

God's Purposes For Israel, The Church & The Nations

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INTRODUCTION

“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’”

- Jeremiah 31:10

These are anxious times we live in. Rapidly shifting political winds, social revolutions, technology advances, regional conflicts and violent terrorism are causing a permanent global sea change.

Countries on the brink of financial ruin threaten political unions and economic stability. Add to this the increased ‘natural’ disasters recorded, the unprecedented rise of religious extremism, ecological fears of our planet’s future and the deadly epidemics of the last decade. The picture is grim and there seems just cause for uncertainty about where our shared world is headed.

Concurrent with all this is a work of God that whilst public, its significance is overlooked. In the secular world it is resisted through either ignorance, misinformation or plain apathy.

Sadly, even sincere Bible-believing Christians, major denominations and church leaders have failed to grasp its significance. Their ignorance and in numerous cases, prejudice and active opposition, has meant a total blindness to a major prophetic event being fulfilled in our generation.

Above all other contemporary signs flashing in our world at present, it is surely the nation of Israel and the events and issues that assault the Jewish state which demand our attention.

With the facts at hand and the words of Scripture on what is unfolding in the Middle East today and in particular Israel, you will see beyond mere headlines.

You will discern a prophetic and miraculous work of God in our times. It is these events that will ultimately eclipse all others in their significance and eventual outcome for our world’s future.

Hyperbole? No, not at all, as we will go on to explore through these momentous series of events.

SOME BACKGROUND

Let me take you back 20 years...

Back in the early 1990's I was not a Christian and had no interest in spiritual matters. I did find myself, however, drawn to study the Middle East and in particular, the State of Israel.

In reading literature, history and commentary on the Jewish people, the Arabs and the flow of history over centuries in the Holy Land, persistent questions demanded answers.

For example: Why and how have the Jewish people persevered over four millennia, against all odds, against unprecedented persecution, to not only survive but to return and re-establish their ancient homeland? And this in an utterly hostile muslim region?

A nation that thrives and contributes, speaking an ancient but revived Hebrew language, a beacon of hope and democracy in a highly contrasted neighbourhood. Having been forced to fight a number of defensive wars against larger armies with greater resources yet came through as victor. And this against all the predicted odds.

That resilience to “survive and prosper despite...” drew me into a personal quest to find out more. I had to know, wherever the path led me.

The great American author and travel writer **Mark Twain** contemplated the enigma of Jewish persistence in history. He remarked, in a short essay entitled ‘**Concerning The Jews**’:

“The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then . . . passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts. ... All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”

Twain, like me, others and perhaps you, have pondered the very same question. For my part, I wanted to come to a satisfying answer that gave a reasonable explanation to the Jewish “immortality”, as Twain put it.

Therefore, to get to heart of Jewish history, I began to study the Bible.

The Bible, written over many centuries is the prime source for understanding the Jewish narrative and perhaps could provide the key for answering the many unanswered questions I had.

Over a period of a year, I researched Israel's past in the Old Testament and its character during the New Testament period. Then, its subsequent existence, often bitter, in the Diaspora.

However, what gripped me most in the Bible were the prophetic statements concerning Israel's destiny; its exile, its ingathering and final redemption. These were not past events but the prophets described them as yet to come and outlined in detail how and where that would happen.

Through this time of private study, I came to a strong conviction of the profound nature of both the Bible and God.

Without intentionally setting out to do so, my core world view became defined thus:

- There is a God
- The Bible is authoritative, true and can be 100% relied upon
- God entered into certain unconditional covenants with the nation of Israel, the Jews, to establish a number of promises and purposes
 - Despite the passage of time and the events that have befallen Israel, those covenants are still in force, as God cannot lie or break covenant
 - If He has a plan for the Jewish people, He surely has a plan for me
 - My destiny and that of the Church is inseparably bound up with God's purposes for Israel

On the same pages, I found the Messiah of Israel, Jesus or Yeshua to give Him his proper Hebrew name. It was a life changing moment. It was profound, it was tangible and it has been permanent to this day.

Incidentally, I never went looking for any of this, there was no hidden 'Pro Israel' agenda. I didn't there know there was such a thing as some critics wrongly label those who believe what I had discovered.

