

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL GOD'S UNBREAKABLE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM: JERUSALEM THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

JERUSALEM: A LESSON IN GOD'S KINGSHIP: When you are chosen by God there is no limit to what all He can do with you! When God picked Jerusalem it was unknown and would have ended up like any other of the vanished cities whose ruins dot the globe. But no, He said I put My name here forever! And what has happened? JERUSALEM has become:

- The NERVE center of the world GEOGRAPHICALLY Ezekiel 5:5 *"Thus says the Lord God: 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. The New King James Version*
- The SALVATION center of the world SPIRITUALLY John 4:22 *You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. The New King James Version*
- The STORM center of the world PROPHEMICALLY Zechariah 14:1-8 *Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. 5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, And all the saints with You. 6 It shall come to pass in that day That there will be no light; The lights will diminish. 7 It shall be*

one day Which is known to the Lord Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen That it will be light. 8 And in that day it shall be— That living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern se And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur. New King James Version

- The GLORY center of the world ULTIMATELY ISAIAH 2:1-5 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 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. 3 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. 4 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. 5 O house of Jacob, come and let us walk In the light of the Lord.* THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION

Four thousand and one hundred years ago, yes 41 centuries ago God made a promise called a covenant with a man we know named Abraham. God did not only speak this promise, it was dramatically displayed by a ceremony called "cutting a covenant". In the style we know was known to Abraham from his culture God took the slaying, dividing and laying out of sacrificial animals on the ground as a setting for His Promise made to Himself and for Abraham that could never be broken. We call this Promise the Abrahamic Covenant.

In Genesis 12:1–3 God declares that His primary focus will be on His promises to Abraham. Genesis is written in the first 11 chapters with all the world in focus, but starting in Genesis 12 God turns His attention toward one small nation, Israel, through whom He promised to progressively accomplish His redemptive plan. God planned for Israel's mission to be "a light to the Gentiles" (Is. 42:6). In Genesis 12 God promised three elements:
a land, multiplied descendants (seed), and His Special Blessing.

This 3-fold promise became, in turn, the basis of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:1–20). All the rest of Scripture bears out the fulfillment of these promises.

God has planned¹ the centrality of Israel, not only in the ancient past, but in modern history — now. The modern state of Israel did not just happen; it is not an accident of history; it is the result of the creative power of the

¹ Drawn from, adapted, and quoted from Tom Mc Call, Levitt Letter articles August to November 1995.

Almighty. Just as in ancient times, when the Lord used human agencies and nations such as Egypt, Babylonia, Persia and Rome to accomplish His will concerning Israel, so He has done in our time. During the last couple of lifetimes, He has used Zionism, Britain, the U.S., Europe and the United Nations to bring about a revived Israel. And just as Satan used Pharaoh, Nebucadnezzar and Titus to attempt to thwart God's ancient plan for Israel, so he has been occupied in using Hitler, Brezhnev, Nasser and Arafat to try to disrupt the modern divine plan for Israel.

Israel as the Center of Divine History in the distant and recent past, prepares the way for Israel as the Center of Divine Prophecy in the future. We who love Christ the Messiah and believe His Word should be fully aware of the significance of these developments. It should spur us on all the more to proclaim the blessings of His Gospel to a lost world, as the days draw close to His return. Because of their sin and unbelief God judged and dispersed His people Israel. The Diaspora, however, is coming to a close. In our time, even during the Church Age, the restoration of Israel is beginning to happen before our very eyes. It is something the world never expected or even dreamed would happen. The Church, even though it has possessed the Bible for all these centuries, has done much to suppress the oft-repeated biblical concept that Israel has a future in the plan and purpose of God. It's almost as though the Church has been jealous of Israel, and afraid that if it recognized Israel's future promises, it would somehow demean Christ and the Church. Nothing could be further from the truth.

