

Israel, are they entitled to the Land of Israel

The Miracle of Israel – She Was Restored to Her Promised Land after 2500 Years

The Prophet Ezekiel recorded a startling prophecy (in Ezek. 37). It is usually described as the “vision of the dry bones.” He saw a valley filled with the dry, disjointed bones of thousands of human skeletons lying in open graves. As he watched, the bones began to come together and grow flesh. Then the corpses came to life and stood up, “an exceedingly great army” (Ezek. 37:10) As the prophet continued to stare in astonishment, the Lord unveiled the meaning of the vision.

The Lord revealed to him that the disjointed, dry bones symbolized the whole house, or nation, of Israel and the horrible plight they would face while dispersed among the Gentiles. The graves represented the gentile nations into which they were forced to flee. The fact the graves were open showed that the gentile nations were not to be the permanent dwelling place of the Israelites. The coming together of the resurrected bones to form a great army is a prophetic picture of the magnitude of the miracle God swore He would perform in restoring the dispersed nation to its ancient homeland of Israel.

Although Ezekiel confidently wrote of the restored Jewish state as “Israel” 2,500 years before, those who served as midwives to the rebirth did not decide on the name until the very day before!

On Nov. 5, 1914, Britain declared war on Turkey, the home of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks were allies of Germany. Neither the British, nor its allies in France, were in position to send troops into the Middle East. Britain already had strong interests in the region, controlling Egypt and key points at the southern end of the Arab peninsula, including the Suez Canal. Britain wanted to keep this route open, as it was the gateway to Britain’s most valued colony, India. Much of the Middle East was in Ottoman hands and had been for centuries.

The British realized that if they were to have any success at all, they needed to cultivate a new ally, the Arabs. An agreement was drawn up between the British High Commissioner in Cairo, Sir Henry McMahon, and Hussein ibn Ali, the Sharif of Mecca. Ali hoped to be the first leader of an independent Arab state.

A letter from McMahon dated Oct. 24 1915, was clearly written and excluded from any agreement “portions of Syria lying to the west of Damascus, as they cannot be said to be purely Arab, but it did promise the Arabs their own state. Subject to the above modifications, the letter stated, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support all regions within the limits demanded by the Sharif of Mecca.

By this letter, the British promised away Turkish lands in exchange for Arab aid in defeating Turkey. Through this and subsequent letters, the areas that are today Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt were included in the promise. Not mentioned in any exchange were the areas of Palestine, which at that time extended from the Gulf of Aqaba to the southwest across to the Euphrates River in the Northwest corner of what is today Iraq.

In 1916, Britain and France began negotiating about what they would do with the Ottoman Empire when they won the war. A secret plan, known as the Sykes Picot agreement, divided the Ottoman Arab lands in 5 categories. Some were to be under direct French or British rule, others merely under French or British influence.

Finally, a region containing the “holy places, roughly corresponding to Palestine, was to be under the joint control of both. There was no mention of a separate homeland for the Jews. Neither was there any attempt to honor the understanding given to Hussein. And a third promise made the following year would complicate the situation ever further.

During WWI, a British scientist, Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, developed a synthetic acetone and showed how it could be used to create a new kind of smokeless gun powder called “cordite”. This helped the British significantly shorten the war. In gratitude, the British government offered to grant Weitzmann a “boon”. Weitzmann, a Zionist leader, asked for a homeland for his people. The problem was turned over to Lord Arthur Balfour. Balfour saw several advantages for Britain in acceding to Weitzmann’s request.

First, he needed the support of the wealthy Jews inside Britain, especially Lord Lionel Rothschild, a wealthy Jew and prominent banker. Secondly, it would be in Britain’s interests to have a state friendly to Britain in the eastern Mediterranean region. Thirdly, largely as a result of the growing sympathy for a Jewish state, brought on thanks to Darby and the rising tide of evangelical Christianity, there was public support for the concept in Parliament. Lord Balfour then sent his famous letter, known to history as “The Balfour Declaration,” that promised a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

His request resulted in the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, which in part said: “His majesty’s government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object.

Lord Balfour had become an avid believer in the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy, through the influence of John Darby’s extensive ministry. As a result, he believed that God could not lie to the Jewish people when He promised to return them to their own land and reestablish the State of Israel. Lord Balfour, with the assistance of another Member of Parliament named Lord Lindsay, who also believed in the literal promises of Bible prophecy, had exerted considerable influence on their colleagues for the sake of seeking to help establish a Jewish homeland.