I simply sought reasonable, rational explanations to the dilemmas thrown up by modern Israel and events across the Middle East.

I believe it was God Himself who drew me in deeper, opened His Word to me and provided the prophetic framework by which I ultimately found sense of it all.

For me, there was no other logical reason for explaining the Jewish persistence and their eventual return over recent centuries back into their God promised Land.

As a new believer, I naively thought every other Christian took it the same way. It didn't take my nascent faith long to realise otherwise...

THE SHAMEFUL FACTS OF HISTORY

There are manifest signs of biblical fulfillment when seeing a regathered Jewish people in Israel. However, differences of opinion exist as to both the interpretation and significance, if any, of this return.

These range from ignorance and indifference to a diametrically opposed theology. Then, there is overt anti-semitism and this found even within the Church and its historical, authoritative statements.

Within a typical mainstream Church, the uninformed generally hold no real convictions. They may express an opinion on Jews in general, perhaps on Israel as seen in the contemporary context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Others may quietly assert that Israel had a divine mission but now the Church undertakes this on God's behalf. Where the Jews fit in to that mission is not clear for them.

Then there is the view held, sadly, that on account of the Jewish failure to recognise and receive Jesus as the promised Messiah, they are now abandoned by God, surplus to requirement, forever lost in their unbelief.

As they forfeited their special relationship to God by this rejection of Jesus, there can be no future purpose for them. This stance is expressed in many ways, but it persists and unfortunately has contributed to anti-semitism in one guise or another over the centuries.

That anti-semitism should find safe quarter within the Church can be traced back to a discernible change in the position of the early Church fathers in how they treated the 'Jewish question':

- Had God abandoned the Jews to their just punishment by rejecting Messiah?
- Was their refusal to embrace the Christian position now the ending of covenant relationship with God?
- Had God completely revoked any covenant promises made to the Patriarchs, reiterated through the Prophets and the New Testament, and now bestowed all such blessings solely on the Christian Church?
- Where God explicitly speaks of future blessing and restoration of Israel, surely we are not to take this literally but receive it as figurative and meant for the Church alone?
- Hence, has God 'replaced' Israel with the Church?

These latter positions, known as **Replacement Theology** or **Supersessionism**, however expressed, have been the source of bitter division and theological misunderstanding.

The logical end of Supersessionism can only be an inferior treatment of Jews. In the past, it and its sibling beliefs spawned much of the persecution against Jewish communities, persisting even till the present day.

For this, the institutional Church and its official replacement dogma, where propagated and, at times, with ruthless persecution, remain culpable for many of the tragedies that befell Jewish communities in so called 'Christian' nations.

Much of the early Church Fathers' works are wonderful treatises and exegesis on Scripture and indeed evangelical for today. Certain views some of them espoused on the Jews, however, are to be deeply regretted and a just reason for Jewish suspicion of Christian attitudes toward them.

Such offences must be acknowledged, repented of and corrected if we are to see reconciliation and I believe, revival.

The nature and influences of the apostolic era Church were its considerable Jewish character and leadership.

The first three centuries of Christianity had a mixed Gentile/ Jewish (Messianic) make up. Eventually, Christianity was semi-recognised by the Emperor Constantine, who extended toleration to it in 315 AD in the Edict of Milan.

This was not an act borne of any spiritual awakening by Constantine, but of political expediency. However, for Jews, the Edict forced them to surrender many rights.

There then followed various laws and councils over the next fifty years limiting Jewish movement, marriages, civil and religious life.

When Christianity became the Roman Empire's state religion under Theodosius, in the late fourth century, the Jewish outlook became even more bleak.

At the same time, the evangelistic zeal and growth of the earlier church stagnated and its substantial Jewish character eroded under increased attempts to decouple the Church from any remaining Jewish influence.

With increased persecution of Jewish communities in the Empire, it set in motion the downward fortunes of the Jews wherever they lived. Their own religious life changed as a necessary measure to survive in an ever hostile world. Not even in the Christian world would they be safe.

BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH...OR ELSE!

“Be on your guard against the Jews...set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them...I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb. I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews.”

The above quotation could plausibly be an excerpt of Articles from Nazi Germany's Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935. However, it isn't.

