

4

Israel: God's Prophetic Clock

There is one nation, one city and one group of people that emerges from the past, stands at the forefront of current events, and shapes the future. The activities of these people provide us indicators for end time events. We will take a closer look at what the Bible says about this one group of people who have blessed the world. We are living in the most incredible and exciting days of human history as the last pages of the Bible read like the front page of today's news! The nation Israel is the linchpin around which God's end time program revolves. If we lack a proper understanding of Israel's ongoing role in what God is doing here on earth, we will never understand it.

If you read Bible prophecy, you will discover that Israel is in some way connected in 100% of all prophecies about the future. Indeed, the eyes of the entire world are upon this tiny state of Israel because the Jews and Israel are the people and the land of destiny. Israel is God's program for what He is doing in the world.

"In our times the biblical prophecies are being realized," Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu declared before world leaders gathering at the United Nations General Assembly in October 2013. He then goes on to explain some prophecies that are being realized in our times. I have discussed some of these in Chapter 3. You really need to keep your eye on Israel; God's end time alarm clock.

Who are the Israelites?

In the very beginning God did not choose a group or a nation of people called Israel. God chose a person called **Abraham** whose descendents became the Jewish nation. Let me explain: the Israelites are the physical descendents of Abraham through his sons Isaac and

Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel in Genesis 32:28. From then on, his sons and other descendents were called "sons of Israel" or "Israelites." Jacob's fourth son was called Judah and his descendents are called Judeans. Later, the name "Judean" was shortened to "Jew." The one thing that makes the Jewish people unique is that they're the only race in the world whose history can be traced back to its very beginning. We can trace their beginning back to 2166 BC, when Abraham was born. We even know that the name of Abraham's father was Terah, and that he came from Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia.

The word Israelite is often used synonymously with the terms Hebrew and Jew. We sometimes refer to the Israelites or Jews as "God's chosen people." This appellation is directly tied to the covenant or agreement God made with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. The Israelites were also the recipients of other covenants with God such as the Mosaic Covenant, Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant. The New Covenant was extended, by the grace of God after Christ's death and resurrection to include anyone; Jew and Gentile alike, who had faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:12).

What does it mean that the Jews are God's chosen people?

God's Word affirms that the Jews are God's chosen people (Deut. 7:6). From eternity past God knew that He (Jesus) would need to be born into the human race in order to save mankind from the spiritually dead condition that they were in (Ephesians 1 & 2; Genesis 3). God had planned from the beginning to be born into a very small nation or race of people called the Jews. The Old Testament tells the story of how God set about creating, distinguishing, and preserving that race.

The ultimate goal of God's choice of the Jews as His chosen people was to produce the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would be the Saviour of the world. Jesus had to come from some nation or people, and God chose Israel. God first promised the Saviour/Messiah after Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Genesis 3). Later, God specified that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12). Later still, He narrowed the Messiah's ancestry to the line of David (2 Samuel 7). Throughout their history, the people of Israel were aware of their "chosen" status before God.

However, God's reason for choosing the nation of Israel was not solely

for the purpose of producing the Messiah. God's desire for Israel was that they would go and teach others about Him. Israel was to be a nation of priests, prophets, and missionaries to the world. God's intent was for Israel to be a distinct people, a nation who pointed others towards God and His promised provision of a Redeemer, Messiah, and Saviour. For the most part, Israel failed in this task. However, God's ultimate purpose for Israel was that of bringing in the Messiah and this was fulfilled perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Why we know this is truly the end of the age – Watching God's prophetic clock

In centuries past, people from time to time would look at world events and think they could see the fulfilment of end time prophecy, and proclaim it to the world. However, in every instance, those who knew their Bibles well would protest that the end of the age could not yet be happening because the *Key Prophecy* of Israel returning to her land had not yet happened. Bible scholars have always correctly considered that the end time clock would not begin to tick until Israel had returned as a nation to her ancient God given land and in particular the City of Jerusalem being back in the hands of the Jewish people. This happened in **June 1967** (after some 1900 years) and at that moment, the end time clock began ticking. Thus, we can know with great certainty that the world is now living in the end of the age.

