

Session 4 Biblical Signs of the Times Related to Israel

I. THE END-TIME SCRIPTURES ARE JERUSALEM-CENTRIC

- A. Israel and Jerusalem are the reference point in discerning God’s timetable for His end-time plans. His end-time purpose is *Jerusalem-centric*—His prophetic calendar (end-time plans) advances in relation to the Jewish people being in the promised land, with Jerusalem under Israel’s jurisdiction.
- B. Many end-time prophecies related to Israel are closely linked to each other and overlap.

II. THE STATE OF ISRAEL, JERUSALEM, AND THE RETURN OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

- A. ***The State of Israel:*** The most striking event in biblical prophecy is the return of the Jews to their homeland to re-establish the *state of Israel*. No prophetic sign is more dramatic or convincing. The Jews were scattered to the nations in AD 70. Now, 2,000 years later, they are back home. In one day, Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948.
⁸“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once?...Zion...gave birth to her children.” (Isa. 66:8)
⁸“In the latter years you [Antichrist] will come into the land of those [Israel] brought back...and gathered from many people [nations] on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate.” (Ezek. 38:8)
- B. ***Jerusalem:*** In 1967, Israel gained control of Jerusalem as a result of the Six-Day War (June 1967), about 20 years after they became a nation. Mark Twain visited Israel in 1867 and described it as a “desolate country, devoid of vegetation and human population...a desolate country...given over wholly to weeds...we never saw a human being on the route.... hardly a tree or shrub anywhere.”
⁶“In that day...Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.” (Zech. 12:6)
- C. ***The people returning to the land:*** The Lord described a time when many Jewish people would return to the land. Over 1 million Russian Jews have moved to Israel since the 1990s. In 1850 the Jewish population of Israel was about 15,000; in early 1900, about 60,000; in 1920, around 75,000; and in 1948, about 600,000. In 2015 over 6 million Jewish people were living in Israel.
¹⁴“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’¹⁵ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land.” (Jer. 16:14-15)
¹⁴“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel.” (Amos 9:14)
- D. Ezekiel prophesied that the Lord would return Israel to the land while they were still in unbelief, and would *then* cleanse them from their filthiness, *in the land*, as they received His salvation.
²⁴“For I will...gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.²⁵ Then I will...cleanse you from all your filthiness...²⁶I will give you a new heart...³⁴The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate...³⁷I will increase their men like a flock.” (Ezek. 36:24-37)

III. THE TEMPLE, SABBATH LAWS, HEBREW LANGUAGE, AND MILITARY

- A. **Temple:** The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (with animal sacrifices according to the law of Moses) is at the heart of the prophetic promises and signs regarding Israel in the end times (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 11:1-2; 13:12-18; cf. Dan. 9:26-27; 11:31; 12:11).
1. The temple has not existed in Jerusalem since the Romans destroyed it in AD 70.
 2. One obstacle to the rebuilding of the temple is that the *Mosque of Omar* (Al-Aqsa Mosque) and the *Dome of the Rock* stand on the Temple Mount (the very site where Solomon's temple stood on Mount Moriah)—the third holiest site in Islam.
 3. Today, there is a strong new movement in Israel, led by Orthodox Jews, to rebuild the temple.
- B. **Sabbath:** The re-establishment of the Sabbath day of rest in social and civil law is a sign of the times (Mt. 24:15-20). In 1951, the Sabbath (Saturday) was declared by law to be a day of rest. (When Israel was under the Ottoman Empire, Friday was the day of rest, and while under the British Mandate, it was Sunday.) The abomination of desolation (Antichrist's worldwide worship system) will take place in the context of a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and re-established Sabbath laws. The two main components of "the abomination" are the *image* and *mark* of the Beast (Rev. 13:15-18).
¹⁵***"When you see the abomination of desolation...¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee...²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."*** (Mt. 24:15-20)
- C. **Hebrew:** Hebrew was re-established as an official language in Israel on May 19, 1948. No other nation without living in its homeland has ever maintained its language for more than one generation. For Israel to restore their ancient language after 2,000 years is unprecedented in history. Many see the revival of Hebrew in Israel as part of the fulfilment of Zephaniah's prophecy.
⁹***Then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.*** (Zeph. 3:9)
- D. **Military:** Zechariah prophesied the restoration of Israel's military, and of the Lord empowering the Israeli army to be mighty like David (Zech. 9:13; 10:3-7; 12:6-9; cf. Mic. 4:11-13). God will help Israel's military even *before* Jesus returns, especially as they fight the Antichrist's forces (12:6-9).
⁶***"In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile...they shall devour all the surrounding peoples...⁸In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David."*** (Zech. 12:6-8)

