

God's End Time Plan for The Land of Israel, Jerusalem and The Jews

Let's Avoid the Subject

This subject can generate such strong emotions that it's hard to get Christians to take a calm objective look at all the Scriptures have to say about it. There are many Pastors who feel uncomfortable over the teaching and practice of some of the extreme "Pro Israel" groups, yet they tend to say nothing for fear of stirring up strife. They are afraid of being wrongly accused of anti-Semitism or of not having a right loving attitude towards "God's Chosen People" the Jews.

Something, however, needs to be said about some of the unbalanced and seriously erroneous views which are being promoted on either side of this controversial subject.

On one side there are some so called extreme "Replacement Theology" groups who are equally off center on this subject in another way. They see no special spiritual and prophetic significance in the events in the Middle East and the re-establishment of the nation of Israel. They believe that God washed His hands altogether with the Jews with the destruction of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel in AD 70. They do not believe God has any special end time plan or purpose for the former promised land of Israel, Jerusalem or the Jews and they regard them as no more than another peoples group needing to be evangelized with some being saved as individuals.

Conversely, there are some groups who are so taken up with natural ethnic Israel that they are clearly off balance the other way. They ardently study Israel's ancient language, its religious traditions and its culture at the natural level and they seem to have no interest in the rest of the world and its great needs. They seem to think that the whole of God's great end-time purpose is entirely focused on restoring the natural Jews to their own promised land and protecting them from their enemies regardless of Israel's political, moral or military behavior.

What seems so strange is that although their passion for Israel's economic and political wellbeing is great, they seem to have little interest in getting these precious Jews to come to Jesus and be saved. Their only concern is to blindly support Israel politically in everything it says or does regardless of the rights or wrongs of the matter.

Some of these groups are committed to helping as many Jews as possible to return physically to their homeland regardless of their spiritual state and how much they hate the Name of Jesus. The fact still remains that Jesus is the only Way and the only Name under Heaven by which men can be saved. The tragedy is the vast majority of these immigrants are agnostic, atheistic or nominal Jews. There are a few ardently religious Jews making up about 10% of the population and we must recognize that they are just as lost and Hell bound as any Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Nominal Christian and they need desperately to be saved.

Within the Church these extreme pro-Israel believers are obsessed with prayer for Israel and Jerusalem and are eager to embrace the outward trappings of Jewish culture. Although usually of Gentile ethnicity they try to be more Jewish than the Jews. They are much more concerned to observe the traditional feasts and festivals of the Jews than they are to rejoice in the glorious Power of the Cross and the powerful Christian fulfillment of these festivals. They also work actively to try to make the Gentile Church more Jewish in every way. The declared purpose of this movement is that the Church should show its gratitude to the Jewish origins of Christianity by embracing the outward forms of Jewish culture and returning the Church to its original Jewish roots. Only then, in their opinion, can the Gentile Church be truly blessed of God.

The fact is that all the historic evidence points the other way. Once the Council of Jerusalem settled the matter, as recorded in Acts Chapter 15 verses 1-34, and James gave his famous judgment, no further attempts were made to get the Gentiles to behave like Jews. In fact, from that time on, many of the Jewish Christians abandoned their Jewish religious traditions and embraced a glorious new freedom in Christ, and the most ardent protagonist of this movement was the Apostle Paul himself.

For fear of offending their Jewish friends and losing their fragile friendship these groups say nothing to the Jews about their greatest need which is to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ their Messiah, and to trust only in His finished work on the Cross to give them right standing before Almighty God.

One of my major concerns is that the activities and teaching of some of these fanatically pro-Israel groups will actually result in the Jews being robbed of their opportunity to be saved and they are actually helping them to go more comfortably and complacently into a Christless eternity.

Even when some Jews are weakly saved, these attitudes and this behavior has prevented many of these precious Jewish believers from coming into their far greater inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Even when Jews are saved by faith in Jesus, they are often encouraged by these groups to call themselves "Messianic Jews" or "Fulfilled Jews" and remain as a separate isolated community. They are encouraged to retain their Jewish religious traditions and practices instead of abandoning these imperfect shadows for the glorious reality of their much richer fulfillment in Christ.

In addition, they concentrate entirely on the present earthly City of Jerusalem and upon the original natural inheritance of about 8,000 square miles of physical land that God originally promised to Abraham. They don't seem to recognize that in any case all of this will be destroyed and pass away at the end of the age to be replaced by a new Heaven and a new Earth.

But when these natural Jews become Abraham's descendants by faith, along with all other believers, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, they enter the Kingdom of God and qualify for a much greater inheritance, which is to possess and rule over the whole Earth with Jesus as King and Lord!

The truth is, that getting the Jews saved and bringing them into their full end time role in the Kingdom should be the passion of every Christian, Jew or Gentile. It will mean great enrichment for the Jews as they enter the Kingdom of God's dear Son and much blessing for the Gentiles who have already entered in and are waiting joyfully to receive them. We will all be greatly enriched by their coming in. Therefore, this should have a high priority with everyone who truly loves Jesus and longs for His appearing.

What is God's True End Time Purpose for the Jews?

To understand this, our first major step is to come to clarity about what the Bible really says. A lot of Scripture is devoted to this subject and it is evidently an important subject to God, especially as we approach the dramatic events of these last days. We need to read all the relevant Scriptures and understand what they really say and they must also be understood in their proper Biblical prophetic context.

We need to understand what God is truly saying through all these Scriptures which must be taken together as a whole.

We must not cling to an individual "proof text" that seems to support our point of view and ignore some others which do not. This is what I call "Ostrich Theology". Like an Ostrich, when we feel our position is being threatened, we can put our head in the sands of a few proof texts and refuse to open our eyes, look at the whole of Scripture and face all the facts. If we do this, it will lead us into error and keep us from the truth.

One of our next problems is to understand how many of these Scriptures are to be understood in strictly literal terms and how many of them are allegorical. Do they all apply literally to the physical City of Jerusalem which now exists on Earth?

