

## **THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL: RETURNED AND RESTORED**

This evening have you ever connected the happenings in the world, in our newspapers, history books, and on the evening news – with God's Word the BIBLE?

To begin with open to Isaiah 11:11 as God describes the 2<sup>nd</sup> Return of His People. The 1<sup>st</sup> was after the Babylonian Exile in 586 BC, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Return after the Roman Destruction of Israel in AD 70-130 and this 2<sup>nd</sup> Return has happened in OUR GENERATION! People alive here tonight have witnessed this happen!

As I read see if your heart thrills as your mind sees the modern day “Miracle of Israel” that has occurred in the re-gathering of almost ½ of all Jews from 100 nations around the world back to Judea and Samaria of the Bible!

And they have returned since 1948 under the “banner” of a flag containing the blue of the Messianic longings of the prayer shawl and the Star of David (symbolizing the Messianic line of Jesus through David) boding centered as the only sign of their flag!

Where exactly did God say they would come back to in this 2<sup>nd</sup> Return? Jeremiah helps us by naming the places that the bones (the destroyed bits of the nation Israel) would come and be clothed with flesh (a nation again) awaiting the breath of God (revival) to come in the Tribulation Hour of Jacob's Trouble.

Note Jeremiah 32:33-44.

Is there any reason other than chance that half the world's surviving People of the Lord have returned to the Land the Bible has always called Israel? Is there any way this has to do with the 20% of the Old Testament that is not yet fulfilled? I believe the answer from God's Word is YES!

To understand the Bible, the Plan of God for the FUTURE and where we His people fit, we need to see what God is still doing with His people, The Lord's People in the Lord's Land.

### **Why Did God Choose A Particular People<sup>1</sup> And A Particular Land?**

There was an important reason for God to establish His covenants with His chosen people in His chosen land.

You see, God chose a particular place, Israel, and a particular people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for a particular purpose.

The Jewish people were chosen:

- 1) To witness to the unity of God in the midst of universal idolatry.
- 2) To show the nations the blessedness of serving the true God.
- 3) To receive, preserve, and transmit the Scriptures, (64 of the 66 books of the Bible were written by Jewish writers), and,
- 4) To be the human channel for the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

The land was chosen for one reason. As they say in the advertising business: location, location, location. While small in size, strategically, the land of Israel sits right in the middle of the great trade routes of the ancient world - between the great empires of Assyria and Babylonia in the north and Egypt to the south. One of the best descriptions for Israel could be, "The Land In-Between." This is exactly where God wanted His people.

Israel is actually a hinge, like the hinge on a door, between the great regions of the ancient world. Whoever controlled the Land of Israel, could exert great influence in the world. That is why conquering Israel was, and still is, a strategic goal of nations seeking to control the Middle East. However, this parcel of land is not up for grabs, for God had, and has, a plan for it.

God put His chosen people in a precarious place, right where God wanted them for a chosen purpose. At times of war or at times of peace, God's message would get out to the known world.

But why? God could have taken them to the remotest desert of the Middle East and created another Garden of Eden for them. There, they could have just basked in God's glory and provision, being removed from the conflicts of the world. In fact, out in the driest part of the desert where no one travels, they could have gone unnoticed until this century when our satellites would have finally photographed them from above.

### **God had other plans.**

1. The strategic location of the land would create special pressures. You might call it, "God's testing ground of faith." In this land, there was much pressure and many tests. But, through these tests, with all odds against the Israelites, God showed forth His miracle power to sustain them and bless them, even in difficult situations. That made people sit up and take notice.

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<sup>1</sup> BFP

2. Since all communication, trade, and even armies of the ancient world had to pass through this land, the message of God's relationship to man through His chosen people would be spread to the known world.

The people of Israel were to be the living testimony of God through their lifestyle and message.

In times of peace, traders and travelers could see and hear God's message to take to the world.

In times of war, God showed His power to miraculously defend them. This message also went around the world. For example, the great King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah in 720 BC. When he reached Jerusalem, he blockaded the city and mocked King Hezekiah and the God of Israel. God moved. The angel of the Lord killed the soldiers and officers of Sennacherib. II Chron. 32 says that Sennacherib returned back to Assyria in disgrace. Not only is this recorded in the Bible, but Sennacherib left an account of this event chiseled in stone which testifies to what God did on this day in Israel.

### **What Does All Of This Mean To Us?**

***"I will establish My covenant with him (Isaac) for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him" (Gen. 17:19)***

God's eternal, redemptive plan is clear in the Bible. Man sinned, separating himself from God. Yet, God wants to fellowship with us, so He implemented a plan that involved a man, Abraham, and a land, Israel, to bring about the salvation of the world.

However, this plan is not finished and the fulfillment of God's prophetic Word is taking place and relates to Israel and the Jewish people today. No doubt, there was, and is, a destiny that has shaped the history of the world.

The people of Israel were chosen to be a testimony for God. They did not have books, tapes, radio and television, as we do today. Their lives were a living message of God's love and power which He used to spread His Word to the people of the world.