In December 1917, at the height of WWI, Britain found itself in a position to implement the Balfour Declaration. In the providence of God, General Allenby captured Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, ending 400 years of Turkish Muslim rule. At the end of the war, the League of Nations dismantled the Ottoman Empire and divided the Middle East between two peoples, the Arabs, and the Jews. Of the land apportioned to the Jews by the Balfour Declaration in 1917, only some 20% was given the Jews by 1921. The remainder of the promised Jewish homeland was awarded to the Arabs. This was due to an unexpected furor among the Muslims, who suddenly found the neglected and desolate land of Palestine to be of infinite value.

By the end of the Great War, Britain found itself in the position of having promised all things to all people, and now it was time to deliver. The McMahon Hussein Agreement gave the land east of Damascus to Hussein of Mecca. The Sikes Picot Agreement divided it up between Britain and France. And the Balfour Declaration gave Palestine to the Jews. The French & British solved their differences by the simple expedient of dividing up the territory by drawing borders, freehand, over the map of the Middle East.

The French created Syria and Lebanon. The British carved Iraq and Transjordan out of what had been Mesopotamia. But when it came to Palestine, the Arabs dug in their heels and demanded that as well. Arab hopes had been raised by McMahon's declaration of support for Arab independence, which the Arabs now claimed encompassed the whole Middle East.

The lack of historical understanding on the part of the British and French diplomats involved is staggering. They drew boundary lines that artificially divided ancient tribal lands and divided tribes into nation states. The legacy of these "diplomats" to future generations was a Middle East in a perpetual state of war. Now, that's diplomacy!! The Balfour Declaration and the support it received in the British government greatly annoyed the Arabs. Even Winston Churchill had spoken eloquently in favor of keeping Lord Balfour's commitment: "It is manifestly right that the Jews, who are scattered all over the world, should have a national home where some of them might be reunited. He went on to say it will be good for the world, good for the Jews, and good for Britain.

But it was not good for the Arabs. And they, as it so happens, have most of the proven oil reserves. In 1921, at the San Remo conference, the British said they had misspoken, and did not intend for the WHOLE of Palestine to become a Jewish State. They proposed instead to divide Palestine into two states, one Arab, and one Jewish. This was an outright lie and marked the beginning of constant concessions to the Arabs' increasing demands.

The British proposal to divide the area into two states was well received by the Jews. Chaim Weitzmann who went on to be Israel's first president, enthusiastically discussed the plan with King Faisal Hussein of Iraq, who initially gave his blessing, then withdrew his support in 1929. But if the Arabs had accepted the 1919 plan, the Jewish minority may well have been "absorbed" into an Arab Palestinian State. And that was not God's plan for His people.

The Peel Commission in 1937 offered a similar 2 nations, one state, proposal. Again, it was accepted by the Jews and rejected by the Arabs. Again, the irony is, had the Arabs accepted it, they would have won the battle for land over which they are currently fighting. And, they would have won without firing a shot and with the enthusiastic support of the Jews. The Woodhead Report of 1938 proposed an even smaller region of Jewish autonomy. Again, the Arabs rejected it; the Jews supported it, although somewhat more reluctantly.

The White Paper of 1939, offered by the British, was much more pro-Arab than any previous offer. At the time, the British were trying to win Arab sympathies away from the Nazi Party. The White Paper curtailed Jewish immigration, cut back Jewish settlements, in fact, it was little more than a tacit recognition that Jews physically existed on the land. Amazingly, the Arabs rejected

even this plan, which gives insight into what they really want. And what they really want is the total obliteration of any Jewish presence in what they continue to call Palestine.

In March 1939, the British government actually asked the Germans to “discourage travel” by Jews to the Holy Land. According to official documents, Sir Neville Henderson sent a cable to the Nazi Foreign Office. It stated that a large movement from Germany of Jewish refugees, who without visas or any arrangements for their reception, were attempting to land in any territory that presented the slightest possibility of accepting them. This is a cause of great embarrassment to His Majesty’s government, and as it appears, to the American government and the latter have expressed a wish you should join the American charge d’affaires in Berlin in bringing the situation to the attention of the appropriate German Authorities and requesting them to discourage such travel on German ships.

The UN Partition Plan of 1947 offered by the UN gave a tiny portion of the land to Israel, the remainder to the Arabs, and declared Jerusalem an open city. This too, was rejected by the Arabs. The first time any partition plan ever offered by anyone was even looked at seriously by the Arab side was in 1968. That was after they had lost the West Bank and city of Jerusalem to Israel following their most recent attempt to wipe the Jewish State off the face of the earth.