IV. THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL

- A. Jesus will not forcibly take the kingship over Israel, but will wait until it is given to Him by those in positions of authority over the land. He prophesied that He would not come back to Jerusalem until the leaders of Israel asked Him to reign over them. He "bound" Himself by this prophecy.
³⁹***"For I say to you, you [the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem] shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"*** (Mt. 23:37-39)

- B. Israel's leaders are the official representatives of that national covenant with God. Jesus will rule from Jerusalem only *after* Israel repents and asks Him to be their king (Acts 3:19-21).

¹⁹***“Repent...be converted [Israel] that your sins may be blotted out...²⁰that He may send Jesus ...²¹whom heaven must receive [retain] until the times of restoration...”*** (Acts 3:19-21)

⁶***This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him...⁷Lift up your heads, O you gates...be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.*** (Ps. 24:6-7)

- C. Today there are over 120 Messianic congregations in Israel, with more than 15,000 Jewish believers in Jesus. There were only two Messianic congregations in Israel in 1970. Messianic congregations are seeing more Jewish people in Israel come to Jesus today than at any time since the first century.

- D. We are watching the amazing fulfillment of the Lord's prophetic promise to establish night-and-day prayer for Jerusalem just prior to the return of Jesus, who will make Jerusalem a praise (Isa. 62:6-7).

⁶***“I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night ...⁷And give Him no rest till He...makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”*** (Isa. 62:6-7)

V. WORLD CONTROVERSY, PERSECUTION, AND ANTI-SEMITISM FROM THE NATIONS

- A. The Jewish prophets foretold that Jerusalem would be persecuted by all the nations and, thus, at the center of world controversy (Zech. 12:3, 9; 14:1-3; cf. Joel 3:2, 12; Zeph. 3:8; Lk. 21:20-24).

²***I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant...shall not be cut off from the city.*** (Zech. 14:2)

³***...Jerusalem...though all nations of the earth are gathered against it [Jerusalem].*** (Zech. 12:3)

- B. The most dramatic fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in John 16:2 will be in the end times by Islamic terrorists. They are so convinced that they are serving God that they are willing to die in the process of killing believers (both Jews & Gentiles). The initial fulfillment of this prophecy occurred in the first century by fellow Jews, and later by the Gentile Crusaders and the Spanish Inquisition.

²***“The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.”*** (Jn. 16:2)

- C. The Lord said that He would first “send” fishermen (those who allure with enticements) and then hunters (those who drive with fear) to hunt, or trouble, the Jewish people who live outside of Israel.

¹⁵***“For I will bring them back into their land...¹⁶“Behold, I will send for many fishermen,” says the Lord, “and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.”*** (Jer. 16:15-16)

1. This prophecy is about the restoration of Israel. Biblical scholars believe this “hunting” was partially fulfilled by persecution that led many to return to the land during the last 100 years.
2. The Antichrist's soldiers will be the ultimate fulfillment of the hunters in this passage.