Another important question to settle is do they apply to all the natural descendants of Abraham. If we were take this line of argument to its logical extreme it would have to include Ishmael and all his descendants plus Midian and many others.

These men and their descendants were also natural descendants of Abraham. Both Ishmael and Esau were circumcised with Abraham as part of the original covenant and in purely natural terms can equally claim the land as their inheritance.

It is more reasonable to conclude that they only apply to Isaac and then to Jacob (Israel) who are called the sons of promise and that they exclude Ishmael, Midian and Esau. God makes it very clear that the true descendants of Abraham were selected, not by natural ethnic descent but by Divine sovereign choice. This choice was then sealed by a right response of faith on the part of those selected but only after they were chosen.

If we therefore rightly restrict these promises of Scripture to the descendants of Jacob (or Israel) only, why should we suddenly from that point start including all the natural descent of Jacob regardless of whether they are believing like Abraham. Why, after several generations of selection by God's sovereign choice accompanied by promise and faith should the covenant and the promises suddenly revert back and begin to apply to all the children of Israel that came out from him by natural descent regardless of their attitudes of faith and obedience.

Is it not much more reasonable to conclude that God still continues to selectively choose and then elect those who make a right response of faith and obedience?

In other words, God's true people have always been found in a faithful remnant who respond correctly by faith and obedience, like their father Abraham. These are the true sons of Abraham. It has never been a matter of natural ethnicity. It has never been all those who could claim Abraham, Isaac or Jacob naturally as their father but a remnant within that wider group who believed and obeyed. This was clearly the teaching of Jesus and Paul plus the other writers of the New Testament.

If this is so, how is this remnant identified? The Jews themselves comprised only a small part of the original twelve tribes which made up the original nation of Israel. As we study Scripture it seems that the covenant and the promises were confined to a small, limited group within those who came to be called Jews several generations later. They were identified, like Abraham, by their faith and obedience to God.

If this is really true, and there is overwhelming evidence to support this, why should God in these last days suddenly start to include all the Jews simply because of their ethnicity when in the past He has always consistently rejected the large majority of Israel's descendants because of their unfaithfulness, rebellion and disobedience?

Such claims of natural descent were made by the Jews in Jesus' day. They claimed that they had Abraham as their father on the basis of natural descent. Jesus strongly refuted any such claim and stated that they had to believe in Him and receive Him like Abraham did in order to be Abraham's true descendants. On the contrary, Jesus said because they hated Him and tried to kill Him, they were not Abraham's children but were of their father the devil (John 8:37-56).

As we move into the greater revelation of the New Testament, we find that ethnicity, circumcision and other such factors have been completely eliminated and are now totally irrelevant. Instead, the issues of hunger for God, calling upon Him, responding rightly to the Holy Spirit by works of faith and obedience become the only factors that decide who God chooses. They alone will determine who will inherit all the promises that God made to believing Abraham.

There are some Christians today who argue that the Scriptures of God's promises to Abraham do not apply to natural Israel at all but now apply only to God's "New Israel" the Church, which is made up of all the nations of the earth, including of course all the Jews who truly believe. Several times in Scripture the Church is called "the true Israel". These Christians would state that it is only to these "spiritual Jews" that these Scriptures apply. They would also say it is only in these "spiritual Jews" that these Scriptures will be fulfilled at the end of the age. Such Christians would question whether these Scriptures can be applied in any way to the present political nation of Israel, largely secular and unbelieving as it is, just because it is made up mainly of the natural descendants of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Are These Scriptures Literal or Allegorical?

We need to know how much, if any, of these Scriptures are allegorical. Are they really written concerning the Church?

In the New Testament, the community of believers which was called The Church is several times called "the Israel of God", "God's Chosen People", "The True Jews", "The True Circumcision", "The True Tabernacle", "The Temple or House of God". These terms are used a number of times by several New Testament writers and even some of the Old Testament prophets. They describe a company of people, not places, and certainly not physical buildings such as the Temple in Jerusalem. In these cases, at least we are forced to conclude by the general rules of good exegesis that the correct interpretation of these Scriptures is certainly allegorical, and

they are written concerning the Church and not written literally concerning Ethnic Israel at all.

On the other hand, in other parts of the New Testament, particularly in the Roman letter from Chapters Nine through to Chapter Eleven, the apostle Paul is clearly talking about Ethnic Israel, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and it would be bending Scripture to think otherwise.

Elsewhere in the rest of Romans and in other books of the Bible, particularly in the Prophets, the most compelling interpretation seems to be that there are two equally valid interpretations running to parallel fulfillment and are applicable to both natural and spiritual Israel at the same time. The events concerning natural Israel are seen like a visible clock indicating where we are on God's plan of countdown to the end of the age.

What is happening on earth between natural Israel and its natural enemies is like a barometer indicating where we are in the showdown between spiritual Israel and the spiritual forces of wickedness.

Is it Possible to Sort All this Out?

Let me first share a valuable exegetical tool I received years ago which has helped me again and again to stay in the truth of what the Scriptures really say.

Unfortunately, I can no longer remember the person who first shared this with me and therefore I cannot acknowledge the source as I would like to.

This good exegetical principle teaches the following: - The seed and essential core of every major doctrine is always found in the words of Jesus Himself. He Himself is the Word of God. He only had the full revelation from the Father and the Spirit concerning the meaning of the written Scriptures as men wrote moved by the Holy Spirit. He alone has the right and the authority to add to, redefine and clarify all the words of Scripture including the Old Testament. In Hebrews Chap.1:1-3 we read: - "In times past, God spoke to us through the prophets but in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son".

For example, several times in the Sermon on the Mount beginning in Matthew Chapter 5, Jesus takes the words of Moses and corrects them or redefines them concerning, lust, adultery, anger and murder. In Matthew 19 He corrects Moses' teaching on marriage and divorce. There are many such examples.