This is not rational conduct! These people are doing just what God said they would do exactly when He said they would do it. This is Bible prophecy coming alive and functioning before us, with the whole world as witnesses. A terrible catastrophe is about to fall on all the Muslim nations that have attacked Israel. The warning is clearly predicted (in Ezek. 36:1-10), but none of these people are listening.

The British immigration policy for Palestine underwent several modifications during the years between wars. As the Arabs objected to the influx of Jewish refugees fleeing Europe, Britain changed the rules to curtail Jewish immigration into Palestine. Britain’s need for Arab oil became more important than keeping its promise to the Jews. In 1930, the White Paper was passed through Parliament, effectively banning further Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Certain elements within the British Foreign Ministry became hostile toward the Jews, especially some of the personnel working in Palestine. Because of this attitude, many millions of Jews who might have escaped the Nazis perished in the SS extermination camps. This kind of action not only sealed the fate of the Jews, but of the British Empire. God warned the gentile world 4,000 years ago of what He would do to the people or nation who harmed His people simply for being Israelites.

He promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning their descendants, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse the one who curses you.” The rise and fall of many great gentile empires of history can be traced to how they blessed or mistreated the Israelites. The Jews suffered through the Holocaust where 6 million men, women and children marched to their deaths.

A note on this: After WWII, the Empire “on whose flag the sun never set” found itself being progressively destroyed. Today, the UK is only a shadow of what it was.

The survivors emerged from the Nazis Holocaust a different people. The nations were shocked. For some, the shock quickly wore off and began to see them as “problem refugees.” Everything they owned, homes, property, and bank accounts, had been confiscated before the war. The new owners agreed it was a shame but did nothing to right the wrong. Greed proved once again to be a universal human weakness.

The Jews of Europe became the Israelis of Palestine. Tough, disciplined, and courageous in the face of overwhelming odds. They fought against British immigration restrictions to sneak themselves into Palestine by any means. They fought against a hostile Muslim population that was being flooded with new Muslim residents from all over the Muslim world. When the British disarmed them and heavily armed the Muslims, they smuggled weapons in with incredible cunning and audacity. They organized freedom fighting cell groups that gave the British more than they could handle.

The British withdrew, and Israel claimed the land of Palestine to be the Jewish homeland on May 14, 1948. They proclaimed a new State and providentially named it Israel. The next day, they were invaded on all sides by the combined might of the Muslim world. Humanly speaking, there is no way to explain how the Israelis defeated the well-trained, heavily armed Muslim army that outnumbered them 10 to 1.

Twelve hours before the document had to be signed and turned in, Israel’s declaration of Independence, Ben Gurion heard the others in the next room arguing about what the name of their new nation would be. He could hear them through the walls tossing around possible names for the new state: Zion! Greater Zion, Judah, Judea. He thought that whenever you have three Jews in a room, you have 5 opinions. He knew the Arabs would have but one answer, Jihad, a holy war.

Ben Gurion was born as David Grein in 1886 in Czarist Poland. But he decided to give himself a new Hebrew name. He chose Ben Gurion, which means “son of a lion.” Then he smiled as his thoughts returned to the momentous event about to happen. “My country” he muttered. Then he unknowingly fulfilled many ancient prophecies by writing in the name “Israel” at the top of the document.

Never in history has such a thing happened. From being scattered across the face of the earth for 2,000 years, they returned to the same piece of real estate from which they were driven. They brought with them their culture, preserved through the centuries, their religious laws, their dietary laws, their customs. They kept alive a sense of nationhood that somehow survived in their hearts. The empires of the Assyrians and the Babylonians of this world all rose and fell. Israel alone, scattered, without friend, land or flag, has endured to become a nation again. There are no Jebusite people in the world today, no Babylonians, no Medes, no Amalekites, no Canaanites or Philistines. But Israel exists, as it did before Nebuchadnezzar!

The cold war enabled the USSR to build the most formidable arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in history. That arsenal is now equipping the Muslim confederacy for their predicted war with Israel, just as Ezekiel predicted the Russian sons of Magog would do.

On May 15, 1948, five well equipped Muslim armies attacked the tiny new State of Israel from all sides. The British trained and equipped Arab Legion of Jordan attacked and captured the power station at Naharayim. An Iraqi expeditionary force tried to ford the Jordan River in the area of Gesher. They were held back for a full week by the poorly armed settlers of Gesher. The Iraqis finally withdrew, choosing to cross the river at a ford held by the Jordanians. The Syrians actually began their attack on the night of May 14. They unleashed a devastating barrage of heavy artillery against the poorly armed settlements south of the Sea of Galilee.

