

THE MIRACULOUS RESTORATION OF MODERN-DAY ISRAEL

(The Most Significant Prophetic Sign That Christ's Return is Near)

"But you, O Lord, will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come...For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. Let this be written for a future (latter day) generation that a people not yet created may praise the Lord (Ps. 102:12-18). Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled... When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:24, 28). 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" (Rom. 11:25, 26).

As the 20th century draws to a close, the church, spiritually speaking, is in much the same condition as were the apostles of Jesus immediately following His resurrection. We all have wondered how it was possible for them not to have anticipated His resurrection for He had told them many times that this was going to happen. The problem was: they heard the words He spoke but lacked divine revelation even as Luke records, "The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about" (Luke 18:34). However, during the forty days prior to His ascension, Jesus opened unto them all of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Himself and suddenly it all made sense. Like the Emmaus disciples, their hearts no doubt burned within them as they saw God's master plan through the eyes of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:25-32).

This spiritual phenomenon has been called a "*prophetic paradigm shift*." Defined more succinctly, it is a radical change in our doctrine and practice as the Holy Spirit corrects and/or expands our faulty understanding of Scripture prophecies as they are being fulfilled in our day and time. I dare say, this took place in the 1st century with the apostles "*understanding of Jesus*" first coming and is occurring today regarding the church's perception of the restoration of Israel as a prophetic sign on the nearness of His second coming.

He who has ears, let him hear! May the Holy Spirit enable all believers everywhere to embrace this "*prophetic paradigm shift*" principle to the end so that we may not only see what God is doing in the earth today but also agree with it and get in step with it. Many Evangelicals hold "*the doctrine of imminence*," that is, that Jesus could return at any moment. We do not believe the Bible teaches this except as it applies to the fact that the day of our death may be imminent. Before the Lord returns two significant events must first occur: (1. the restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of promise (Luke 21:24-28) and (2. the emergence of the Antichrist (II Thess. 2:1-4). Israel has been back in its homeland since 1948 and has been in control of Jerusalem since 1967. The Antichrist is yet to appear but may soon do so in association with the European Union (the restored Roman Empire prophesied in Daniel 2:36-45).

I. WHY THE GENTILE CHURCH NEEDS A PROPHETIC PARADIGM SHIFT REGARDING THE ENDTIME RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

A. The misbelief that God's purposes for the nation of Israel ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Approximately a generation after Jesus ascended to heaven, the Romans under Titus violently quashed a Jewish rebellion. Just as Jesus had predicted in Luke 21:20-24, the temple with its sacrificial service was destroyed, tens of thousands of people were put to the sword and the rest sold as slaves and carried off to the various nations of the world. Since Jesus had come in the flesh and had fulfilled His redemptive mission as Messiah, the church from Constantine onward believed that Israel's identity as a nation had outgrown its usefulness. If Jews were to be saved through the gospel message, they could be reached in whatever countries to which they had been banished. [Let us not forget that the Jews were scattered over the earth at least three different times: (1) in 721 BC when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, (2) in 606 BC when the Babylonians over-ran the southern kingdom of Judah, and (3) in 70 AD when the Romans subdued Judah and Jerusalem.]

However, Scripture says, "He who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night... Only if these decrees vanish from my sight, declares the Lord, will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me" (Jer. 31:35,36). Consider also this promise, "So, then, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land" (Jer. 23:7,8). And remember Jesus Himself prophesied that the Jews would once again rule Jerusalem when the times of the Gentiles would come to an end. This was fulfilled in 1967 when Jerusalem was reunited under Israeli control during the Six Day War — the first time in 2,500 years! This event was not mere happenstance but divine providence!

B. The propagation of anti-Semitism within the church —both Protestant and Roman Catholic.

Bad enough that the national identity of the Jews was denied but, even worse, the Gentile church began to persecute them as "Christ killers." Many notable post-apostolic church fathers were anti-Semitic, men such as Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Tertullian, Origen and John Chrysostom. Jerome, who translated the Scriptures into Latin, claimed that the Jews were incapable of understanding the Bible and should be severely persecuted until they confessed the "true faith." What is not common knowledge to most lay persons is that Martin Luther also had strong anti-Semitic biases and wrote against the Jews. Unfortunately, Hitler used Luther's anti-Semitic teachings to justify the Holocaust while most German Lutherans watched passively in silence. One might ask: How could this be? Didn't the Gentile church leaders know from Scripture itself that while the Jews had a part in Christ's suffering and death, every human being on the

planet has an equal share in the blame? The New Testament is clear: "He (Jesus) died for all...He tasted death for every man...God made Christ to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him... The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile," Rom. 1:16.