These doctrines of Jesus are then expanded in the writings and greater revelation of the Holy Spirit as He wrote through the apostolic writers of the New Covenant. Jesus promised that once the Spirit had come, He would lead those first Apostles into all truth and reveal to them everything the Father had shown Him and He had said to them.

Until their spirits were illuminated by the Holy Spirit, they were not able to really understand many things that Jesus was saying to them. But on "That Day" when the Holy Spirit came, as Jesus had promised, everything changed. Immediately, when the Spirit was given at Pentecost, this amazing new understanding of the Scriptures poured forth from their spirits and was recorded through the various inspired writers of the New Testament.

Finally, equipped with this new revelation from Jesus and the greater insight of New Testament writers, we can go back to the Old Testament Scriptures where these truths had their beginnings and are put into their right historical setting. They are also filled out and enriched by story and illustration.

Then the full meaning of these Scriptures is brought out by revelation of the same Holy Spirit. We then discover that every page in the Old Testament is testifying by example, admonition, type and shadow of the Lord Jesus Himself, just as the first disciples discovered on the road to Emmaus when Jesus opened up the Law and the Prophets to them and showed them in these writings all things concerning Himself.

Only in this way can we come to full understanding of the actual writings of the Old Testament. Although opposite to the chronological order in which Scripture was written, it is the true revelatory order by which we come to understand the truth.

In other words, we must always allow the superior revelation of Jesus and the New Testament writers to define, explain and correct the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures.

With this in mind, let's begin with a few Biblical definitions.

1. WHAT IS A JEW?

a. **The Historical Definition**

The definition of this term has changed significantly over the Centuries. In the Old Testament it first meant literally a descendant of Judah, who was one of the sons of Jacob and one of the original twelve tribes of Israel. It was never used to describe the whole nation of God's people at that time. The whole nation was called "Hebrews", or sometimes "Jacob" or "Israel" but never Jews. Abraham was known as a Hebrew even before Isaac and Jacob were born but he was never called a Jew.

During the exile in Egypt, the one tribe of Joseph became the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. As a result, there were now thirteen tribes including Levi. The tribe of Levi then became priests to all the other tribes and were distributed among those remaining twelve tribes. They had no separate land or inheritance of their own. The Lord alone became their inheritance.

Under King Saul, the unity of the nation was seriously eroded and for seven years after Saul's death, only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, immediately accepted David as their King. The other ten tribes remained separate but after seven years they did finally accept David and came together again as one Kingdom under his rule.

This allowed David to move from Hebron to Jerusalem, deal with the Jebusites, set up The Tabernacle of David and establish his Kingdom which became a Kingdom of great power and authority. This Kingdom came to its full power and glory during the earlier years of Solomon. But because of Solomon's many wives from various pagan backgrounds, growing tensions began to emerge between the various sons. As a result, the Kingdom began to decline and disintegrate.

After the reign of Solomon, the one Kingdom of Israel split into two. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom formed Israel and the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom formed Judah. From then on, those of the Southern Kingdom were generally called Jews whether they were from Judah or Benjamin.

After the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria in BC 720, these ten northern tribes were absorbed into many nations. They intermarried, lost their separate identity and completely disappeared as a discernable nation. The land forming the Northern Kingdom of Israel was occupied by the people of many different nations. They worshiped their own gods as well as fearing the Lord.

Jehovah was regarded by them as a "territorial god" over the land in which they had now come to live. He was not perceived by them as the God of the whole Earth but as a local deity who needed to be placated along with all their other gods as they were now living in His territory. This land, later known as Samaria, became totally apostate and followed a syncretistic religion involving a corrupted worship of Jehovah along with the worship of many other "gods".

The Southern Kingdom of Judah continued for more than 100 years after Israel had disappeared, but the whole population of Judah was finally carried away to Babylon in three stages beginning in BC 608. Most of them sought to retain their identity in their forced "disaphora", or dispersion among the many nations around the Mediterranean. They continued to read the Scriptures and worship Jehovah in local synagogues scattered around the Babylonian Empire.

A small minority of these Jews returned 70 years later to begin to reoccupy the original promised land in BC 538 under the leadership of Zerubbabal. After several stops and starts over about 20 years, the Temple was finally rebuilt under his leadership through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. After about 100 years the City of Jerusalem was finally rebuilt under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah from B.C. 445 onwards.

The vast majority of the Jews, however, remained scattered among the nations of the former Babylonian Empire, now the Persian-Median Empire. They remained as distinctive Jewish communities and preserved their

separate identity by practicing the traditions and religion of the Jews. They gathered in small synagogues to pray and read the ancient Scriptures. No animal sacrifice was practiced because it was understood this could only take place in the Temple in Jerusalem.

These returned exiles normally used the term Jew for themselves but sometimes used the wider terms of "Israel" or "Jacob" although only Judah and Benjamin remained.

The term Israeli or Jew gradually became synonymous for those who returned to live in Judah, the southern part of the original Promised Land. It was also used to describe those from the southern Kingdom who continued to live as Jews in the lands to which they had been scattered. They built themselves little synagogues and somehow managed to maintain their Jewish traditions and culture in exile in these various nations and various empires which came and went over the next several hundred years.