Its source is German but such runs the advice of the great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, on the issue of how to deal with the stubborn Jews. Incensed that his reforms within the Church and his emphasis on justification by faith rather than works had not seen any positive response from Jews, he became embittered and with vigour, went all out against Jews in German lands.

Luther's persecuting zeal didn't end there but fermented further antagonism from the Church and state against Jewish populations further afield.

Shocking as Luther's statements were, for the most part they reflected a general consensus in Europe at the time and have persisted till the present day in one form or another. Usually violence, intolerance and the scapegoating of all national ills on the Jews.

In the twentieth century, the racial ideology of the Nazis merely took such longstanding views of Jews to its inevitable and final solution, the Holocaust.

The history of the Jewish people over the past two thousand years is tragic and well documented: mass expulsions, pogroms, massacres, libel charges, the Inquisition, restrictions or banning of religious practices, forced conversion, segregation into ghettos.

Perhaps one would not be amiss to conclude that surely all this was sure evidence that God really had finished with the Jews and they found no further redemptive purpose in His plans.

As difficult as it is to accept, it may well be that much of what befell the Jewish people in the previous centuries of the exile could be interpreted as divine judgement. It is not an easy conclusion to draw but perhaps offers a viable, even biblical explanation.

A few years ago in Israel, in conversation with a Chief Rabbi on this very issue of judgement, he quoted to me **Deuteronomy 8:5**: *“Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.”*

For him, he could accept why God had to allow these tragedies to fall upon Israel in the exile. It was a Father's judgement on an errant son. I found it harder to accept the conclusion but did see the pattern in the Scriptures of God's dealings with Israel.

Indeed, with all who enjoy God's fatherhood.

God did give explicit warning to Israel of what would overcome them if they broke covenant. He reiterates this in Scripture and through the Prophets and on evidence, it can only be seen as the fulfillment of those pronouncements.

For example, **Leviticus 26:14-39** and **Deuteronomy 28:15-68** forewarn of the calamities that will overtake Israel for persistent disobedience and neglect of the covenant relationship with the Lord.

Reading through these passages alongside a survey of Jewish history, the picture is as tragic as it is true. All these predicted woes have come to pass during the periods of Jewish exile from the Land.

There were times of brief regathering and restoration back into their physical land in Biblical times, but the past two millennia have seen these scriptures fulfilled literally as they were declared.

Notwithstanding, this does not mean that judgement was to be the utter end of the Jewish people, the annulling of the covenant or indeed the replacing of Israel by others; not another nation and not even the Church herself as we shall go on to see.

The repeated attempts in history to annihilate the Jewish people yet their survival, demonstrate that God's covenants are still valid and there is yet a redemptive purpose for Israel's existence.

If it were not so, why does the enemy go to such extreme lengths to eradicate God's people if God has indeed finished with them and replaced them with another? The attempts to destroy Israel are a repeated fact in the biblical and Jewish narrative.

Among the protagonists we find Pharaoh, Haman, Antiochus Ephianes, Herod and others.

This extends to the Inquisitions and pogroms of the Middle Ages and in more recent memory, the wholesale slaughter of the majority of Jewry in Europe by the Nazis and their collaborators.

I must point out for objectivity's sake that I do **NOT** mean all Christendom at all times has behaved in such a way or preached doctrine decidedly anti-semitic.

But, to be objective we must also state that the silence in this same Christendom has been, at times, deafening by its indifference when other factions of the Church did what they did.

And this, all in the name of Christianity with impunity and little or no outside intervention. That is a incontrovertible and regrettable fact.

There were those in the Church's history who held strong convictions of the ongoing purpose of God for the Jewish people and their physical restoration to their ancient homeland. This is more the remarkable considering that most of these figures lived some time before any nationalist movement emerged among the Jews to once more return to the Holy Land in great numbers.

Among those who believed the literal prophecies were Puritan giants such as John Owen, Samuel Rutherford and Increase and Cotton Mather. Indeed, the future restoration of the Jews was a commonly held belief in English and early American Puritan circles and influential upon later church movements.

Jonathan Edwards too, perhaps America's greatest theologian, affirmed, "*Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in Romans 11.*"

Concluding, **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**, the great English preacher of the Victorian era, stated: "*I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible it is this.*"

These men let Scripture inform their convictions. They believed literally in the promises and prophecies of God. Where we can find no other reason to do likewise, we too should take them as God intended; literally.