C. The development of "Replacement Theology."

A logical consequence of teaching anti-Semitism and the end of the Jewish nation is the belief, firmly held in most Gentile churches, that the church has replaced Israel in the mind and plan of God. This conviction requires an allegorical method, i.e., a symbolic representation, of interpreting and applying Old Testament Scriptures that speak of Israel. Any endtime prophecy referring to Israel must automatically mean the church. Again, this is what is being taught in seminaries. However, with a knowledge not based on denominational biases of the Scriptures, we should see that the latter day regathering of the Jews to the promised land is predicted in the Bible and that God is not finished with Israel as a nation. We should now be convinced that we have a responsibility as Gentile believers to love the Jews and help them return to the land and to find the Messiah (Rom. 11:31).

The cumulative effect of the aforementioned negative realities in the Gentile church for the past 1600 years has been a bitter resistance to Jesus by the Jews. Since the cross has been used as a sword to kill Jews for centuries, why should we expect them to be open to the gospel? Could this be one of the reasons the Lord is going to deal uniquely with them as a nation regathered to the land God promised them forever (Gen. 13:15)? Very likely. In any case, it is long overdue for the Gentile church to repent to God and to the Jewish people for the atrocities we have committed toward them over the centuries. If the bride of Christ is going to be an elect company of Jews and Gentiles united in love, we had better get started tearing down the walls and reaching out to Abraham's seed after the flesh! (Eph. 2:11-18).

II. WHAT THE GENTILE CHURCH NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND FROM THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES TO GET IN STEP WITH GOD'S ENDTIME RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

God has a sovereign plan for the world and all of its inhabitants which will be fulfilled (Is. 46:9,10). Just as all the prophecies concerning Jesus' first coming were fulfilled to the letter, so all the prophecies pertaining to His *second coming* will also come to pass — including the restoration of the nation of Israel. Thus, it is incumbent upon the church to diligently pray for divine revelation so that we might accurately discern the outworking of God's sovereign will especially in these last days (Eph. 1:17-19, John 16:12-16, Rev. 1:1-3).

A. The times of the Gentiles are quickly coming to a close.

Jesus said that Jerusalem would be restored to the Jews when the times of the Gentiles would be fulfilled (Luke 21-24). This means that since 1967 God has shifted prophetic gears. It implies that the ingathering of souls from among Gentile nations is coming to a close even as Paul states in Romans 11:25, 26, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers... Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved." For nearly 2,000 years, the Jews have experienced a hardening against the gospel (by divine design) so that the Gentile nations would hear and believe the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. But at the close of this grace period for the Gentile nations, the Lord will lift the veil from the eyes of the Jews (II Cor. 3:15,16) and bring in the elect of Israel, chiefly in the land of Israel. This is what Paul means when he says, "And so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26). The Holy Spirit is telling the Gentile church today that the full number of the elect Gentiles has nearly been harvested from among all the nations of the earth (Matt. 24:14). In short, God's mission focus has been steadily changing from the Gentiles to the Jews since 1967 when the Jews gained control of the city of Jerusalem — if we have ears to hear.

B. God has a specific plan to gather in the elect of Israel.

According to the prophetic word recorded in Psalm 102:12-18, there will come a latter day generation of Jews when "the Lord will arise and favor Zion, an appointed time when He will rebuild Israel and appear in his glory." This special season of divine grace began in the late nineteenth century with the birth of the Zionist movement in Europe, which gave rise to the establishment of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948, by a mandate of the United Nations. Sadly, many Gentile believers — fifty years later — still regard this unusual event as a quirk of secular history which has no biblical or spiritual significance.

Anyone with such a mindset would do well to view a compelling video entitled "Israel In Bible Prophecy" which was prepared by Dr. David Reagan from McKinney, Texas. It deals with the following aspects of the miraculous restoration of God's chosen people in their land: (1) the regathering of the Jewish people, (2) the re-establishment of the state of Israel, (3) the reclamation of the land of Israel, (4) the revival of the Hebrew language, (5) the resurgence of the Israeli military, (6) the refocusing of world politics on Israel and (7) the reoccupation of the city of Jerusalem by the Jews. This thrilling story was filmed entirely on location in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. You would be wise to obtain this documentary and show it to family, friends, and church members. Write Lion of Judah Ministries, P.O. Box 681505, Franklin, TN 37068-1505 and enclose a check for \$21.24, which includes postage and handling. Seeing this film will help you grasp what a prophetic miracle modern-day Israel's restoration is and continuous to be!

According to prophecy experts, there are at least two phases to God's plan to rebuild Zion.