VI. THE BATTLE FOR JERUSALEM

- A. The battle for Jerusalem will be the decisive battle to end the Armageddon campaign.
²I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. (Zech. 14:2)
- B. The battle for Jerusalem is a spiritual, political, and military battle for the control of Jerusalem. It will end when Jesus returns to reign over the whole earth and cast Satan into prison (Rev. 20:1-3).
¹¹Behold, a white horse. He [Jesus] who sat on him...¹⁶has...a name written: KING OF KINGS ...¹⁹And I saw the beast [Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him...²⁰Then the beast was captured and the false prophet...^{20:1}Then I saw an angel...²He laid hold of...Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. (Rev. 19:11-20:2)
- C. Satan's strategy is to seek to exploit Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 23:39 as a "loophole" in God's end-time plan by seeking to keep the leaders of Israel from receiving Jesus as their king. Satan knows that Jesus cannot violate His own prophetic word. Therefore, Jesus cannot return to earth to rule from Jerusalem until Israel's governmental leaders beckon Him to be their king.
- D. Satan's end-time strategy includes seeking to ***control Jerusalem*** by:
1. *Deceiving Israel* into taking the mark of the Beast (making an alliance with the Antichrist)
 2. *Killing the remnant of the Jewish race* so there are none to invite Him to rule Jerusalem
 3. Trying to make Israel so *offended at Jesus* that they will not receive Him as their king
- E. Satan wants to destroy the Jewish people so that a believing remnant cannot invite Jesus to rule Israel as her Messiah. John uses a prophetic picture of Israel as a woman being attacked by Satan as a dragon; God intervenes to protect her from the Antichrist's rage (Rev. 12:13-17; cf. Zech. 13:8-9).
¹³When the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman [remnant of Israel]...¹⁵The serpent spewed water...like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood [persecution]...¹⁷The dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring [the Church], who...have the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 12:13-17)
- F. The city of Jerusalem shall be taken, and half its population shall go into captivity (Zech. 14:2).
²“For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off.” (Zech. 14:2)
1. Jerusalem will temporarily be taken by the Antichrist, creating the context in which Jesus will deliver Israel, parallel to Israel being delivered from captivity in Egypt in the days of Moses.
 2. About 600,000 Jews currently live in Jerusalem; thus it is possible that as many as 300,000 Jewish people will be taken as captives in the final years of the Great Tribulation.
 3. The Lord will save Israel in the context of the Antichrist's rage against them in the end times.

- G. **Two conflicting trends:** Anti-Semitism in the nations and love for Israel in the Body of Christ. Many Jews and Gentiles will go to prison under the Antichrist's reign of terror. Jesus will deliver Israel and require the Church to stand with her like Corrie ten Boom's family did in World War II.
- ⁶***"I will...give You [Jesus] as a covenant to the people [Israel]...⁷to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house..."²²But this [Israel] is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses."***
(Isa. 42:6-7, 22)
- H. Scripture describes an aspect of Israel's persecution as some of them being put in prison by the Antichrist, leading to the time when Jesus kills him and sets the prisoners free (Ps. 102:18-22; Isa. 27:13; 42:6-7, 13, 22-23; 49:8-25; 61:1-2; Jer. 30:3-10; Ezek. 39:25-29; Amos 9:11-15; Joel 3:1-2; Mic. 4:6; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:10-14; 13:8; 14:2; Mt. 25:43; Lk. 21:24).
- I. **Salvation and persecution:** The Antichrist's attack on Jewish people will result in 2/3 being killed and the remaining 1/3 accepting salvation. (*The number of Gentiles killed because they refuse to worship the Antichrist will be far greater.*) We should only mention the future suffering of Israel and the Gentiles with great sorrow. There has never been a time when 1/3 of the Jews in Israel testified of receiving Jesus as Messiah, so we know that this prophecy has a future fulfillment.
- ⁸***"It shall come to pass in all the land...that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: ⁹I will bring the one-third through the fire...They will call on My name."***
(Zech. 13:8-9)
- ¹⁵***So the four angels...were released to kill a third of mankind [Gentiles]. (Rev. 9:15)***
- J. The Antichrist's attack on Gentiles and the resulting death toll and imprisonment of Gentiles will far exceed the number related to Israel. However, the Lord gives special emphasis to the Body of Christ to love, stand with, care for, and even suffer with the Jewish people.
- K. **Contradiction:** The Bible places Israel's greatest promises and her most intense suffering in the same time frame. Replacement theologians apply Israel's greatest biblical *promises* to the Church, but *not their suffering*. Others, who love Israel, apply the time of Israel's greatest *promises* to the future, while dismissing the time of their *greatest suffering* as having already been fulfilled (70 AD). Both groups make the same error of separating the time of Israel's greatest promises from the time of their greatest sufferings. Scripture puts them together. Israel's future is ultimately glorious.