I believe God's Word<sup>2</sup> teaches that He chose the Jewish people and bequeathed to them as an everlasting possession the Land of Canaan, so that they should give to the world His Word, men of faith, the Messiah and a living example of what it means to follow this one true God and experience His faithfulness and correction.

- *Acts 15: 14-18* Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 16 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; 17 So that

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<sup>2</sup> Drawn from ICEJ 4<sup>th</sup> Conference Conclusion papers 2/22/01.

the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.' 18 "Known to God from eternity are all His works.

I am also convinced from God's Word that the modern restoration of Israel is not a political anomaly, but evidence of God's on-going faithfulness to His people through His covenant made with the Patriarch Abraham.

- *Acts 17:26-27* And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

The more we understand God's Word the more we recognize the debt that we as Christians owe the Jewish people, since we share in their spiritual blessings and it involves repaying this debt by demonstrating our concern for them through deeds of genuine love (Psalm 122:6; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 15:27).

- *Psalms 122:6* Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.
- *Romans 15:27* It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.

## FULFILLMENT OF THE COVENANT

Although the New Covenant<sup>3</sup> is quoted in Hebrews 8, it cannot be taken to mean the New Covenant is fulfilled in the church for in Jeremiah 31:31, as well as in Hebrews 8:8, it is stated that the covenant is made with "the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." The covenant will be fulfilled with the nation with which the covenant is made. The time of the fulfillment of the New Covenant is eschatological as seen from the context of Jeremiah 31. In the section of Jeremiah 30–33 the setting is established in Jeremiah 30:3 where it states, "Behold, days are coming," suggesting an eschatological setting (cf. Jer. 31:27). Jeremiah related it to Israel's restoration to the land (Jer. 32:37, 40–41). "The sequence of events set up by the prophets is that Israel will first be regathered and restored to the land and then will experience the blessings of the new covenant *in the land*. ... Fulfillment of the prophecies requires the regathering of all Israel, their spiritual rebirth, and the return of Christ." The New Covenant is not fulfilled in the church but in the future kingdom.

Christians should take courageous action to support the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel in all its parts; to comfort and pray for them in their trials and adversities; and to proclaim to all men that their election is irrevocable, and was and is meant to bring about God's redemptive plan for the whole world (John 4:22; Romans 3:1-2; Romans 9:1-5; Romans 11:29).

- *John 4:22* You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.
- *Romans 3:1-2* What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

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<sup>3</sup> Enns, Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press) 1996.

- *Romans 9:1-5* I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.
- *Romans 11:29* For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The promised restoration of Israel is to be understood as a two-phased process, encompassing a restoration to the Land followed by a restoration to the Lord, the God of Israel (Ezekiel 36:24-28; Jeremiah 24:6-7).

- *Jeremiah 24:6-7* For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. (This must be after AD70's Diaspora) 7 Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

Reading Ezekiel 36<sup>4</sup> gives us a remarkably clear description of what has been taking place in Israel over the past 100 years. Interestingly, today's wildflowers on the hills of Israel have a lot to do with this promise and testify to God's faithfulness. This passage opens with God speaking to the mountains of Israel, lamenting their desolation and abandonment. This was caused by Israel's enemies who invaded the land to conquer the "ancient high places," and then boast about it. God did not intend that His land, Israel, would be inhabited and prosper under any other people, except the Jewish people, so it lay barren for generations. The observations of Mark Twain aptly fit the prophet's lament.

But, in verse 8, God had exciting news for the land: *"But you, O mountains of Israel, you will shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people of Israel; for they are soon to come home."*

He went on to say that He would multiply the numbers of people from the house of Israel, they would rebuild the ruined and wasted cities, and increase their flocks and produce of the land. When this happens, He says, *"You will know that I am the Lord"* (v. 11).

There is a connection between the fruitfulness of the land of Israel and those inhabiting it. We already read in Leviticus 25:23 where God tells us He owns the land, and He chose to give it to His covenant people - the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Only when the land and the covenant people are together in combination, do both flourish in accordance with God's divine plan.

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<sup>4</sup> Clarence Wagner, BFP online, Covenants of God article.

Ezekiel confirms that it is the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel that triggers the restoration of the land itself to its former glory - and more.

Their return and the land's restoration was also important for God's integrity, as well. In judgment, God scattered His covenant people for a season. Once scattered, Ezekiel 36:20 tells us that the people of Israel profaned the integrity of the Lord's Name and His promises among the nations, when the nations said mockingly, *"These are the people of the Lord, and they had to leave His land."*

You see, in the ancient world, the pagans judged the effectiveness of their pagan gods by how well these gods protected them in their land and provided for them. In this region, they worshipped the god Baal, for security from invading armies and the provision of rain and food; and Astarte, the goddess of fertility, for offspring.

Therefore, when the Jewish people went into exile and the land of Israel became desolate, the pagan nations mocked the God of Israel as unable to protect and provide for His people.