Arab radios announced with euphoric glee that the “War of Annihilation” had begun! The Arab Legions numbered more than 650,000 men. British mercenary officers of great renown led some of the Arab armies. All Arab armies were armed with the most modern of weapons and air power of the time. The Jews, on the other hand, had only 45,000 “troops”, most of whom were guerrilla fighters from the Haganah, Palmach, or members of the Irgun and Stern groups. Under the British mandate, it was a crime punishable by death for a Jew to carry a firearm, although Arabs carried weapons openly.

As a result, the new Jewish army had very little with which to defend itself. Chaim Herzog, the Jewish historian, estimates the total armament at the Haganah’s disposal was 10,500 rifles, 3,500 light submachine guns, 775 light machine guns, 34 3” mortars, and 670 2” mortars. And, worst of all, they only had sufficient ammunition for 3 days’ fighting. The Palmach, the “Israeli Army,” for want of a more descriptive term, was able to arm only 2 out of 3 of its fighters. Against the Arab Legion’s modern jet air force, Israel had 20 unarmed Piper Cubs. The Arabs also controlled the only landing stripes in Palestine.

The Arabs fought a very different Jew than those who went meekly into Hitler’s death camps or lined up naked in front of ditches to be machine gunned by members of the SS Einsatzgruppen. Outnumbered by more than 100 to 1, and hopelessly outgunned, these survivors of the death camps, of countless persecutions in the Muslim countries, and of the hardships that life in Palestine had to offer, shocked not just the Arab armies, but the entire world. Many Israelis charged into battle without a weapon to take one from the dead body of a fallen enemy.

A few Jews from outside the country flew in on a wing and a prayer with obsolete German Messerschmitt fighters purchased from Czechoslovakia. With these planes and some cavalier volunteer pilots, they cleared the skies of enemy planes and turned back an Egyptian armored corps in the Southern Gaza Strip. With a determination rarely seen in any war before or since, the Jews met every onslaught. 10% of the total population of the new Israeli State fell in battle. But when the dust cleared, the Israelis controlled all the land set aside for them by the original Mandate plus half the city of Jerusalem. On June 11, 1949, the Arabs withdrew, and the Israeli State became a fact.

At the beginning, it looked hopeless for the outnumbered and outgunned Jews. The Arabs were justified in their conviction of an easy victory. But some of the rabbis proclaimed God’s promises from the Torah to the beleaguered men, “Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword” (Leviticus 26:8).

The land of Israel became the land of the Jews, by miracle if you please. Their victory is inexplicable apart from the unseen intervention of the Hand of God. God has a Plan for the last days. A restored land of Israel, homeland to the Jewish people, is the key element in His plan, and the very existence of Israel bears testimony to it. The old rabbis remembered, and even the atheist immigrants from Russia took heed to the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure” (Isaiah 46:8-10).

God wants the world to know that His promises concerning His chosen people are His promises, not merely legends in an old Book. By their very survival, the Jews prove God is exactly who He says He is, and His counsel shall indeed stand, and He will do all His pleasure. The birth of Israel sets a pattern that is drawing us toward the end of days and the Day of the Lord. Israel fought 5 wars in its short 50 years: The War of Independence, the Sinai Wars, the 1956 Suez Crisis, the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War. In each war, Israel ended up with just a little bit more of the territory God promised to “Abraham’s seed forever.

Who Really Caused the Palestinian Refugees: Weeks before the war, Arab families were encouraged to abandon their homes and flee to the Arab countries. They were assured that within a matter of weeks, they would be allowed to return and reclaim their homes, and also the homes of the massacred Jews. Although the new Israeli government pleaded with them to stay and fight together for a common homeland, all but a handful crossed over into Jordan to wait for total victory against the Jews. They expected to return home as soon as the hated Jew was slaughtered. Instead, after the war was lost, their “brother” hosts kept them in miserable refugee camps and did nothing to help them.

The Death of Colonialism: For most of the past 200 years, the major European powers invaded, subjugated, and set up colonies in many places around the world. The legacies of colonialism are still apparent on the map. The Dutch Antilles, The US Virgin Island, the British West Indies, and so on. It was colonialism that gave rise to the saying “the sun never sets on the British Empire.” Before the Revolution, The US was itself a colony of Great Britain. At the close of WWII, the cost of maintaining colonial empires became too high for the colonial powers.

The British had been bombed out of business; their only option available was to begin to divest it from foreign obligations. As the various colonial empires were granted independence, a new spirit of ethnic pride was rekindled in nations who had lived for generations under a sort of “national schizophrenia.” Countries previously held together by colonial powers splintered into smaller countries better suited to their ethnic makeup. In 1948, the UN was composed of 66 nations and since at least an additional 128 countries came into existence.