THE DISTINCT DESTINIES OF THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL

It is when the Church recognizes Israel that the true distinctiveness and glory of the Body of Christ become evident. This called-out Body, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles during the Church Age, is the highest entity the Lord has created, superior to the universe, all the angels, the nations, and Israel. Our Head, our Husband, our Friend, is the Son of God Himself. We shall reign with Him when He rules the earth, and our 12 Founding Apostles will rule over the 12 tribes of Israel. The angels themselves will study us forever as the greatest exhibit of God's grace, and we will actually judge the angels. This is our destiny and I, for one, would not trade my position in the Body of Christ with any creature in the universe! Why, then, be disturbed over what God has promised the Jewish people? Why be jealous over the future destiny of Israel? How shortsighted of us! Indeed, the Church's finest and most distinctive hour will be when Israel is restored nationally and spiritually to the Lord at the Second Coming of Christ. We will return from Heaven with Him as His glorious Bride to rule Israel and the world. What more could we ask?

So if we are not to suffer from spiritual myopia, we must recognize what the Lord is doing with Israel, not shrinking from it as though our own interests will be overshadowed. Rather, we rejoice in these developments, with full assurance that our own redemption draws ever closer. What, then, are we to expect in the future?

THE FUTURE DIVINE SCHEDULE

The modern miracle of the restoration of Israel, although mostly in unbelief, is but the prelude of even more climactic developments. A brief outline of the events the Lord has revealed in the Bible is as follows:

- Christ's coming for His true Church, our Blessed Hope – I Thessalonians 4
- The War of Gog and Magog – Ezekiel 37-38
- Antichrist's Contract with Israel (The Tribulation) - Daniel 9
- The Abomination of Desolation - Matthew 24
- The War of Armageddon - Revelation 16
- The Salvation of Israel & Judgment of the Nations - Matthew 25
- The Millennial Reign of Christ - Revelation 20
- The Great White Throne Judgment - Revelation 20
- The New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem - Revelation 20

Suffice it to say that we are eagerly looking forward to the imminent return of Christ, described in I Thess. 4:16-18 and elsewhere. He could come at any moment and fulfill the Feast of Trumpets, in which He will call the believing Church to be with Him and give us (both the living and already-dead Church saints) our glorified bodies. What a great day that will be!

Nevertheless, the world will continue on without the believing Church inexorably toward its time of judgment and the wrath of God. The first event on this timetable of judgment appears to be the war described in Ezekiel 38-39, known as Gog and Magog. As we have seen earlier, the world is moving ever closer to the alignments there described. The scenario of the nation to the extreme north joining with Persia, Ethiopia and Libya, seems quite plausible with the Russo-Islamic alliance that is currently shaping up against Israel. It is well within the realm of reality that what Ezekiel described over 2,500 years ago could be mobilized quickly in today's world, and set the stage for the Antichrist and the Tribulation.

THE JEWS SURVIVE THE SATANIC NAZI HOLOCAUST AND CREATE ISRAEL

By 1947, we believe God had organized the restoration of the Jewish nation through Zionism, and its allies in Dispensational Christianity and the British Mandate of Palestine. In full and desperate opposition, Satan attempted to

thwart the divine plan of the restoration of Israel. He used the enormous disruptions of World War II, and the Nazi Holocaust, which singled out the Jewish people as greatest enemy, destined for total extermination. However, the Chosen People miraculously survived all of this, were streaming into British Palestine by the thousands from Europe, and had come to the dramatic moment of declaring their independence before the world. Once again Israel would become a living nation among the family of nations after a Diaspora of nineteen centuries.

ARABIC ISLAM IS THE NEW SATANIC ENEMY OF REVIVED ISRAEL

The infant nation's immediate attention first had to be given to the Arab neighbors, and Arabic Islam became the next tool in the hands of Satan to keep Israel from prospering, now that it had survived the Holocaust to become a nation. The Arab nations did not recognize or accept the U.N. partitioning of Palestine into Jewish and Arab sections. As soon as Israel declared independence, the surrounding Arab neighbors declared war on Israel, and in the first months of its existence the Jewish people had to defend themselves with the meager weapons they had against an onslaught of the combined armies arrayed against them.