For this reason, in Ezekiel 36:23-28, God speaks of a great end-time return of the Jewish people to their covenant land, which He would orchestrate for the integrity of His Name. This was to show the nations of the world that He is the living God who keeps His promises. To accomplish this, in verse 24, God says, *"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land."*

In addition, God also desires to restore spiritual fellowship with His people IN His land when He says in verses 27-28, *"And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; and you will be My people and I will be your God."*

The process of this latter-day, prophetic move, as expressed by Ezekiel, is what I call the three R's of end-time Bible prophecy concerning Israel:

- a **RETURN** from exile to the land of their forefathers;
- the **RESTORATION** of the land, and then,
- the **REDEMPTION** and renewal of the spiritual life of the Jewish people in the land.

Yes, this day is today! The rabbis themselves even refer to our present day as, "Messianic Days." Surely, we can see that the land IS being restored and the people have been returning for over 100 years. And, as the Jewish immigrants return, many from former communist lands where the worship of

God and the reading of the Bible were forbidden, they are now learning of the Lord God of Israel in their ancient homeland, and a true spiritual renewal is beginning to take place. It is not all happening at once, but it is certainly in process.

Ezekiel gives us God's last word to the heathen nations of the world who sought to occupy His land and prevent His people from returning. In verses 34-36, he says:

*"The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, 'This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited! Then the nations around you that remain will know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it."*

This is an irreversible process, since we are promised that there will never be another exile (Amos 9:15; Isaiah 11:11).

- *Isaiah 11:11* It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea.
- *Amos 9:15* I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," Says the Lord your God.

And while Israel has been promised the entire Land, we nevertheless must allow room for God to judge the nation of Israel in her borders, just as in biblical days, as His chosen means of divine correction, knowing His higher goal is to bring her to Himself (Ezekiel 11:10-11; Ezekiel 20:33-44; Hosea 5:14-6:3).

- *Ezekiel 11:10-11* You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. 11 This city shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the meat in its midst. I will judge you at the border of Israel.
- *Ezekiel 20:33-44* "As I live," says the Lord God, "surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. 34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. 35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. 36 Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord God. 37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; 38 I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord. 39 "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord God: "Go, serve every one of you his idols—and hereafter—if you will not obey Me; but profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols. 40 For on My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel," says the Lord God, "there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them, and there I will require your offerings and the firstfruits of your

sacrifices, together with all your holy things. 41 I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. 42 Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. 43 And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. 44 Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel," says the Lord God.' "

- *Hosea 5: 14-6:3* For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. 15 I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." 1 Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. 2 After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. 3 Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth.

Regardless of political developments within the Jewish State, we are to stand by her, encourage her, make her jealous by our zeal for Him and for His Word, and declare the Word of God to her concerning her destiny (Isaiah 62:1-12; Romans 11:11).

- *Isaiah 62: 1-12* For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp that burns. 2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the Lord will name. 3 You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God. 4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you. 6 I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, 7 And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8 The Lord has sworn by His right hand And by the arm of His strength: "Surely I will no longer give your grain As food for your enemies; And the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine, For which you have labored. 9 But those who have gathered it shall eat it, And praise the Lord; those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts." 10 Go through, Go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway! Take out the stones, Lift up a banner for the peoples! 11 Indeed the Lord has proclaimed To the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him.' " 12 And they shall call them The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; And you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.
- *Romans 11:11* I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

We Christ's Church are commanded to honor the natural olive tree of Israel into which we have been grafted (Romans 11:17-18). We note that there is a Body of Messiah in the Land

of Israel today with much to offer the universal Body of believers - a living testament to the Jewish roots of our faith and to the faithfulness of God to His promises, and a means to counter anti-Semitism and encourage the Church in the nations to embrace Biblical Zionism.

- *Romans 11:17-18* And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

God's Word clearly foretells of a coming time of blessed rest and peace for the whole earth. No greater hope has ever been instilled in the heart of mankind, as when "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 any more" The Scriptures also reveal that this age of peace will be preceded by the restoration of Israel, which will come in the midst of great conflict and distress, as the nations resist and oppose the Jewish return to Zion. It has not been hidden from man that ultimately God will judge the nations for coming against the Jewish people whom He has regathered in Jerusalem (Joel 3). And it is only after the Lord "rebukes strong nations" for these actions that the promised universal peace shall prevail

- *Isaiah 2:4* 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.
- *Joel 3:1-3* "For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land. 3 They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy as payment for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.
- *Micah 4:3* He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; 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.

Any nations and all peoples that those who seek to dislodge the Jewish people from any part of Jerusalem, to disinvest Israel of her bequeathed inheritance, or to divide the Land of Israel are placing themselves in conflict with the God of the Bible (Joel 3:1-3). Indeed, they shall rupture themselves and fall irreparably under the judgment of God (Zechariah 12:1-9).

- *Zechariah 12:1-9* The burden of the word of the Lord against Israel. Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: 2 "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. 3 And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. 4 In that day," says the Lord, "I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the Lord of hosts, their God.' 6 In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem. 7 "The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of

Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. 8 In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the Lord before them. 9 It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Ultimately, we affirm that the restoration of Israel will usher in the coming of the Messiah to the Mount of Olives, as the Hebrew prophet Zechariah declares (14:3-20), and bring rest to God's people and the entire world.

*Zechariah 14:3-20*