Jerusalem is a “Burdensome Stone”: Through Zechariah the prophet, God predicted that at the time of the end. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen on 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. (Zech. 12:2-3).

One of the biggest problems for the planners of the coming one world order is what to do with Palestine. The 5 million Jews there are not about to surrender their sovereignty to the UN or the US or anyone else. They have made their last move. To this day that is more than apparent. The significance of Jerusalem's end time prominence is clear that the Holy City will be in the center of world events in the end time.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs will focus more and more attention on Jerusalem. The total world situation may be expected more and more to be cast into the mold that prophecy indicates the stage is set and the actors are ready for the final drama in which Jerusalem will be the key! Many ancient prophecies are unfolding before our eyes, but they could not be fulfilled until Israel was back in her land as she is today. This was written by Tim LaHaye in 1999.

Here is an example of one of the many promises regarding the re-gathering of Israel. God showed the prophet Ezekiel the bones of the Hebrew nation and asked him if they could live. The godly prophet wisely replied, "O Lord God, You Know" (Ezek. 37:3).

Ezekiel 37:7-11a "So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them". "Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath," "Thus says the Lord God;" "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live" "So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army". "Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel."

They indeed say, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off". Then say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. They shall not defile themselves with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people and I will be their God" (Ezek. 37:7-11 & 21-23).

How it came about: The gradual growth of the Israel nation from scattered skeleton to full body development is starting. As Ezekiel's prophecy indicates: "There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone" (37:7). Following this, "the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them (Ezek. 37:8). From the sound of an earthshaking event (WWI), the seeming dead nation of Israel was to gradually formulate a body, after which the spirit would be breathed into it. We submit that history records the birth of the nation of Israel exactly in this manner, beginning in 1917.

Here are the amazing events which took place. In 1916 the war was going adversely for England. German machine guns and other advanced weaponry was cutting down their soldiers. Desperate

to find a rapid method of manufacturing TNT and a smokeless gun powder, they turned to a brilliant Jew named Chaim Weitzmann who invented such a formula that made possible the rapid production of those vital materials thus changing the course of the war. In return, David Lloyd George, representing the British government, told Dr. Weitzmann to name his price. Rejecting personal reward, he requested that Palestine be declared the International homeland for the Jewish people. Consequently, the Balfour Declaration was drawn up and signed (on Nov. 2, 1917).

Gradually the Jews began to gather (bone to his bone), and (in 1917), it is estimated that less than 25,000 Jews lived in that land. By 1922 there were 83,000; 1932-180,000; 1935-300,000; 1937-430,000 and by 1945 more than 500,000. In 2002 there are over 6 million and growing. But while God blessed Israel, Britain reneged on her 1917 treaty. In 1939, after much deliberation over the growing conflicts between the Arabs and Jews, Britain withdrew from Palestine; shortly thereafter the National Council and the General Zionist Council proclaimed from Tel Aviv the establishment of the sovereign state of Israel. The date was May 14, 1948. David Ben Gurion was appointed Prime Minister. Both the US and Russia recognized the new nation which, after much debate, was accepted as a member nation of the UN by a vote of 37 to 12.

In 1967 for the first time since the Babylonian captivity, Jews took charge of Jerusalem. That has to be the most impressive fulfillment of Bible prophecy in 20 centuries. After planting the Israeli flag on the Dome of the Rock, Moshe Dayan did a strange thing, he decided to be conciliatory toward his Muslim captives and instead of keeping the site, he returned control back over to the Muslims. As a secularist Jew, Dayan thought it would help make friends of the Arabs, he succeeded only in making his friends angry. As the Arab neighbors outnumbered Israel 50 to 1, he knew that to not have done so would ignite a holy war. Some religious Jews still have not forgiven Dayan for his actions.

Only a breath away: All that is left for Ezekiel's vision to be fulfilled relates to the statement "but there was no breath in them" (Ezek. 37:8). That expression is not difficult for Bible students to decipher, since "breath" or "wind" often refers to the Holy Spirit. That would indicate that, one of these days, Israel is going to have a fresh visitation of the Holy Spirit, when a mighty revival sweeps the land. This agrees with many passages that predict a great spiritual awakening when the Jews call upon the Messiah they rejected (in 30 A.D.; Joel 2:18-22; Zech. 12:10; 13:2; Rom 11:26-27; Rev 7:1-10).

Interestingly Tim LaHaye toured Israel to find they are convinced that the time of the Messiah's revelation to the nation is near. He tells of a few rabbis in America who are expert in both the Old and New Testaments. He admitted on TV that Jesus fulfilled so many messianic prophecies during His lifetime that He was the Messiah for the Gentiles, but the Jewish Messiah has yet to come. Some Jews are beginning to recognize that their Messiah will be just like Jesus Christ! That is how close the nation is to the "breath" stage. Israel is just "a breath away" from turning to her Messiah.