It is alarming that there are so few people today, especially in the church, that recognize how important the modern state of Israel is in God's plan. The truth that the Jewish people must return to their ancient homeland has been known among some theologians throughout the Church Age. The most famous theologian who wrote about the physical return of the Jews to the Holy Land was **Sir Isaac Newton**. He stated around 250 years before the nation of Israel was re-established that the Jews would return to the Holy Land and form a nation again. The re-establishment of the nation of Israel to her ancient homeland is considered to be the most important warning sign of the end times. The parable of the fig tree is about Israel being reborn (Matt. 24:32). I truly believe that those individuals born after 1967 are the final generation and the rapidly approaching end of the age when Christ returns to earth.

God has predicted in His book in various places that the sons and

daughters of Israel would return to their land, the land of Israel, just before He would send them their Messiah; Christ Jesus. For almost 20 centuries the children of Israel have not lived in their homeland simply because one did not exist. Until 1948 there has not been a nation of Israel for them to return to. Since 70 A.D. they have lived in various parts of the world, mostly in Europe, but on other continents as well. But in the last 70 years, we have seen the re-establishment of the State of Israel and the return to that land of the people known to the world as "the Jews." Over the past 70 years we have seen the fulfilment of prophetic Scripture never before seen by any other generation. To date, there are close to 8 million Jews who call Israel their home who have returned there just in the last 70 years and their presence there is an incredible testimony to how close we are to the return of Jesus Christ.

You might say, "What is the big deal with Israel; particularly Jerusalem?" "What is it about this tiny piece of real estate that captivates the nations?" To anyone well acquainted with God's Word – this should come as no surprise. The attention being given to this place was all predicted in the Bible. This is one of the interesting things about Bible prophecy; we are presented with history written in advance. Israel's role in Bible prophecy is of extreme importance. It doesn't take an expert to see how Israel's very existence is a miracle.

Jerusalem is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible. This is the one place in all of the world that Jehovah God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has singled out and called "His Own." God said, *"but I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there: and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel (2 Chronicles 6:6)."* God goes on further to say, *"For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually (2 Chronicles 7:16)."*

The nation Israel is like no other nation on the face of the earth. It is God ordained, God decreed, and a God protected nation. They are His special, chosen people. He chose Israel, *"to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6)."* Then in verse eight He adds why He chose Israel, *"because the Lord loves you and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)."*

The history of the Jewish people for the last 2000 years continues to fulfill what Moses said would happen to Israel. The Jewish people have maintained their identity, but were at the mercy of the nations. They suffered at the hands of the Byzantines, Crusaders, Muslims, Europeans, Russians and most recently the Nazis. Because of their disobedience to God, Moses warned Israel in Deuteronomy 28:66, *"Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life."*

In the end times, after the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation, God again deals directly with Israel. The angel Gabriel informed Daniel over 2500 years ago that His people Israel and the City of Jerusalem would be the centre of world focus (Daniel 9:24). They would serve the role as God's prophetic clock. In the end times, God would restore the Jews to the land of Israel. It is God's plan for Israel that controls the future. They are His chosen people, and many promises that were made to them by Jehovah God to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) still remain to be fulfilled. God keeps His promises and everything experienced by the Gentile nations of the world in the future will be tied in some way to God's plan for Israel.

The control of the land called Palestine (ancient Canaan; the Promised Land) is the most volatile issue in international geopolitical debate. But the land belongs to God, and He deeded it to Israel as her homeland (Genesis 12:7). And that deed has never been cancelled.

Only the covenant promise of God has been sufficient to keep the Jews alive as the people today. Any other nation would have vanished off the earth. History has demonstrated that any people who leave their homeland will, after five generations, lose their national identity by being absorbed into the culture, but the Jewish people remained a distinct entity. Not only have they survived, but the nations that persecuted them have either been destroyed or have completely lost their individual identity and have been absorbed into other cultures and races. You cannot find the ancient neighbours of the Jews anywhere. Have you ever met a Moabite? Do you know any Hittites? Are there any tours to visit the Ammonites? Can you find the postal code of a single Edomite? No! These ancient peoples disappeared from history and from the face of the earth. Yet the Jews, as God promised, have returned to their land. And, they are beginning this

final regathering to the land of promise which ultimately will be fulfilled during the thousand year reign of Christ (Rev. 20).

What is the land that God promised to Israel?