VII. THE TRUE CHURCH WILL STAND WITH ISRAEL

- A. The battle for Jerusalem will be one issue used to perfect the Church in her obedience to Jesus. Scripture calls the Church to stand with God's purposes for Israel. It will be a litmus test of obedience. The highest issue in serving God's purpose for Israel is obeying Jesus' sovereign leadership. We love Him; therefore, we want to do what He does and love what He loves.
- ²⁷***...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish [compromise]. (Eph. 5:27)***

- B. Gentile believers will provoke Israel to jealousy to know Jesus (Rom. 10:19; 11:11). In other words, Israel will desire to have *what Gentile believers possess spiritually*. This will happen as Gentile believers show love for Israel, including risking their lives to *provide refuge* for Jewish people in flight, *performing miracles* reminding them of Elijah, and being *fearless* in the face of death.
- ¹¹ *...to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. (Rom. 11:11)*
- C. In the 1930s, if even 100 pastors across Europe had spoken clearly about the coming persecution of the Jewish people and the biblical mandate to stand with Israel, then many believers in Europe would have had time to process this biblical mandate *before* facing the challenges to their faith under Hitler's holocaust in the 1940s. Gentile believers would have had opportunity to prepare places of hiding with provision for the Jews in flight during the 1940s.
- D. God calls the Church to stand with Israel in their persecution now and under the reign of terror of the Antichrist (Isa. 40:1-2; 62:6-7, 11; Jer. 31:7-10; Mt. 25:31-46; Rom. 11:11; Rev. 12:13-17).
- ¹ *“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. ²“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.” (Isa. 40:1-2)*
- ¹¹ *The LORD has proclaimed [mandated] to the end of the world [Gentiles in the nations]: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him.’” (Isa. 62:11)*
- E. The Church must take a stand to boldly pray, declare, and sing the message of God's purposes for Israel so that all the nations hear it clearly (Jer. 31:7-10).
- ⁷ *Thus says the Lord: “Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O Lord save Your people, the remnant of Israel!’ ...¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’” (Jer. 31:7-10)*

VIII. DIFFERENT RESPONSES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL

- A. ***Some will be supernaturally protected:*** Some will remain in the land of Israel with God's supernatural protection (Joel 2:32; 3:16; Zech. 12:10; cf. Isa. 4:3; Obad. 1:17). God will call some believers to remain in the land of Israel during the persecution of the Antichrist.
- B. ***Fleeing from the land:*** Some will leave the land under the Lord's direction (Mt. 24:15, 16).
- C. ***Apostate:*** Some will stay in the land and worship the Antichrist, joining his regime (Rev. 13:8).
- D. ***Killed:*** Some will die in the land of Israel at the hands of the Antichrist's regime (Zech. 13:8).
- E. ***Imprisoned:*** Some will be taken as captives (Zech. 14:2; cf. Isa. 42:7, 22; 49:9, 24-25; Ps. 102:20), and some of these will be liberated by Jesus in a way that is parallel to the Jews in Egypt being liberated from captivity in the days of Moses.