Israel's Central Role in the Kingdom: During the exciting 40 days that Christ spent with His disciples after His resurrection, He conversed with them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). He undoubtedly corrected their previous misunderstandings. One question

remained however, and the disciples asked it: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” The wording of that question revealed the disciples’ basic understanding of the teaching they had just received from Christ concerning the millennial kingdom:

1. That the kingdom would indeed be restored to Israel.
2. That the kingdom had not yet been established; and
3. That Christ, not the Church, was the only One who could restore it.

Had any of these assumptions which are implied by their question been false, Christ surely would have corrected them. That He did not, leaves these three points intact. Certainly, He didn’t say, as some teach today: “Don’t you realize that since they crucified Me God has excommunicated the Jews? Israel no longer has any special place in God’s plans. She has nothing to do with the kingdom. It all pertains to the Church now!” Instead, He simply replied: “It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:6).

Two Distinct Destinies: It is clear from even a cursory study of the prophecies pertaining to the Church and Israel that distinct destinies lie ahead for each. For example, the destiny of the people of Israel is to be brought back into their own land from every place where God has scattered them. The Church never had land of its own, was never removed from it, and certainly can’t be brought back to it. Her destiny is in heaven. Both Israel and the Church play significant roles in the last days and specific prophecies pertain to each. Failure to distinguish between the two results in a serious distortion of biblical prophecy, especially that which pertains to the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ **Second Coming of Christ** (see Rev. 14-16 and also read our Article: “Glorious Appearance – Second Coming of Christ; see Rev. 19: verses 14-16; also read chapters 19 and 20).

The distinction which separates Israel and the Church make inapplicable to the latter, for all time, the promises which God gave to Israel as recorded in numerous places in the Bible. The very nature of God’s promises to Israel requires that they pertain to a specific ethnic group of people who lived in a particular location on the earth, were scattered from it, and returned thereto in the last days. In contrast, the Church, which was not in existence when these promises were made and isn’t even mentioned in the Old Testament, far from being a single, ethnically identifiable people, is comprised of multitudes from “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”. **Every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation** (Rev. 5:9)

It cannot be stated too strongly that if we are to understand the Rapture and the Second Coming, then we must distinguish Israel from the Church. Otherwise, we will confuse the distinct roles which each is to play. If we substitute the Church for Israel, then we will be hopelessly confused on prophecy and will not be able to discern the times in which we live, which are described in Scripture as “the last days.”

Why in the World Did God Choose the Jew: Remember God called Abraham out of Assyria about 4,000 years ago. He presented him with several fantastic promises and some sobering responsibilities. He promised the elderly Abraham a son, an heir who would father a unique race of people, a nation chosen and blessed in a special way by god himself. And what were God’s

purposes in making these promises to the Jews? There were probably many, but here are four main reasons:

1. It was the Jews who had the special responsibility to receive and write down God's revelations to man. This critical mission was accomplished. Virtually every book of both the Old and New Testaments was authored by a Jew under the inspiration of God. Some argue about possible exceptions, but none has ever been proved or even argued persuasively.
2. The Jews were chosen to protect and preserve the purity of the autographed original manuscripts they had transcribed under the inspiration of God. Their success is one of the wonders of the ancient world. Think of what we all owe the Jews in gratitude for the way they accomplished this job despite incredible adversity, turbulence and even the destruction of their country. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the 1940's, many "scholars" expected to see significant differences between the wording of these scriptures which had been recorded about 200 BC and the earliest manuscripts we had at the time, which were over 1100 years later. Surprise! They were virtually identical.
3. Israel was needed to provide a human family through whom the Messiah, the Savior of all mankind, could be born. Did you know there are more than 300 specific prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah as a humble suffering servant? The great paradox is that when He did come, the very people who had predicted the event rejected Him! They were looking for the second portrait of the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament, that of mighty conquering King and Priest, who would deliver them from their political oppressors. The religious leaders had strayed so far from the truth of the Torah that they had become self-righteous and saw no need for a humble Messiah who came to die for their sins. After all, they were not sinful like the Gentiles. They failed to see the most important fact, "There can be no crown without a Cross". The Messiah had to first come and die for our sins. He will come the second time to set up His kingdom for all who have received His pardon by faith alone. Think about the way the New Testament begins: "These are the ancestors of Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David and of Abraham (Matt. 1:1).
4. The Jews were selected to witness to the pagan world that there is only one true God and to show men how to know him. The mere survival of the Jewish people, scattered for centuries, regathered and reborn as a nation in this generation, is the single greatest testimony to the truth of the Bible. The Jews remain a living witness to God's reality.