It becomes very clear from the prophesying of their prophets, particularly Zechariah, that even as the Temple was being physically rebuilt, these prophets were seeing in the Spirit a much greater spiritual fulfillment in the Heavenly Realm. To them, this physical building was a small, imperfect, allegorical representation of something much greater and more glorious that God was going to raise up in the Heavenly Realm in the last days. Malachi, the last prophet before the 400 years of prophetic silence, thundered these same truths. We shall look at these things more fully later.

b. In the Period of the New Testament

At the time of the New Testament, the understanding of the term "Jew" would be similar. It would describe those who lived in Palestine or Israel and adhered to the Jewish religion. It would also include those who remained scattered in many nations in the Roman Empire but kept their Jewish identity and followed their Jewish religious traditions. It would also include proselytes of many nations who had embraced the Jewish religion during the dispersion. They would have been circumcised as Jews and now lived as practicing Jews in the various Cities of the Greek and now Roman empires. A good example of this would be Simon of Cyrene with his wife and his two sons Rufus and Alexander. They were a black African family from Cyrene in North Africa mentioned several times in Scripture and located in present day Lybia.

c. The Present-Day Definition

Today, the term "Jew" is much more vague. The present-day nation of Israel officially recognizes as a Jew or Israeli anyone who can prove Jewish nationality by birth from Jewish parents within present day Israel, or by direct descent within the last two generations from undiluted Jewish stock living elsewhere. They can also become a "Jew" by marriage to a Jew if they also accept and practice the Jewish religion, or they can become a "Jew" by embracing the Jewish religion as a practicing convert. Present day Israel is largely secular and is full of ethnic "Jews" who are strongly patriotic concerning their nationality as Israelis, but are atheists, agnostics or nominal non-practicing Jews concerning their religion.

d. The Definition of Jesus

In John's Gospel Chapter 8, verses 37-59, Jesus is facing a hostile crowd who claim to be the children of Abraham. Jesus carefully defines who Abraham's true descendants are. They are defined as those who love and receive Jesus, just as Abraham did when he met Him in the person of Melchizedek. This was because they truly knew and loved the Father and who bore witness to Him. Those who hated Him and tried to kill Him were defined as the children of the devil even though they claimed natural descent from Abraham.

From then on, throughout the Gospels, the Book of Acts and the Epistles, the term "The Jews" is used to describe a company of orthodox, religious, Jewish fanatics who opposed and hated Jesus and persecuted the Early Church. They were the ones who crucified Jesus, stoned Stephen the first martyr and caused the death, imprisonment and persecution of many Christians in the early years of the Church. All who suffered at their hands in the early days of the Church because of their faith in Jesus were themselves ethnic descendants of Abraham and Israel. However, they refused to be called Jews anymore but preferred to be called believers in Jesus or Christians who were "of the circumcision".

This collective term "the Jews" occurs about 160 times in the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles. Although all but

one of the writers of the New Testament were themselves ethnically Jewish, they write about “The Jews” as if they were some separate group, apart from themselves, to which they no longer belonged, and who had become the opponents and enemies of Jesus and of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

e) **The Apostle Paul’s Definition**

The Apostle Paul gives a more precise definition. He writes, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God”. (Romans 2:28)

He also defined the true circumcision. “We are of the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3-7). The true circumcision must glory in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in its natural Jewish ethnicity. See also Galatians. 6:15, which states “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love”.

2. **WHO ARE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM?**

As we have already said, if we think in purely natural ethnic terms, all the Arab nations have the same claim as the Jews on Abraham as their father and on that basis could also claim an equal right to the Promised Land. Ishmael was circumcised along with Abraham, long before Isaac was born. The purpose of that circumcision was to seal God’s covenant promise concerning the Land (Gen. 17:7, 8,26).

Therefore, Abraham pleaded with God that Ishmael should be his heir but God emphatically said “No”. God then made a sovereign, elective choice and said the “son of promise” Isaac would be Abraham’s sole heir. This was said even before Isaac was born (Gen. 17:15-21).

Later, God commands Abraham to listen to his wife and cast out the bondwoman Hagar with her son Ishmael because Ishmael would not be allowed to inherit along with Isaac, the son of promise. (Gen. 21:10,12). This is repeated prophetically several times in other Scriptures (Isa. 54:1; Gal. 4:2, 30).

Nevertheless, God did appear to Hagar and make certain specific promises of blessing to her concerning her son Ishmael. He also promised he would become a great nation.

3. **Paul Makes it Very Clear to Whom the Promises Were Really Made**

“But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, in Isaac your seed shall be called. That is, those who are the children of the flesh (i.e. natural descendants of Abraham or even Isaac), these are not the children of God; but only the children of the promise are counted as the seed (Rom. 9: 6-8).

Therefore, know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7).

4. **There Is only One Seed which will inherit The Promises. This Seed is the one new Corporate Seed made up of all who have come to faith in Christ with Jesus as their Head.**

(Gal 3:14-18) “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, and to your seed, who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by **God in Christ**, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”

So, God confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given and three generations before Judah was even born. So the Jews have no ethnic rights to the covenant and only become partakers of the covenant by faith in the same way that the Gentiles do.

Also, these Scriptures make it very clear that the inheritance cannot come through the vehicle of the observance of Moses Law but can only come by promise and believing faith. Note that God made the Abrahamic Covenant **in Christ** four hundred and thirty years before the Law and Moses Covenant came into existence. So the Covenant of Promise through faith in Christ Jesus was and still is the way that Abraham and all his seed must come to God.

5. Like the Risen Christ, this One Seed has no earthly ethnicity (Gal 3:27-29)

Writing to the Gentile believers in Collosae, Paul writes:-

*“You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here (in the new Man) there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.¹²Therefore, as **God’s chosen people**, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”.* (Col 3:7-12 NIV).

Therefore, becoming the seed of Abraham, inheriting the promises and becoming “God’s chosen people” has got nothing to do with ethnicity and it certainly cannot be a matter of who is or who is not a natural Jew. But it’s all a matter of faith through Christ. Whether we are Jew or Gentile is irrelevant. It is only those who are of faith who are of the true line of the seed of promise.

B. THE LAND OF PROMISE

1. A Physical and A Spiritual Promised Land

Hebrews 11:8 -16 As we have already seen, when Abraham came to dwell physically in the land that God had promised him, he dwelt there “as in a **Foreign Country**, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (verse 9).