The primary motivation behind the Arab objection to the fledgling Israel was religious. This was not just a political matter, it was, in fact, a "holy war" or "jihad." The Jewish state was an offense to the sanctity of the holy sites in Jerusalem and throughout the land, according to their viewpoint. The only way this could be rectified was by forcibly removing the Jews from the land and pushing them out into the Mediterranean Sea. This was the battle cry in the Arab nations, and a recurring theme for over forty years of discord.

The fanatical Muslims could not tolerate the idea of an official Jewish presence in Palestine, especially in Jerusalem. Islam considers the Temple Mount with its famous Dome of the Rock and Al Aksa Mosque as one of the most sacred holy sites in the world, ranking behind only the central sites of Mecca and Medina.

ISLAM ATTACKS ISRAEL & THE GOSPEL

The Arabs are the physical descendants of Ishmael, the first son of Abraham, and the vast majority of Arabs have adopted Islam as their official religion and have spread their religion to much of the world's population throughout the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Islam expresses tolerance for Judaism and Christianity, but essentially it attempts to refute the cardinal doctrines of both. It transfers to Ishmael the blessings that came through Isaac and Jacob, and disputes the deity and redemptive work of Christ.

While the Muslims have generally neglected the development of Palestine throughout the centuries, with the exception of a few cities, they have jealously guarded their rights over the land from the time of the Crusades. It was one thing to dislodge the European Crusaders from the land, but the Moslems have discovered it is entirely another matter to dislodge the Jewish people who consider Israel as their religious and ancestral homeland.

To understand the hostility between these descendants of the patriarchal brothers, Isaac and Ishmael, it is necessary for the Jewish and Christian readers to understand something about the nature and history of Islam from our perspective. In some ways, the development of the religion of Islam in the seventh century was one of the great master strokes of Satan in the world. Before Islam, the vast Arab population, and much of Africa and Asia, was essentially neutral toward passive Judaism and evangelistic Christianity, although these areas had some bias toward various forms of polytheism. But with the religion of Mohammed came a conscious rejection of and negative attitude toward the unvarnished truths of the Old and New Testaments.

While giving lip service to the various biblical prophets, including Moses and Jesus, and claiming vehemently to be a religion of pure monotheism, Islam challenged most of the history and doctrine of the Scriptures. The Koran deliberately removes Israel from its historical and theological position as the Chosen Nation, and replaces it with the Arab peoples, the descendants of Ishmael. One of the major annual feasts of Islam, called ISHMAEL, demonstrates this. They actually twist the Scriptures and celebrate this feast as a commemoration of the willingness of Abraham to offer Ishmael (not Isaac). Thus, according to Islam, Ishmael (and the Arabs) displaces Isaac (and the Jews) as the Promised Seed. From that point on, Islam continues to denigrate the position of Israel, its historical possession of the Promised Land, the glory of the worship in the Jerusalem Temple, and the Messianic destiny of the Davidic dynasty.

At the same time, Islam undercuts the truths of the Gospel. The Koran considers Jesus to be a prophet, but denies the deity of Christ. Furthermore, it rejects the substitutionary atonement of the death of the Lord, as well as the validity of His resurrection. On the contrary, the Koran invents the theory that Jesus did not actually die on the Cross, but rather only "swooned," or fell unconscious, and then later recovered and pretended to have risen from the dead.