1. The regathering stage

Over the past fifty or more years, roughly 5 million Jews have immigrated to the land God promised Abraham and his seed. Ten million Jews yet remain in Gentile nations — 6 million in America alone. Still, the Lord is calling all Jews to make "Aliyah" (return to Israel). Even now the Interior Ministry in Israel is preparing for a population of 12 million Jews. This suggests that God in His providence will soon be motivating the American Jews to return to their ancestral homeland.

Here are some Old Testament prophecies that speak of this great endtime ingathering:

"The Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you" (Deut. 30:3,4).

"Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Is. 43:5,6).

See also: Is. 11:12, Jer. 24:6,7; 31:10 and Ez. 11:16-20; 37:11-14; 39:27,28.

2. The redeeming stage

Most of us think that before the Lord would regather the Jews, they would first be required to repent and accept Jesus as Messiah (I Kings 8:46-53). However, many Scriptures teach otherwise, that after the Jews return to the land, the Lord will then redeem them by calling them back to Himself. Consider the following texts:

"For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez. 36:24-28).

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look upon Me whom they have pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son" (Zech. 12:10).

See also: Jer. 32:37-41, Ez. 39:27-29 and Rom. 11:25,26.

III. HOW THE LORD IS GOING TO REVEAL HIMSELF AS MESSIAH TO THE JEWS IN THE HOLY LAND

A. The pressure of international isolation and rejection.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise all around the world today. Why is this? The primary cause is the devil's hatred of the Jews for their role in bringing salvation to the human race through Jesus, the "***Seed of Abraham***" (Gal. 3:16). Indirectly, God is using this to drive the Jews back to their homeland. Even the U.S. State Department is pro-Arab as are many of the European Union nations. The day will come, and it may not be far off, when Israel will stand alone. How else will the Scriptures be fulfilled that say, "I will gather all nations to Jerusalem to fight against it... Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle" (Zech. 14:2:3).

In their desperation, the Jews will cry out to God to help them. This has already occurred in past battles with Arab League nations since Israel was birthed in 1948. Stories are told of how God fought with them in supernatural ways, which enabled them to emerge victorious time and again. It is reminiscent of Joshua's conquest of Canaan where God sent "the hornet" ahead of them) perhaps warring angels) and rained down hailstones to drive out the enemy (Josh. 10:11; 24:12). What is the bottom line? **The Lord will increasingly show Himself powerful on the Jews' behalf in the days to come!**

B. The love and support of Gentile Christians from around the world.

In Romans 11:30,31, Paul prophesies how the Gentile church will be called on by God to befriend the Jews at the close of the age when all nations will have turned against them: "Just as you (Gentile believers) who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their (the Jews') disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you (Gentile believers)."

This has been happening increasingly since Israel became a nation. For years the Christian Embassy has been hosting an annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem where thousands of Gentile believers from most nations of the world gather to befriend the Jews with singing, dancing, parades and intercession for Israel and its leaders. Beyond this significant display of love and good will, many Gentile Christians are actively working to assist Jews in Eastern Europe and elsewhere to come to the Promised Land. This ministry involves contacting would-be immigrants, arranging their transportation and providing funds to make "Aliyah" and to get settled in Israel. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when He said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40).

C. The effective witness of Messianic Jews in Israel to their secular Jewish brethren.

In Israel today there are more than 50 Messianic congregations, all of which are experiencing dynamic growth. This is powerful evidence that the Spirit of the Lord is lifting the veil of unbelief from the Jewish people. The story is told of how a prominent military officer was sent home to die because there was no cure for his particular affliction. As he was riding home on a bus he met a Messianic Jewish couple who told him that they had been instructed by God in a vision to pray for a sick man they would encounter on the bus. The officer eagerly allowed them to lay hands on him and pray. Nothing seemed to happen but the next morning the man woke up completely healed. He has since become a believer in Jesus! This true story was covered in the Jerusalem Post. God is reaching Jews through Jews — just the way the church began 2,000 years ago!

D. Sovereign revival where God takes the initiative in a supernatural way.

For years the Lord has instructed intercessors for Israel to pray for two things: (a. the return of the Jews to their land and (b. for a mighty revival throughout Israel. Old Testament prophecy clearly teaches that this will occur. Hear these words of Ezekiel 39:7, 8, 28, 29: "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will not longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I am the Holy One of Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of... I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord."