We are also told that Abraham regarded this land of Canaan as a land of sojourning or temporary dwelling. So, he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the sons of promise, because he was looking for another City and another Land. The City was Heavenly Jerusalem. It had foundations and its builder and architect are God. The Land that Abraham sought was also in the Heavens (verse 16) . The Heavenly Land was to be occupied by building this heavenly, spiritual, (but nevertheless very real) City of Jerusalem. Once this Heavenly Land is fully possessed, it becomes the means of bringing the Kingdom of God over the whole Earth.

As a result of this revelation Abraham now saw that his inheritance was to include the whole earth and not just Canaan (Romans 4:13).

Nevertheless, God made clear, unambiguous promises concerning a small physical piece of land on Earth of approximately eight thousand square miles whose boundaries were very clearly defined geographically. This land was known as Canaan and later became Israel.

We are forced by these Scriptures to recognize two lands. One is spiritual in the Heavens and the other is physical on Earth. We shall see later what God says about this physical land.

In addition to this it is clear that God revealed to Abraham at some point on his long journey from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan that he and his seed would inherit the whole earth (Rom.4:13). Paul also wrote to the Corinthians “The whole earth is yours” (1 Cor.3:21). That’s why presumably we are told that Abraham did not say “We’ve arrived” when he got to Canaan and just settle down there but he dwelt as a stranger and sojourner along with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise, looking for the City and the Land which were heavenly and was the means to his full inheritance.

THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

The Two Jerusalems

In Galatians, Chapter 4 verses 21-32 Paul, and also in Hebrews Chapter 12:18-24, the writer to the Hebrews, speak of two Jerusalems.

a. Physical Jerusalem - The City which now exists on Earth

This is the present earthly physical Jerusalem and is described as still being in bondage with her children. She represents the Old Covenant, Hagar and Mount Sinai and is definitely not of the line that will receive the promises. We are in fact commanded to cast her out, for neither she nor her son can inherit with the woman (or City) of promise (Gal 4:30). She is a City that represents the Law and practices an outward form of the Jewish Religion. So how can this City inherit the blessing and promises made to Abraham and his seed which can only be received by faith?

b. Heavenly Jerusalem - The City which now exists in the Heavens

The second Jerusalem is not on earth at all, but nevertheless, it does already exist in the heavens. This Jerusalem is free and is already the Mother of us all who believe and is of the line that will receive all the promises (Gal. 4:26-31; Heb. 12:22-29).

She will be the Mother of countless multitudes from all nations tongues and peoples, without striving or effort, through the power of the Cross, instead of being married to the Law (Isa. 53:1 - 54:17; Rom. 7:1-4). She is the Church.

It is this Heavenly Jerusalem that will one day come out of Heaven adorned as a Bride for her Husband and is clearly not a City of stone but built entirely of people who are joined to Christ and to one another in love and who have become His Bride. This City will then be the glory and center of His Kingdom forever within a New Heaven and a New Earth. Once David's Tabernacle is established, this spiritual City can be built in the heavens starting at Mount Zion which is also spiritual in the heavens. (Rev. 21:9-27).

In the light of this, which City should we be concentrating on? Which City should be the focus of our prayers and our passion? Read as an example Ps. 87:1-7 (written in David's Tabernacle). Which City is God talking about here?

Considering Pss122, in what way should we be praying for the Peace of Jerusalem? Peace is only to be found in the coming of the Kingdom (Isa.9:6,7; Eph 2:14-17).

Nevertheless, other Scriptures make it very clear that God still has a special end time purpose for the natural physical City of Jerusalem on Earth. He's going to use it as a provocation to gather the God (Jehovah) hating nations, who hate the natural Jews and who also hate Jesus and His Church and the Jews. These nations will be gathered against Physical Jerusalem on earth. God will bring them to battle at Jerusalem and thus to judgment (Zech 12:1 to Zech 14:11).

At the same time the battle over Jerusalem will be the provocation that God will use to cause that generation of Jews to look on Him whom their forefathers pierced in their blindness and their fury long ago when He came to be their King and protect them and make that City the center and launching place for His glorious Kingdom.

They will come to loath themselves and repent and turn with great sorrow to Him whom they crucified. They will repent, believe and be saved (Zech 12:10-14). It is so important to keep the right balance of Scripture in these matters.

WHAT ABOUT THE TEMPLE?

Understanding The Tent, The Tabernacle and the Temple

From the days of Abraham right through to this present day there have always been people who longed for God's presence and who were prepared to pay the price for it. They, as a first priority, took time to be alone with God. A number of them had a simple tent of meeting to which God would come and meet with them face to face without any veil or ceremony of religion. As a result, they became a friend of God.

Moses was a great example of this. In Exodus 33 we read how Moses and a few others, one of whom was Joshua, would meet God face to face in this tent of meeting which stood long before the Tabernacle of Moses had been designed or built.

Even after Moses Tabernacle had been built Moses kept his personal tent well outside the camp and he continued to meet with God there. God could come to him and the few others who had paid the price and presence Himself among them without bringing judgment to the rest of the camp of Israel. In Moses Tabernacle the Levitical Priesthood could minister to the needs of the people without any of the Priests or the people having to get near to God. They could have their sins covered, They could bring their tithes and offerings and so experience the financial blessings of God. They could come with their sicknesses and the Priests could pray over them and they could be healed. All without getting anywhere near God. In this way God could be a blessing to them without destroying them with His presence.

The Tabernacle of David was a further development of this. During the whole of David's reign David's Tabernacle stood on Mount Zion and Moses Tabernacle was moved to Mount Gibeah, about 7 miles or ten kilometers away. This allowed the people of Israel to make their choice. If they wanted God they went to Mount Zion with David and paid the price for intimacy and joyfully dwelt in His presence. If they wanted the benefits without getting too near to God they went to Moses' Tabernacle.