ISRAEL, CHRISTIANITY & ISLAM COMPETE OVER JERUSALEM

Islam thus attempts to undermine most of the essentials of the Scriptures, and, when it became widely accepted through proclamation and conquest,

the religion of Mohammed became a major problem for biblically based Judaism and Christianity. This difficulty was exacerbated when Islam occupied Jerusalem and made it one of its main holy places. Now there were three religions competing over the territorial rights to Jerusalem. Throughout fourteen hundred years, this has resulted in the Moslems wresting Jerusalem from the Byzantine Christians, the short Crusade period of European domination of Jerusalem for about 100 years, and the twentieth century phenomenon of the return of the Jewish people to the Land. Most of this time, Islam (in one form or another) has been in control of Jerusalem. Until recently, the Arabs have persuaded themselves that the Jews were no more permanent in Jerusalem than the European Crusaders. Some aspects of the current peace movement indicate that Moslem leaders, however reluctantly, may be coming to the conclusion that they will have to come to terms with a permanent State of Israel, at least for the time being.

SOVIET COMMUNISM, ULTIMATE ENEMY OF ISRAEL DURING COLD WAR

For over a hundred years God has been laying the groundwork for the restoration of Israel in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ, and Satan has been fighting that restoration every step of the way. It is an amazing thing that at the same time God was organizing the early stages of the restoration of Israel in the first quarter of this century, Satan was organizing a counter movement to try to stop the restoration and, once Israel was a nation again, to destroy it. The Lord did His work of restoration through Zionism, the British mandate over Palestine, the Balfour Declaration, and Dispensational Christianity. Satan, on the other hand, worked through the Nazi German Holocaust, Arab Moslem hostility and Soviet (and international) Communism to thwart God's restoration plan for Israel.

EARLY SOVIET SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

Remarkably, when the crucial votes were being taken in the fledgling United Nations, the Soviet Union joined with the Allies in supporting the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab sections. Many of the leaders of the new independent state of Israel had come out of Russia and Eastern Europe, and had a socialist political/economic view. The kibbutz agricultural communities appeared to many Marxists as an ideal socialist building block for society. Thus the Soviet leaders initially found many areas of compatibility with the young Israel. This friendship did not last very long, however. As Israel developed, it became strongly attached to the West, politically, economically and militarily.

THE STRANGE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND THE MOSLEMS

By the time of the Israeli-Arab conflict in 1956, the Soviet Union had become solidly aligned with Egypt and the other Arab nations. It is not difficult to explain how Communism was opposed to Christianity, but how is it that the atheistic Communists could cooperate so fully with the monotheistic Moslems, and vice versa? They would appear to be so antithetical that it would be impossible for them to work together.

The one thing that brought these two outwardly opposite geo-political groups together was their mutual antipathy to Israel. Millions of Jews live in Russia, and many of them wanted to emigrate to Israel. The Soviet government turned down their applications, and thousands of Jews came to be known as "refuseniks," because of the denials they were issued. Russia became the new Egypt, and the international cry arose once again, "Let My people go!" Tensions between Russia and Israel multiplied.

Soviet/Arab warfare against Israel reached its height in the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The parallels between this war and the early stages of the conflict prophesied in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are remarkable, and they may have been a prelude of things to come. We will also explore how, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, these great prophecies might be fulfilled by the power to the extreme north.

THE FOUR WARS

Therefore, in order to view modern world events in a biblical perspective, we have to take off the glasses provided to us by secular journalists and historians, and put on our biblical glasses that see the movements of the nations from the microscopic vantage point of Israel. Modern Israel has fought four major wars during the last fifty years, and each one has played an important role in setting the stage for the prophesied events of the Tribulation:

1. 1947-48 War of Independence: restoration of Israel
2. 1956 Suez Canal: assertion of national sovereignty
3. 1967 Six-Day War: recapture of the Temple Mount
4. 1973 Yom Kippur War: solidified West Bank occupation

Through all these wars, which were relatively minor in comparison with the World Wars but major for Israel's survival, the Satanic strategy was to destroy Israel through the Arab armies, mostly armed by the Soviet Bloc. But God protected His Chosen Nation through the sacrificial dedication of the Jewish people, and the support of the United States and a handful of other nations. If we do not recognize this titanic supernatural background behind the observable struggle, we are not looking at recent history from a biblical viewpoint. The four wars each played a significant role in the great struggle between the Lord and Satan over the preservation of Israel.