In the book of Genesis God made many promises to Abraham but I just want to focus on one and that is the land promise which has never in the history of Israel been fulfilled but will be in the Messianic kingdom to come. In chapter 15, God declares to Abraham, *"To your descendents I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates (v.18)."*

According to Genesis 15:18 and Joshua 1:4, the land God gave to Israel included everything from the Nile River in Egypt to Lebanon (South to North) and everything from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River (West to East). So, what land has God stated belongs to Israel? All of the land modern Israel currently possesses, plus all of the land of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; some of Egypt and Syria, all of Jordan, plus some of Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Israel currently possesses only a small fraction of the land God has promised and even in the golden age of Israel under King Solomon they never came close to possessing this land that God gave them. But, they will in the Millennium during the reign of Christ Jesus. God keeps His promises.

Currently these lands are occupied by other nations. The question arises of how Israel will acquire this land. Will she have to invade and conquer other countries? The text in Genesis 15 offers no indication that Israel will have to fight and conquer; therefore, the logical answer is that the Lord will see that the promises are fulfilled.

The boundaries of the land promised to Abraham's descendents is clearly indicated in the Bible, yet we know that Israel has never had control of the full extent of this land. The Lord never said when it will happen, but He does say that it will happen. I believe that after the final battle (Armageddon) where all the nations of the world that came against Jerusalem will be defeated by Christ Jesus; He then sets up His 1000 year reign on earth (Rev. 19 and 20). God's promises to Abraham will be fulfilled with the establishment of His Messianic kingdom. As we see from history God has fulfilled every promise given to Abraham so far and we can be certain that He will fulfil the land promised to Abraham's descendents during Israel's future golden age.

God's timepiece

Everyone knows that the tiny nation of Israel, with a population of just over 8 million people receives enormous attention in the world's media; far beyond what its size would warrant. Have you ever wondered why the tiny nation of Israel is in the news nearly every other day? Have you ever wondered why when Israel does almost anything it certainly makes headlines? Why the entire focus of peace in the Middle East centres on Israel? Why Israel, what is so significant about this tiny little country whose size is less than Vancouver Island?

Some countries are renowned for their strategic location, their great size, their climate and natural resources, or their industrial and manufacturing capability and capacity. Israel is not known for any of these things yet there is no other nation in the world that stirs men's hearts like the mention of the nation of Israel.

God sees the beginning from the end and knows all things. God has a schedule and has appointed times for events to happen. God has lovingly given us a look at His schedule so that we won't be caught off guard when these events take place. He has appointed Israel as His prophetic timepiece. If you want to know what time it is in God's schedule, all you have to do is look at what's happening in Israel. God uses the nation of Israel as a sign to the world that Christ's return is near.

God's name and honour are at stake

God's very name is linked to the regathering and survival of Israel. His promises will be brought to pass for His own purposes. You can count on it; God does not lie.

Not only would the land be restored, but the people would be restored to the land. The reasons for their exile were bloodshed, intermarriage and idolatry; they caused the name of God to be profaned among the nations wherever they went as they were associated with God. In order to vindicate His own name, and not for Israel's sake, God would restore the people to their homeland.

"Therefore I poured out My fury on them (Israel) for the blood they

have shed on the land, and for their idols with which they have defiled it. So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judge them according to their ways and their deeds. Wherever they went, they profaned My holy name, when they said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.' But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord... when I am hollowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land (Ezekiel 36:18-24).'

Let me ask you this: "If God has no purpose left for Israel, as some people think, why would He go to the trouble of regathering them? After all they were troublesome and disobedient to God in the first place and that was why He dispersed them to all the corners of the earth as a punishment."

Israel is again the homeland of the Jews

After 1900 years, Israel became a nation again and it started in 1948 and was completed in 1967 with the recapture of Jerusalem by the Israeli army after the Six-Day War. There you have it from the lips of God, as to why, this will be done. The Lord will restore Israel, not because of any good in them, but because of good in Himself. God's name has been profaned among the Gentiles and God is going to restore the honour of His name, when His Son is exalted on the throne of David in Jerusalem and rules and reigns for a thousand years in what is known as the **Millennial Kingdom**. A golden age where God's unfulfilled covenant promises to the nation Israel will be fulfilled beginning in the 1000 year reign of Christ Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16)." This title given to Jesus indicates that He has the power to exercise absolute dominion over all His realm. In John's vision, Jesus is returning to judge the world and establish His earthly kingdom, as He predicted in Mark 13:26.