Towards the end of David's reign, he had this great longing to build a house for God which was more glorious than his own house (2 Samuel 7:1-4). It seemed a very laudable desire and Nathan the prophet told him to do all that was in his heart without consulting God first. Then, that night, God spoke to Nathan and showed him how wrong he had been to give the go ahead to David. So, Nathan came back with a word of correction which makes God's heart very clear. Basically, God doesn't dwell in buildings and doesn't want Holy Temples being built, which will lead his people into error. He has always chosen unimpressive tents or tabernacles so the people will come for Him and not for the glory of the building.

Also, God states His passion is to dwell with people who are of a humble and a contrite spirit who will pay the price of intimacy. (2 Sam 7: 4-17). Nathan also gives a clear prophecy concerning David's seed who is clearly not Solomon but Jesus who will build a house of People, not a physical building at all, and this is the only building God is interested in and willing to dwell in. Jesus prophesied this at the beginning of His ministry in John 2: 19-22. Paul further develops this thought in Ephesians 2:19-22. Peter also refers to this in 1 Peter 2:4-10

During His early reign Jesus obviously never liked the magnificent Temple that Herod had built. It was built for political reasons by a corrupt evil man and his demonized wife and not to glorify God at all. It became a great stumbling block to Israel in the days of Solomon and again in Jesus, day and He prophesied its destruction.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

1. God's Unchanged Heart for Ethnic Israel

Despite their rebellious history and consistent unfaithfulness, God still sent His Son Jesus to Bethlehem in Judea to be born a Jew after the flesh and so become the Savior of the World.

Jesus first proclaimed the Kingdom of God to the Jews to give them one final opportunity to repent and fulfill their destiny. They had the opportunity, by receiving Jesus as King, to become the beginning of the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on Earth in which case earthly Jerusalem would have become its capital City. They would then have been given the privilege of taking the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations of the world and bringing them all to the feet of Jesus in joyful submission to His rule and government. In this way they would have fulfilled all the prophetic scriptures and been the means of blessing the whole Earth. But

they missed their day of opportunity.

The first twelve Apostles, all Jews, were initially sent only to the “lost sheep of the House of Israel” to proclaim the Kingdom of God first of all to them (Luke 9:1-6).

The Apostle John writes “He came unto His own but His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). Apart from a believing remnant, they refused Him as their King and refused to come into the Kingdom of God.

In Luke chapter 17 and 19, Jesus weeps over the earthly City of Jerusalem and declares how often through the prophets and other messengers He had tried to bring them to accept Him as their King so He could protect them, as a hen protects her chickens under her wings, from all Satan’s wicked plans of destruction. If only they had received Him, Jerusalem would not have been destroyed. Instead, Jesus would have protected her and made Jerusalem the center of His Kingdom and a blessing to the whole Earth.

But with tears streaming down His face, He finally declares “But you would not receive Me, therefore your City is left to you desolate”. He also says “You did not perceive your time (kairos moment) of opportunity. Concerning the Temple, Jesus said “Not one stone shall be left upon another”.

In Matt. 21:33-43, Jesus first taught the parable of the wicked vine dressers clearly referring to himself as the Son and owner and the scribes and pharisees as the rebel servants who would finally kill him. As a result, the City would be judged and destroyed. He then proclaimed to the Jews “The Kingdom is taken from you and given to another nation bearing the fruits of it” (Matt.21:43).

After they had crucified Him, the Jews were the main persecutors of the church for several decades until they ceased to exist as a nation.

Again and again the writers of the New Testament, all but one of whom were Jews, refer to “The Jews” as their main persecutors and opponents and as a result saw “The Jews” as something separate and apart from themselves because they rejected Jesus as their Messiah, killed Him and persecuted the Church.

It would be reasonable to think that as a result of this, that God would forever be finished with the Jews. Hence Paul’s question in Romans 11:1 “Has God cast away His people”? The answer is “Certainly not”! God has promised through the apostle Paul that He will do something fantastic among the Jews at the end of the age so that “all” Israel would be saved, (probably a poetic all), and becomes a Christian nation which would become a wonderful and vigorous part of the Kingdom of God in the last days.

This judgement on the City of Jerusalem came in response to their continued rebellion and stubborn opposition which culminated in the crucifying of Jesus.

Is this judgement reversible or is it final? I am compelled to conclude from these and other Scriptures that this judgement is final and irreversible in terms of the Jews as an ethnic nation being the initiators, source and center of the Kingdom. However, the door is still open for them to come as individuals, repent, believe and play a vital and glorious role in the manifestation of the Kingdom.

Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 11-22 declares that God, through the Cross, has made peace between Gentile and Jew in the Kingdom and has made One New Man from the two. As we unite as one redeemed, multi-racial, New Israel under God, we will have great power to sweep away all opposition and on the foundation of apostles and prophets build the Kingdom with great power and authority.

Amos Chapter 9 is the very chapter where God promises to raise up again The Tabernacle of David which has fallen down as the means of reaping the great end time harvest. Just prior to this great promise, the prophet in verse 6 makes a clear distinction between Israel as a House, and Israel as a Kingdom. He promises the House will continue but the Kingdom will be irrevocably destroyed.

From that day to the present time Israel (or Judah) has never been permitted to become a Kingdom again. Although several Macabee leaders tried to re-establish the Kingdom, they were never successful. During the time of the Jesus and the Roman Empire for a time, several generations of the Herod family were appointed by the Romans to function as a vassal “King” under their control. These “Kings” were never really accepted by the

Jews and again the Kingdom was never established.

Jesus was Temporarily a Jew on Earth, but not after His Resurrection

In Romans Chapter 9, as Paul begins to share his burden for his brethren after the flesh, he declares in verses 4-5 *“who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, **according to the flesh**, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen”*.

Several times in the Epistles Paul is careful to refer to the Jewish ethnicity of Jesus as something He had temporarily during his earthly life as He fulfilled the role of the Last Adam. Jesus, we are told, was of Judah **according to the flesh**; Paul also states in 2 Corinthians 4:14 that he **once knew Christ according to the flesh** but now knows Him thus no longer.