Why do some spiritualise the blessings for the Church but from the same passages, leave the curses literally to Israel? This selective interpretation only exposes prejudice and unnecessarily obfuscates simple revelation.

Therefore, our own position must be informed by Scripture as it reads, not biased by cultural pressures or compromised by the possible conflicts our position exposes us to.

I fear this is much of the motivation behind those who refuse to entertain any further thought or prayerful study of the Bible in this matter.

It is, I state, that for the precise reason that God has neither finished or replaced the Jewish people that such events outlined previously have happened and anti-semitism remains until this day and will do so till Messiah returns.

So, if Israel remains within God's purposes, what do the Scriptures teach us concerning Israel's restoration?

GOD IS A COVENANT KEEPER

God has committed Himself to the Jewish people on several counts:

1. God, will be their God **FOREVER**:

“And I will establish my covenant between me and you (Abraham) and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

- **Genesis 17:7**

2. They will be a people **ALWAYS** before Him:

*“**35** Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD of hosts is his name:*

***36** If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.”*

- **Jeremiah 31:35-36**

I can see the sun shining right now and last night I observed stars.

This isn't allegorical, it is literal. So what the Lord said through Jeremiah still holds true today.

3. Their physical land to be an **EVERLASTING** possession:

“And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

- **Genesis 17:8** Part of the Abrahamic Covenant

Even when exiled from the Land God gave, He viewed the Jews as a 'nation' before Him. Always.

Nationhood is defined by not only ethnicity, laws, culture or history but by necessity has to possess defined territory to function as a nation. The land God gave, Israel, is that possession and despite being exiled as judgement a number of times (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Roman, etc), they were always brought back into it, according to God's covenant promises.

With this land came a unique destiny that Israel had to communicate the truths about God; a privilege and a responsibility.

Jesus Himself affirmed the uniqueness of the Jewish position when He stated in **John 4:22**:

“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

Ours and the world's salvation has its root and spring from the Jews. To this divine destiny, Israel is being restored and it is this we are witnessing now and in the coming days:

"...Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."

- Genesis 18:19

Furthermore, in the coming days, the nations will experience the effects of Israel's redemption:

"1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it."

- Isaiah 2:1-2

The covenants in question are unconditional. God undertakes unilaterally to fulfill them, they are irrevocable. The fact that this last Jewish exile continued for almost two thousand years is irrelevant. It does not annul God's covenant in any way.

That, after this time and all that has afflicted the Jewish people in their wanderings over two millennia, makes the miracle of Israel's restoration even the more staggering.

Yet it has happened as prophesied. And it has happened literally as prophesied.

God never forgot Israel despite the backsliding, assimilation and the terrible tragedies that occurred during these exiled years. The yearning only deepened for a return to Zion, to build the waste places and once more:

"...go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

- Micah 4:2

Without their land and seemingly no way to survive, few would believe God had remembered His covenants. But He did:

*"6 For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. 7 For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. 8 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with **EVERLASTING** love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer". (Emphasis mine)*

- Isaiah 54:6-8

The preservation of the Jewish people as a nation, Israel, over the centuries, despite exile, is proof of God's covenant faithfulness. The raging hatred and attempts to extinguish Jewish existence in this same period only convince me more that the purposes of God are at once a mystery yet irrevocable and unquenchable.

He has spoken and He will do it.

THE REGATHERING

“I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

*I will plant them on their land, and they shall **NEVER** again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the LORD your God.”* (Emphasis mine).

- **Amos 9:14-15**

Don't waste time trying to allegorise this. It is to be understood literally. Never means never. Never again to uprooted from **THEIR** Land.

Despite the conflicts and incessant incitement against Israel and despite many who actively plan Israel's destruction, God will restore AND preserve Israel in their Land.

Without doubt, the road of return has been extraordinarily hard for Israel. However, she will overcome and God will preserve the nation, fulfilling His word to Israel until all things written are complete.

How these times of exile must have sorely touched God. Despite all the collective sufferings, a remnant was preserved and has returned. God never forsook them but accompanied them through all their travail, even the most awful events that befell them as a nation exiled.

That time of hard dealing with Israel is closing and a glorious future is awakening:

“and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.”

