah prophesied concerning the final salvation of Israel:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son (Zechariah 12:10 NIV).

On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity (Zechariah 13:1 NIV).

In the book of Romans, Paul explains to us the role of Israel in God's plan of salvation:

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people whom he foreknew (Romans 11:1, 2 NIV).

He tells us that the unbelief of Israel is partial and for a season:

Again I ask, Did they stumble so as to fail beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! (Romans 11:11,12 NIV).

Then he continued:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable (Romans 11:25-29 NIV).

This is the time of Jesus Christ's second coming, when the Israelites will look at him and recognize that He is the One whom they have pierced. At that time, all Israel shall be saved.

We must realize that these words simply cannot be applied to a "spiritual" Israel. They can only be applied to physical Israel.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Israel's Future Exaltation

Israel is God's miracle nation because of its future exaltation.

Jerusalem is now a source of trouble to the peoples all around it.

This, too, was prophesied by prophet Zechariah:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it (Zechariah 12:2,3 NKJ).

Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you. Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion. Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations - their kings led in triumphal procession. For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined. The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet. The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the Lord; in its time I will do this swiftly (Isaiah 60:10-13,22 NIV)

That, of course, will take place at the end times. But future Jerusalem will be the center of blessings for the nations during the Millennium reign of the Messiah.

The prophet Isaiah says:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:2-4 NKJ).

What a glorious future!!

CHAPTER TWELVE

The name "Jerusalem" is found as early as the 14th century BCE in Egyptian documents known as the Tel El Amarna letters. Jerusalem is also mentioned in this same time period, known as the Canaanite period, in the story of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem) in Genesis 14:18.

- In the year 1000 BCE King David conquered the Jebusites, who were the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and brought the Ark of the Covenant from Kiryat-Ye'arim to Jebus (Jerusalem). This is when Jerusalem acquired national status as the capital of the Jewish people and religious status as its holy city.
- In 960 BCE King Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah - the Temple Mount - traditionally considered the site of the sacrifice of Isaac.
- In 560 BCE Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Jerusalem. Its inhabitants were exiled to Babylon, its temple was destroyed.
- In 538 BCE King Cyrus of Persia permitted the exiles to return to Jerusalem. The people were led by two great men Ezra and Nehemiah. During this time the second temple and the walls of Jerusalem were built.
- In 333 BCE Alexander the Great vanquished the Persian Empire. After his death his empire was split and Jerusalem and the rest of the country came under the rule of Ptolemaic Egypt. It was later passed to the Seleucid Syrians. Hellenistic culture grew dominant under the Seleucids.
- In 63 BCE a rift between Alexander Janneus' successors enabled Pompey, commander of the Roman forces in the east; to seize the country.
- In 37 BCE unbridled ambition and high-level intrigue brought to power Herod Antipater, under Roman patronage. During King Herod's reign Jerusalem grew northward. Monumental building took place including the expansive and magnificent Temple Mount.
- In 70 AD, because of the Zealots' revolt against the Romans, the Romans under the command of Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. The Jews were exiled.
- In 135 AD the Emperor Hadrian declared a new city on the site of Jerusalem, called "Colonia Aelia Capitolina." A temple of Aphrodite, goddess of beauty and love, was built on the temple mount. This took place after the Bar Kochba revolt.
- In 324 AD Constantine became the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Shortly after his victory he declared Christianity the Empire's official religion. These developments had a significant impact on Jerusalem. Churches were built on sites identified as sacred to Christianity. Monks and clerics made Jerusalem their home; it became the mainstay of Christian learning. For contemporary Christians Jerusalem was above all else the actual site of the great events of the Scriptures.
- In 614 AD the country fell to the Persians. Thousands of its inhabitants were massacred during that conquest, many churches were destroyed, a famous cross was looted.
- In 629 AD the Emperor Heraclius restored Byzantine rule and returned the cross to its place.
- In 638 AD Jerusalem surrendered to the forces of Arab Muslims. This Arab conquest was bloodless and tradition has it that the Patriarch Sophronios surrendered the city to Omar. During the first century of Islamic rule in Jerusalem, the Omayyad Dynasty ruled the country. Caliph Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan built the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount claiming that it was the place where the prophet Muhammad came for his night voyage to ascend to heaven. Jerusalem was recognized as the third holiest city in Islam, after Mecca and Medina, and as a destination for pilgrimage.
- In 1099 Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders who massacred the city's Muslims and Jews. After 460 years of Muslim rule the Crusaders restored Jerusalem. This conquest was a black spot in Christian history. It took place because the Christians at that time did not

know that Jerusalem did not belong to them according to the Scriptures, but to the Jews, and the time of its restoration to the Jews had not yet come.

- In 1187 AD Jerusalem fell to Salah-al-Din A1-Ayyuby, Sultan of Egypt and Syria, putting an end to the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem. The great golden cross that rose above the Dome of the Rock was toppled and shattered, to be replaced by the crescent, the symbol of Islam. Following Salah-al-Din's victory Jews returned to Jerusalem and were joined by immigrants from the Maghreb, France, and Yemen. We have to say that throughout these years we do not find any claim by the Palestinians that Jerusalem is their capital, or even that Palestine is their land.
- In 1260 AD the Mameluke rulers of Egypt controlled the area. During that time Jerusalem became politically insignificant.
- In 1517 AD the Ottoman forces drove away the Mameluk forces from Palestine and the country was ruled by the Ottoman empire that was to dominate the entire Near East for the next 400 years.
- In 1917 as World War I neared its end and the Ottoman Empire was being defeated, the Ottomans surrendered Jerusalem to the British forces. General Allenby entered the Jaffa Gate, on foot, at the head of a victory procession. That marked the end of four centuries of Ottoman-Turk rule, and the beginning of 30 years of British rule.
- In 1920 the British Mandate Civil Administration took over from the military. For the first time since Crusader days Jerusalem was again the capital of the whole country.
- In 1948 the state of Israel was officially recognized by the United Nations as an independent state. At that time the battle began for the status of Jewish Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Arab-Jewish struggle for control of the city became a terrible war. The battle over Jerusalem became violent as the Jordanian and the Egyptian troops entered the city.
- In 1949 the Arab-Jewish war over Jerusalem came to a halt, with Jerusalem divided.
- In 1967 after Israel defeated Egypt, Jordan and Syria in the Six Day War, Jerusalem was reunited. The Jewish government proclaimed that Jerusalem was Israel's undivided eternal capital.

What does the future hold for Jerusalem? The Word of God indicates very clearly that it is in Jerusalem that the throne of the Messiah will be established. God says that He will give to the Messiah the throne of David, His father in the flesh. We should remember that this throne was never in heaven; it was in Jerusalem.

When the angel Gabriel announced the miraculous birth of the Messiah to the Virgin Mary, he said to her:

...Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!
...Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:28, 30-33 NKJ).

In the book of Revelation we read the Messiah's promise to the overcomers:

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21 NKJ).

The Messiah is now seated with His Father on His Father's throne in heaven (Hebrews 10:12). When the Messiah comes again, He will sit on His own throne, the throne of His father David in Jerusalem, and there the overcomers will sit with Him.

There are many precious promises given directly to the physical nation of Israel. We have to remember that the most reassuring evidence of the Messiah's return is the presence today of physical Israel in its promised land. This is the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord Jehovah to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets.