The Risen Christ is clearly The Lord from Heaven (1 Cor.15:45-49) and not of this earth at all. He is Melchizedek, The faithful High Priest of the New Covenant and of the Heavenly Tabernacle (Heb. 7:1-14). This Man is without genealogy without father or mother, without beginning or end or days, like the Son of God. **In His resurrection Jesus is without human ethnicity and is now no longer a Jew.**

All of us who have been to the Cross and are now raised with Him have experienced the same transformation. We are citizens of heaven and of his Kingdom and our earthly ethnicity is now of no consequence.

3. Should the Church Therefore Become More Jewish?

We have already seen that in both Old and New Testament, the full power of the Kingdom was not released until David's Tabernacle was raised. In this Tabernacle, David, along with everybody else, ceased to be a practicing religious Jew. He became a Priest after the order of Melchizedek as well as a King. Although from the tribe of Judah after the flesh, David wore a linen ephod. He danced and worshiped, unveiled before God in the Shekina Glory of His presence, something quite illegal and impossible according to the Law of Moses and the Levitical Priesthood.

Melchizedek was clearly the high priest of that Tabernacle of David. No sacrifice for sin was ever offered there because they had, like Abraham, seen and believed in the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb who, in the spirit realm of eternity, was already slain before the foundation of the world.

The Tabernacle of David had to become free from the bondage of Jewish Law and Tradition to allow the full authority and liberty of the Kingdom to have the power to throw down demonic principalities and powers in order to become more effective in reaching the world and reaping a great end time harvest.

Although all the writers of New Testament Scripture were Jews (except for Luke), they did not use Jewish terms or words at all even when writing to Jews. The original manuscripts were written in Koine Greek, not Aramaic as some have erroneously tried to teach. All passages from the Old Testament Scriptures quoted in the New Testament were from the Greek Septuagint version and not from the Hebrew text.

By the year AD 50-55, when the New Testament began to be written, the first Jewish believers did not appear to be interested in maintaining a Jewish culture or imposing this on the Church. They never spoke once of “Messiah” or “Yeshua” but always of “Christos” and “Jesus” in their Greek forms. Many Jews did not even speak Hebrew anymore and the majority were much more familiar with Greek. For this reason, the Old Testament had been translated into Greek and many Jews only read this Septuagint Greek version of their Scriptures and were not able to read the Hebrew.

Paul, more than many, was one who had once been a prisoner to these legal binding deceptions of Jewish Religion and was once in deep bondage to the religious demons who had moved into pervert and take control of many of these Jewish traditions. This took place in a very similar way to what has happened to many of the Orthodox Christian churches today. As a result, he saw more clearly than many how these traditions must be rejected and that they could not be part of the New Covenant. He fiercely resisted every attempt to “Judaize” the new Gentile believers. He said of those who brought such a message it was another gospel; it was another

Jesus and exclaimed "let them be accursed who bring such error" (Galatians 1: 6-12).

In the Philippian letter Chapter 3, Paul describes his impressive Jewish pedigree and then declares it to be dung or trash and of no value, compared with the excellencies of knowing Christ and the power of His Resurrection.

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul, writing to a mixed readership of Jews and Gentiles, so destroys the idea that Jews have a special place in the Kingdom simply because of their ethnicity that he is forced to ask and answer the question at the beginning of Chapter 3 "Is there any advantage in being a Jew"? He replies "There is much in every way" (Rom.3:1,2) The chief thing being, that to them was committed the "Oracles of God" a phrase which roughly means the "actual speakings of God".

It is obviously very desirable for a Jew to continue to express his culture, as with any culture, within the multicolored fabric of the Body of believers. This is part of the multicolored wisdom of God (Eph.3:10).

But there is something extra and uniquely special when a Jew comes to Christ from the faithful remnant of Jews that have truly know God, been open to His Spirit and have loved His Word all down the centuries of time.

There is something particularly special and precious about that true Jewish Remnant and their culture which has preserved from generation to generation the true gradually emerging written revelation of who God really is and what He is really like. These men and women had their wonderful encounters with God, lived in His presence, heard what He said, wrote it down and pondered its deep meaning. As a result, there has emerged a rich cultural perspective peculiar to this remnant group.

But this was not true of the majority of ethnic Jews who simply practiced the empty externals of their religion without ever knowing or desiring to know God Himself. They honored Him with their lips but their heart was far from Him.

Each succeeding generation of this remnant group that truly sought God did not have to start from scratch but built upon the discovery and knowledge of God imparted to them by their godly forefathers.

It was this small group, within Israel, who in every generation sought to know God rather than just practice a religion. These people had many wonderful encounters with God over the centuries. They hungered after God and knew Him in some measure. They were often not ardent practitioners of religious Judaism and lived free from the Law. It was such people who were alive in the generation in which Jesus was born who recognized Him as the Messiah, received Him joyfully and at great cost to themselves became the foundation and pillars of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Unlike any other language, the Hebrew language was shaped primarily by the desire to accurately put into words the things the true God was showing to such people concerning Himself. They gradually began to see the true nature of God, the nature of Sin, the nature of Man and the relationship that God desired to have with Man.

Godly men and women opened their hearts and spirits to God and He taught them by His Spirit. Then they struggled to find words to write down what He was showing their spirits. So, they invented new words to describe more accurately what God by His Spirit was revealing to them. For this reason, the Hebrew language has many shades of meaning and specific words which much more accurately describe the mysteries of God, the nature of Man and the nature of Sin. Much more than any other language Hebrew has become a vehicle for God to reveal Himself. These writings and sayings became "The oracles of God".

The Greek language is also a very rich language but its weakness is that although many of their great philosophers thought and pondered their way through the mysteries of God, Man and the Universe, they were without spiritual knowledge of the true God and could only use their considerable natural intellect to plumb these mysteries. Consequently, Greek Philosophy came to some very wrong conclusions concerning the nature of man and of God and of the universe He had created. As a result, the same richness of words on these topics does not exist and even worse, some concepts particularly concerning the nature of God and Man are very misleading. This unfortunately today is the main philosophical influence upon our Western culture.