IV. WHAT THE GENTILE CHURCH CAN DO TO ASSIST THE LORD AS HE GATHERS IN THE ELECT OF THE JEWS IN ISRAEL

Every Gentile believer needs to develop an relational witnessing mindset for loving the Jews that is in keeping with Paul's words in I Corinthians 9:19-20: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became as a Jew, to win the Jews." The Holy Spirit will have to reveal to each of us what this means in practical terms but here are some suggestions to seriously consider:

- A. You can repent before God and the Jews for the unChrist-like treatment the Gentile church has given them for the past 1600 years.
- B. You can ask the Lord to give us His heart and burden for the sons and daughters of Abraham after the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1).
- C. You can study the Scriptures which deal with God's plans to regather and redeem Israel in the latter days, especially Romans, chapters nine, ten and eleven.
- D. You can intercede for the Jews to be stirred to return to the land of Israel, to be given grace to receive Jesus as their Messiah and to be protected from all the devil's ploys for their destruction.
- E. You can subscribe to prophetic newsletters that will keep us abreast of God's action in Israel today. We suggest the Jewish Voice Prophetic Magazine, (a monthly periodical for \$25 per year), 16001 North 34th St., Phoenix, AZ 85032.
- F. You can go to Israel in September of each year and participate in the Christian Embassy's Feast of Tabernacles celebration. For information contact Sounds of the Trumpet, 8230 Birchglen, Houston, TX 77070.
- G. You can become involved in intercessory prayer tours with Reuven Doron, a Messianic Israeli, who lives in Israel with his family. Praying with Messianic Jews in and for the land and its people would be a dynamic experience. For details write Embrace Israel Ministries, P.O. Box 10077, Cedar Rapids, IA 52410-0077.
- H. You can attend services at a Messianic congregation in your city or area and invite the minister to preach or testify in your local Gentile church.
- I. You can go to your local Christian bookstore or Messianic outreach and purchase books on how to minister the gospel to Jews in a winsome and biblical way.

V. CONCLUSION

It is not our intention to be a date-setter as concerns the second coming of Jesus. Nevertheless, the Bible says we will know the season but not the day or the hour. The Lord said that a generation would come that would witness His return. They would know this by certain signs that would appear, an unmistakable one being the restoration of Israel and the control of Jerusalem by the Jews (Luke 21:24 - 33). This has occurred in our generation. Depending on what length we give to a generation (40 or 50 years), Jesus' return could be less than 20 years away. Are you and your family ready?

Quoting from "Famous Hebrew Christians," by Jacob Gartenhaus, regarding Benjamin Disraeli, the British Statesman, Author, Diplomat, and Prime Minister, (1804-1881):

"In all church discussions we are apt to forget the second Testament is avowedly only a supplement. Jesus came to complete the "law and the prophets." Christianity is completed Judaism, or it is nothing. Christianity is incomprehensible without Judaism, as Judaism is incomplete without Christianity.

The pupil of Moses may ask himself, whether all the princes of the house of David have done so much for the Jews as that prince who was crucified on Calvary. Had it not been for Him, the Jews would have been comparatively unknown or only as a high Oriental caste, which had lost its country. Has not He made their history the most famous in the world? Has not He hung up their laws in every temple? Has He not vindicated all their wrongs? Has not He avenged the victory of Titus and conquered the Caesars? What successes did they anticipate from their Messiah? The wildest dreams of their rabbis have been far exceeded... **Christians may continue to persecute Jews (and by so doing misrepresent their Master)** and Jews may persist in disbelieving Christians, but who can deny that Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of God, is the eternal glory of the Jewish race?"

Disraeli anticipated the final conversion of the Jews and expresses the hope that "they will accept the whole of their religion instead on only the half of it, as they gradually grow more familiar with the true history and character of the New Testament."

Now a final quote from Reuven Doron's January 1999 newsletter:

"The nation of Israel had to be back in her land, having her national life built around God's altar and temple, in order to prepare for the first coming of the Savior. In the same way, Israel today is being called back to the land, and the House of the Lord is being built (with living stones this time)... By God's own wisdom and mercy He determined that Israel be carried toward her inevitable encounter with her Messiah leaning on Gentile hands, so that the ancient debt of love will be paid back at the close of this age. As we have said before, Israel gave birth to the church in the first century, and the church will now give birth to Israel in the last. Let God be glorified." Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Shalom,
Chris Heeb, Director
Good News for Israel.

Good News for Israel is a ministry of proclamation, education and reconciliation between the Jewish and Christian communities, founded in 1878 as the Zion Society for Israel, making us the oldest, continuous ministry of its kind in the country. For further information please call us at (612) 926-7369.

We would like to give special thanks to Brother Rodney Lensch for his 40 years of service to the Lord. His love for the Church and for the restoration of the Jewish people to their Messiah made it possible for this ministry to adapt his original article for its use and for the glory of God.