- **Micah 4:7**

God preserved them in order to bring them to once more dwell in their Land, Israel, and to fulfill all that remains to be done, again revealed in Scripture:

“In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

- Isaiah 11:11-12

So remarkable was this ingathering to be, that it would eclipse even the famed deliverance from Egypt, celebrated at Passover:

*“**14** However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ **15** but it will be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors.”*

- Jeremiah 16:14-15

The logistics are staggering when one considers the numbers that have returned back to Israel, from the Aliyahs (immigrations) of the 19th century to modern times.

Millions of Jewish people have been absorbed within modern Israel and all this whilst facing open Arab hostility, war, terrorism and internal pressures.

Surely, this is a greater act of redemption unfolding than what ancient Israel experienced under Moses from Egypt.

With the rise of fundamental Islam in the region, ISIS, and the old hatred toward the Jewish people alive and well, Israel daily faces existential threats. Will she succumb? Will all that God has done be overturned and the Jewish people once more be overcome and exiled, contrary to what Scriptures indicate?

Regardless of the circumstantial realities and other prophetic scenarios to be played out, we have to believe that Israel’s restoration is to be final and God will preserve the nation through whatever may be thrown at her. The fact that Israel has existed now for 67 years as a modern state in a sea of virulent hatred testifies to something miraculous behind her survival.

Yes, Israel has experienced defence forces, technology, innovation and a hardy economy. However, these alone do not explain its resilience. Not only to overcome aggression but to positively thrive as a nation in a contrasted and overtly anti-semitic Middle East.

The deserts bloom, swamp lands transformed to teeming grasslands, a revived ecology, pioneering research, disproportionate global contribution in terms of science, medicine and technology beyond its small size and demographics.

Despite lacking the one resource all surrounding countries have found, oil, Israel is a triumph of humanity in the face of adversity and opposition. Ultimately, it is the triumph of God's faithfulness.

Only God's maintenance of His covenant provides a satisfactory explanation for Israel's re-establishment, preservation and prospering into the twenty first century. A period when many expected - and others relished - her demise.

Yet, Israel stands and we stand in awe of this God event in our generation.

THE COMING SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION

All that I have outlined to this point proves wonderful illustration but that is not the end in itself. We stand back and marvel at all that God has done but why has God kept covenant, why the return to the ancient homeland, Israel?

When Rome had effectively defeated any remaining Jewish resistance to their rule in the second century AD, large depopulation occurred and thus begun the long winter of exile for the Jews. Unto the ends of the earth they went, and the rest is, as they say, (Jewish) history.

All this was, as already stated, prophesied long ago. Judgement came in the form of exile and Jewish life and fortunes changed dramatically over the passing centuries. In God's eyes, however, they were not forgotten.

The yearning to return to Zion became the cry of exiled Judaism over the centuries of waiting: "*Next year in Jerusalem!*"

Jesus, in grief, foresaw all that would overtake Israel in **Luke 19:41-44**; the Roman siege, the destruction of the Temple, loss of nationhood and eventual exile. (**Luke 21:24**).

He saw them wandering among the nations, pursued and downtrodden. But, He also told that the days of exile would end when "*the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*" (ibid)

With the Jewish ingathering back to Israel, these passages have found literal fulfilment and the times of the Jewish people and God's purposes for them are now coming to the fore again.

The blindness to the revelation of Jesus (Yeshua) as Messiah, Paul describes as a major stumbling block. They cannot see, as blindness has hardened them to the real identity of Jesus:

“25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

- Romans 11:25

God has hardened the Jewish heart but only for a determined duration. The event ending this hardness is again connected to the ending of Gentile times and the restoration of Israel's destiny in God's plan.

With the return to the physical Land, once more Israel comes to the centre of God's dealings with mankind.

Let us not forget that it was God's hardening of Israel to unbelief that became the means for our own (Gentile) salvation.

Without this hardening, we would have remained outside of God's purpose, unforgiven, and left to the only end our sinful nature deserves: death and judgement. Their temporary rejection has been our salvation.

For this, a huge debt to the Jewish people has to be acknowledged.

Therefore, we cannot take issue with Israel for her unbelief. Neither can we be arrogant or boast in our position of salvation at the expense of Israel.

Paul warns against this in the strongest terms. See **Romans 11:11, 17-20**.