While God has a special place in His heart for the Jews, He has also allowed a national spiritual blindness to come upon them. How else can one explain the way the Gentile world accepted the simple truth of Jesus so readily, while so many Jews rejected Him? At the same time, it's important to remember that, in every generation since the first, some Jews have accepted Jesus as Messiah and Lord. In biblical terminology, these folks are referred to as "the believing remnant." Despite the worldwide dispersion and persecution of the Jews from the first century through the 21st, God kept His promises of eternal blessings and will someday restore the Jews to a position of special favor. At this moment in history, it is the Church (all true believers in Jesus Christ), who enjoy God's special blessing.

The drama of this shifting emphasis is told by Paul (in Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11). This would be a good time to review those scriptures. And here's a way to understand the message: Romans 9 explains the Jews' election; Romans 10 reveals reasons for their rejection; and Romans 11 promises their national restoration. God has promised never to abandon His chosen people. The divine hand of protection of the Jews during their five major wars against enemies that far outnumbered them, are modern day illustrations of how He keeps His promises. The world has witnessed the Jews' election, rejection and partial restoration in the land of Israel. We are nearing the moment in history when they will be spiritually restored as well as physically restored.

"For I don't want you, brothers, to be ignorant concerning this mystery" (wrote Paul in Romans 11:25), "lest you should become wise in your own eyes, that a partial blinding has come upon Israel until the fullness of the gentiles has been brought in."

In other words, at some point in history, very soon Hal Lindsey believes, God's special focus and blessing is going to shift back to the Jews. At that moment, the Jews will once again be responsible, as God's representatives, to take His message to the whole world. This mission, incomplete and seemingly impossible for the last 2,000 years, will be accomplished by the 144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams in seven years. See 144,000 Witnesses on our Articles Page. Also (see Rev. 14:1-6).

What on Earth will Happen in Israel – by Tim LaHaye from his May 2002 Newsletter

With the tragic conflicts in Israel and Jerusalem taking center stage every night on the evening news, many are asking, "What is the future for Israel?" "Will there ever be peace in the city of peace again?" While things do not look too hopeful, there seems little the politicians can do that will usher in a time of peace. Certainly not as long as Mahmoud Abbas is in charge and committed to terrorism as a means of gaining his unreasonable demands.

The Bible is quite clear that the Jews will be back in the land when Messiah comes, both during the tribulation period and for the entire 1000-year Millennium. So, it seems quite unlikely they will be driven from the land despite how things look today, at least not until the antichrist desecrates the temple and drives them into the wilderness for the last 3-1/2 years of the tribulation, according to Revelation Woman Fled Into the Wilderness (see Revelation 12:6).

There is one possibility that may offer hope for Israel and make it worthwhile to send these peace envoys from the US and have peace conferences. (Ezekiel chapters 38-39), one of the highly significant prophecies in the Old Testament, indicates that Russia and their allies (who make up most of the Arab world), are going to go down against Israel in battle to destroy the Jews once and for all. They, of course, will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel, not by military hardware they received from the USA but by the direct intervention of God.

Tim LaHaye is personally convinced that will take place between 3-1/2 to 7 years or more before the Tribulation. Some of his friends disagree. They think that will be the battle of Armageddon (see Revelation 19:14). Also see Armageddon on our Articles page. He does not think so and suggests four reasons it cannot be confused with that battle that takes place at the very end of

Tribulation and culminates with the Glorious Appearing of Christ and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom:

1. Armageddon is not directed against Israel but constitutes an attack on the part of the world's nations against Christ (Rev. 16:12-21 and 19:11-21). The deception of the Antichrist and his insane hatred of Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation period will culminate with his bringing together, even from the Orient over the dried up river Euphrates, hordes of people against, not Israel, but Jesus Christ, the coming King. That he will utterly fail is clearly predicted (in Rev. 19). However, this Scripture passage should not be confused with Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, which to even a casual reader plainly states that Israel is the object of Gog's and Magog's hatred. These two attacks are unique and distinct, and he believes they will occur at least ten or more years apart.
2. No one world government is functioning during the events in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. The destruction of Russia as revealed by God to His prophet, will come at a time when, as we have already seen, Israel is the central focus of two confederations of nations. These two confederations, the northeastern confederation of Russia and her hordes versus the western democracies that do not come to the aid of Israel, cannot coexist in the one world government, predicted by our Lord and His prophets for the seven-year tribulation.
3. Gog comes from the North, the Antichrist from Europe, Gog, the prince, and Magog the country are predicted to come from the "north parts" (Ezek. 38:15). According to Daniel 7:8, 24 and 26, the Antichrist comes out of Rome, a mixed blood of Romans, Greeks, and possibly Jews.
4. It takes 7 years to burn the implements of war (Ezek. 39:8-10). Armageddon occurs at the end of the Tribulation just before the Millennium. This in turn (according to 2 Peter 3), begins with a renovation of the earth by fire. It is unlikely that the Jews will spend the first 7 winters of the Millennium burning the implements of war left over from the Tribulation.