Every true believer is greatly enriched in his understanding and appreciation of the one true God if he recognizes and receives this remnant Jewish heritage. It is only right that Gentile believers should in this sense remember the Jewish roots of their faith with deep gratitude. They need to appreciate the enormous price that was paid by this remnant group to bring us this glorious gospel of this so great salvation to us.

But this must not be carried past the point where the truth and simplicity of Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom is compromised or confused in one of several ways.

Further thoughts to ponder and research:-

How did the Early Church handle This?

The Testimony of the first Martyr Stephen Acts 7

The Very Early years - A Jewish Church before the Gentiles came in

The Early Years - First Samaritans, then the Gentiles coming into a Jewish Church

The Gospel going out to the Gentiles who don't have any Jewish Roots anymore?

The Council in Jerusalem Acts 15 sets the scene.

David's Tabernacle is raised again

The Church initiative passes from Jerusalem to Antioch, and then to Thessalonica and Ephesus?).

The Apostolic initiative passes from Peter to Paul.

The attitudes and writings of the early church fathers AD 50-AD 200

Some of the same errors which occurred then and were addressed by Paul and others in the Scriptures and by several of the early church fathers in their writings are occurring once again in the church.

They must be as strongly resisted by us today as they were by Paul and the writer to the Hebrews in the early days of the Church. Some of them are listed as follows:-

a. Embracing the Shadow rather than the Reality

The Shadows which were contained in the ceremonial Law must never be allowed to obscure or replace the Reality that has now come. That would be an insult to Christ and His so Great Salvation and is an anathema to God.

b. Confusing Secular Jewish culture and godless Zionist activism and its attendant political aspirations with God's true end time purpose for His People and His Kingdom.

Do we cheer for the Nation of Israel and stand with the Jews whatever they do?

c. Confusing dead apostate Jewish religious ceremony and activity with the true spirituality of the faithful Remnant Culture

3. What is our Responsibility to the Jews?

In Romans Chapters 9-11 Paul gives us some guidelines as to how the Jews will respond to Christ at the end of the age. We are told they will be provoked to jealousy when they see God's blessing upon the Gentiles and

this will convict them and cause them to be saved (Rom. 10:19-21; Rom. 11:11-14).

Therefore, the greatest practical thing we can do to bring the Jews to Christ is to make the Church so magnificent, so glorious, so evidently blessed of God and so rich in all the promises which God made to Abraham, that the Jews are forced to take notice and see beyond any doubt that God is with His People the Church and through the Church the Kingdom which many Jews are longing for is evidently being powerfully established.

The honest ones like Nicodemus will have to cry out "I know that you are a man, a woman sent from God for no one could do the things which you do unless God is with them. They will then be provoked to seek God for themselves so they might be saved and come into this glorious Kingdom as equal partners with us of this one nation under God.

4. God's Affection for Certain Geographical Locations

God's purpose has always been for the whole Earth. He declares "The whole Earth is Mine and the fulness thereof". He has given the whole Earth to Abraham and his Seed as an inheritance (Rom. 4:13).

Nevertheless, He has deep affection for certain geographical places that are very precious to Him because of the things that happened there.

There are many such places in the land of Israel and a number in present physical Jerusalem such as Mt. Zion, Mt. Moriah, the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane to name but a few.

Certain prophetic Scriptures concerning end time events are given a definite geographical location involving one or more of these places.

D. The Literal and the Spiritual Are Running Together to Conclusion

1. The Existence of Israel is a Present Day Miracle

As a cynical agnostic, Napoleon Bonaparte once said to one of his godly Bishops "Give me a proof for the existence of God." The Bishop simply replied "The Jews my Lord". The fact that Israel even exists is clearly a supernatural miracle. The hand of God is evidently upon the nation to preserve it.

One by one, the words of the prophets are being fulfilled concerning Ethnic Israel as well as for Spiritual Israel. The physical fulfilment is like a visible clock we can see and read, telling us the time and the place where we are at in the end time purposes of God.

The physical is the Shadow and the spiritual is the **Reality**. Ethnic Israel may inherit at the natural level but it is much more important, even for Jews, to inherit with us as Spiritual Israel all the fulness of God's promises to Abraham concerning the whole Earth. Only that will last.

2. God Also Loves the Palestinians and Wants Them in His Kingdom

There is no solution to the Middle East problem. Natural Ishmael and his descendants will always be at war with Natural Israel. The problem is spiritual not political. There can be no peace until all parties lose their natural ethnicity and come into the Kingdom of God. As the new corporate Israel of God with all their natural enmity crucified, they can live in love and harmony as the One New Man in Christ (Eph.2:11-18).

Isaiah makes an amazing prophetic prediction concerning Egypt, Assyria and Israel (Isaiah 19:18-25). After chastening them, God will cause them to become one with Israel and they will all worship the Lord. There will be peace and brotherhood between them and they will all joyfully come together in Jerusalem to worship God. Can we even imagine such a thing?

Eventually, only the Kingdom of God will remain. The earthly physical City of Jerusalem along with everything else on this present Earth will one day be burned up and disappear. Then there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth in which righteousness dwells. Then, Heavenly Jerusalem will come

down out of Heaven as a Bride adorned for her Husband and will become the glory of the whole Earth. The picture is highly allegorical and what this means literally is hard to imagine. It will probably only become clear as the events actually take place. This will just as it was with many prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus. Then every knee will bow and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. There will not be one Scripture left unfulfilled.

It is far more important to get ethnic Jews to receive Jesus as the fulfilment of the all Scriptures say concerning Messiah. They need to have their eyes opened so they can see the Kingdom of God, enter into it, receive as their Savior and so become a glorious part of the true Israel which will be made up of all nations. Amen!