National Israel suffered at the hands of numerous oppressors. Through apostasy and idolatry, she broke from covenant relationship with God and suffered a decline in vital, biblical religion.

Then, she lost sovereignty with foreign conquest and rule over her, the imposition of conditions and demands that could not be met.

Finally, the physical land was lost. Banished by Rome, exiled into the nations of the world, where she remained.

This pattern is being reversed in the restoration of the Jewish people: physical regathering back to their physical land has happened; restoration of national functions such as state, legislature, armed services, and all that goes with a modern state's governance and identity. This too has come to pass.

Ultimately, the final stage is the renewing of covenant with God and it is to this end the prophets and us eagerly wait.

Ezekiel described the days when Israel's heart would be transformed from stone and unbelief to being tender and responsive to the Spirit of God.

The nation would come alive once more and return to the Lord:

“24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

- Ezekiel 36: 24-26

Note that God must bring them back FIRST before the spiritual renewal occurs. This explains why Israel today, although having religious elements, is still largely secular and generally unaware of its prophetic destiny.

However, it is as Ezekiel predicted: bring them back, establish them and then renew them with a new heart and a new spirit. It is happening and will continue to do so in growing numbers in the days ahead.

From two thousand years of exile and the most dreadful experiences that have been the Jewish narrative; from the utter horror of the Nazi Holocaust, a Jewish nation has once more risen. It is a work of God and it is an event that has happened within a generation of our own lives.

THEM DRY BONES...

The dry bones passages are favourites with revival preaching and Church focussed themes but the context is clearly Israel not the Church:

*“12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel.....14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you **IN YOUR OWN LAND**. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”* (Emphasis mine)

- Ezekiel 37: 12, 14

Note that God says He will, at this time, bring them to their **OWN** land. There is only one land in history that can be rightly described as being the land the Jewish people dwelt in, where all her history was recorded.

That land is the land we know as Israel today. It is absurd and dishonest for these passages to be appropriated by the Church as being allegorical and meaning anything else than what they literally express for Israel.

Furthermore, Isaiah said that when this happens, it would be a banner to the nations. Something so manifest and headline grabbing, it would arrest the attention of the nations. Certainly this has been true of modern Israel's rebirth and existence till now:

“He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

- Isaiah 11:12 (See also Isaiah 49:22)

REVEALING THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF GOD

It is exciting to see all this biblical fulfillment in our own day. The regathering of the Jewish people back into the land of Israel, their God given and legally determined borders.

However, wonderful as these events are, they are just signposts along the way to God's ultimate purposes for both Jews and Gentiles in the end times.

To these, we now turn and explain what we is yet to appear on the prophetic horizon.

1. The Jewish Redemption

With the return to Israel, God has been faithful in bringing an end to Jewish exile and has brought about the reality of the Jewish state once more. This, after two thousand years and this exactly according with the words of Scripture.

It is the spiritual redemption of Israel that all this looks forward to and it is this to which prophets such as Zechariah and Paul foretold in the day of Israel's regathering:

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”

- Zechariah 12:10

Again:

“25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; 27 “and this will be my COVENANT with them when I take away their sins.”” (Emphasis mine)

- Romans 11:25-27

This salvation, once given, will not be rescinded by God, *“for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.”* (**Romans 8:29**).

They shall not be cast out of the Land again, but will enjoy the renewing of all of God’s covenant blessings. **See Ezekiel 39:29 and Isaiah 45:17**

2. Revival In The Nations

Not only will Israel experience God’s covenant mercies again, but the nations will be impacted by the redemption of the Jewish people:

“And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate My holiness before their eyes.”

- Ezekiel 36:23

The above promise of God occurs in the same period that the next verse, 24, outlines God taking the Jews from all nations and bringing them back into their own land, there to deal with them.

He will cleanse them and put in them a new heart and a new spirit and they will know Him as in the days before.

Read all of Ezekiel 36 for the context and fulness of what God is now doing in regard to Israel’s national and spiritual redemption and the overflow to the nations.

It is God’s glory that the Lord is concerned with and these signs evince the jealousy for His name to be once more honoured in Israel and the nations of the earth.