Taking these four reasons together, we can only conclude that Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 are not to be confused with Armageddon. Instead, they occur ten or more years earlier, prior to the tribulation period.

When Does Israel Burn War Implements? (In Ezekiel 39:8-10), we find that after Russia has been supernaturally destroyed, "those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up. For 7 years they will use them for fuel." Obviously, the Israelis are not going to pile all the war implements together and make an enormous bonfire. In a land that enjoys quite mild winters, they will use the weapons for fuel for seven seasons instead of gathering firewood from the forests.

Two facts stand out in bold relief. First, Israel will enjoy seven years of peace after Russia is destroyed; second, for seven winters they will be reminded of God's supernatural intervention on their behalf as they burn the implements of war. It is vitally important that we locate these seven years chronologically, because they are the key to the period in which the Soviet Union will be destroyed.

God has not left us without information regarding His plans for the future. There is a chart in the May 2002 issue of Tim LaHaye's newsletter called Pre-Trib Perspectives that reflects the major events accepted by almost all scholars who hold a pre-tribulation view of prophecy. Note also that the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel during the latter 3-1/2 years of the Tribulation. According to Revelation 12, this event will unleash the harshest anti-Semitic persecution the world has ever known, a fiery furnace arranged for the Jews by the Antichrist.

Russia will have to be destroyed at least 3-1/2 years before the tribulation begins for the Jews to have 7 years in which to burn the implements of war. Keep in mind that there is no reason necessitating the Jews' burning the weapons during the first 3-1/2 years of the Tribulation. The entire 7-year period of burning could occur before the Tribulation begins, but there is no way to be certain of this. We can only speculate as to whether the 7-year period occurs entirely before the Tribulation. We know that it cannot extend beyond the Tribulation.

Except for the Rapture which could take place at any time, Tim LaHaye believes the next major event on the prophetic calendar of God will be the peace treaty between Israel and the Arab world. This cessation of hostilities may likewise signal a short time of peace throughout the whole world. For example, in speaking of the end time and the coming of Christ, says that the day of the Lord will come.

1 Thess. 5:3 "while people are saying, Peace and safety." Further, "Destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." This indeed suggests that before the holocaust known as the Tribulation period, a time of peace and safety will encompass this earth, interrupted only by Russia's invasion of Israel.

As impossible as it may seem in the light of the present crises, we can expect Israel and the Palestinians to hammer out some kind of peace accord they can all live with, one that is for their mutual good. After all, peace, even an undesirable peace could be in both countries' best interest.

That brings up the possibility that the agreement suggested by several of the leaders in the Arab world and seemingly endorsed by President Bush, to establish two sovereign states in Israel with governments committed to halt the bombing and the agreement to live in peace, just might work. And it might be a fulfillment of prophecy. Whether we will live to see that happen is anyone's guess.

Christ could rapture His church at any moment, or we may see some miraculous peace accord reached and then the rapture, or we might even be on earth when Russia goes down against Israel with their Arab allies to receive the judgment of God. Only He knows! In any case, I look through these war clouds and mayhem in Israel for some kind of incredible peace worked out that both sides can live with. But I am also looking for our Master's shout from heaven at any moment. Read about that in the June 2002 edition.

The Importance of the Land of Israel: Those who insist that the Church has replaced Israel often argue that there are no references in the New Testament to Israel restored to her promised land, and therefore such promises from the Old Testament are no longer of any effect. That

statement simply isn't true. When he told Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, the angel Gabriel declared explicitly that this One would reign "upon the throne of his father David."

Here is a New Testament reference to Israel restored to her land and a reaffirmation of the promise to David concerning the messianic kingdom. Other New Testament references to Israel's future in her land concern Armageddon (Rev. 16:16; 19:17-21), and Christ's rescue of Israel. Moreover, Christ, who is acknowledged as "the King of Israel" by His disciples (John 1:49; 12:13), promised the twelve that they would reign with Him over "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 20:4), obviously in the land of Israel.