3. Messiah’s Return And Reign

Jesus finished His earthly ministry and ascended to the Father. He promised to return to earth and fully accomplish all God’s purposes for mankind including judgement of the nations and the establishment of His messianic reign on earth. He gave clear testimony of things which must come to pass and how they would affect both Israel and the nations.

The prophets of the Old Testament alluded to the same things. Ultimately, all these events, including that of the Jewish return to their homeland, are necessary to first pass before the return of Christ and His kingdom.

Israel is now being restored and the Jews return home. The spiritual awakening is increasing and the other signs spoken of coming to pass.

Surely, the return of the Lord is soon, although we cannot be dogmatic regarding exact timings. Yet, we cannot dismiss all these signs as merely coincidental.

God is once more shaking the nations and through Israel and the Jewish people, is communicating to us of what is ahead: His Son is coming soon to take up royal residence:

“26 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 27 My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

- Ezekiel 37:26-28

To summarise: Israel and the Jewish people are the enduring sign and testament of the truth of God’s Word. They were forsaken for a while, but He has regathered them into their own land once more. There, He will deal with them as a nation, bring redemption, salvation and ultimately the birthing of the Messianic kingdom on earth.

As so much has already been fulfilled, we have strong conviction and encouragement to see the remainder fulfilled literally in the days ahead.

Consequently, it is not hard to understand why the nations and Islam in particular rage against Israel.

Satan, the ancient adversary of all God’s purposes, knows his time is short and Israel’s regathering has not escaped his notice. He has tried repeatedly over history to destroy the Jewish people in order to annul God’s covenants and Word.

He has failed but he will continue with utter hatred to do what he can to bring about their destruction. He uses multiple means but the intended end is the same.

See Psalm 2:1-6.

His time and the time of the Gentiles is nearing its fulness. God’s Messianic reign draws closer and these factors enrage him all the more to go all out against God’s people.

But God will triumph. His Kingdom is unshakeable and regardless of the enemy’s resistance and the raging nations, the Lord’s purposes stand firm and in readiness to be fulfilled:

“2 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?...4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.... 6 As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

- Psalm 2:2,4,6

OUR RESPONSE

God will have the final say but it is also upon us to seek out the truth on these matters, to come to our own biblical convictions and act upon them.

With revelation comes responsibility and the events I have outlined here cannot leave the reader ignorant or indifferent.

Governments will be affected by their response to Israel and the Jewish people. Individuals in their attitudes, and believers in their handling of the clear prophetic Word. Truly, it is a critical time for the nations and for you and me.

We can align with God's purposes for Israel or we can oppose. To do nothing, is to have already chosen to miss the work of God. God will require it of us and the Lord speaking through the prophet Joel draws the dividing line on the matter:

"I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land"

- Joel 3:2

If we have eyes to see it and position ourselves in line with God's Word, we can enter a wonderful work of the Lord in our own time. Equal in significance to days that the prophets and faith heroes of old looked forward to:

"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar...."

- Hebrews 11:13

The ongoing development of Israel's restoration brings a five-fold schedule of fulfillment into focus:

1. It is a **PROPHETIC** work of God: Scripture as breathed by God through the prophets is being fulfilled.

2. It is a **MANIFEST** work of God: these events are happening in the full glare of the world today, nothing is obscured. All can witness what is unfolding.

3. It is a **POWERFUL** work of God: the purposes of God are unstoppable; He will accomplish all He has set to do regardless of enemy hatred and opposition.

4. It is an **AWAKENING** work: the signs of Israel's ingathering and restoration are both a prelude and a wake up call to the Church and the world that God's Kingdom is coming in its fullness.

5. It is a **GLORIOUS** work: ultimately, all that has gone before points to the glory that will finally be revealed about God, His sovereignty, His election, His providence. All nations shall worship Him.

A PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I leave you with the personal challenge to weigh all this up and to hear for yourself what the Spirit is saying.

Not only to the listening church, but to you **individually**; your unique response and stance for truth and adjustment where necessary.

I pray you will obey what your convictions lead you to do and say.
One day, it will be required of you.

“You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favour her; the appointed time has come.”

- Psalm 102:13

Surely, the time is at hand; lift up your heads because the salvation of the Jewish people is at hand....and therefore, your day of redemption draws near too.

The Lord bless you out of Zion! (**Psalm 134:3**)

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