



# HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

### Abstract

The Old Testament and the New Testament both have many Scriptures that prophesy that Israel will be restored as a nation. Is present Israel that restoration? or; Is it just something that a hardy, hardnosed group of people have carved into a nation? Isn't it true that God rejected Israel totally just like they rejected His Son? Why are they a present nation?

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>#1 - The Return of Israel to Their Land - An Idea from God ! .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>#2 - The Preservation of Israel - A Prophetic Miracle .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>#3 - The Surety of Israel Being Restored.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>#4 - Seven Themes of Ezekiel 34-37 Found in the New Testament.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>#5 - The Dry Bones Come Alive .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>#6 - The Spiritual Impact of Israel Restored! .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>#7 - The Restoration of Israel Slotted into History .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>#8 - Was the Restoration of Israel Only an Old Testament Thought? .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>#9 - How Does the Restoration of Israel Reflect on the Church? .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>#10 - How Do Conservative Rabbis Interpret the Restoration of Israel? .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>#11 - What is God’s Final Plan for the Israel He Restored? .....</b>	<b>61</b>

### #1 - The Return of Israel to Their Land - An Idea from God !

Of all the things that is obvious in the Bible, none is clearer than the fact that Jesus was rejected by a majority of the nation of Judah (just a small part of the nation of Israel) and that they had a major hand in forcing the Romans to crucify Jesus on the cross. Because that is true many have taught that Israel would not be restored and that the Church had replaced Israel as the promised people of God. We will look carefully at this and other questions to see if that is really what the Bible says.

Some might say, "Why even worry about it or study and discuss it?" The attitude that God displays toward Israel will tell us a lot about the attitude that God has about us when we go off the rail in our Christian walk or even in our faith in Christ.

Over 300 years ago, King Louis XIV of France asked Blaise Pascal, the great Christian philosopher to give him proof of the existence of God. Pascal answered, "Why the Jews, your Majesty, the Jews!" The great Bible teacher Carl Ketcherside was once asked, "What do you think is the greatest evidence that the Bible comes from God?" His answer: "The Yellow Pages of the phone book." Everyone in the room was stunned by his answer; so, the questioner went on to ask, "What do you mean?" Ketcherside said, "Look at the names of the banks, the names of the department stores, the names of the lawyers and doctors and accountants. You will see one Jewish name after another." God promised He would preserve the Jewish people, and He has. Both men, living three centuries apart were referring to the remarkable fulfillment of Bible prophecies about the Jews. Especially they were referencing the fact that despite the worldwide dispersion of the Jews—after 125 AD they were prohibited from living in the land of Israel for hundreds of years. And the fact that they were persecuted many times and often for the purpose of extinguishing the race, they kept their identity and preserved a recognizable body of people that began to migrate to the original land of Israel in the late 1800's and have not stopped their migration since, only accelerate it after Israel has become a free nation.

I do not think we realize how preposterous this sounds. I like what Rabbi Dov Greenberg, the Executive Director of Chabad, the Jewish Hasidic Movement at Stanford University wrote: "Imagine we could travel back in time and say to the great Pharaoh of the time of Moses. There is good news and bad news. The good news is that one of the nations alive today in this land will survive and change the moral landscape of the world. The bad news is: It won't be yours. It will be that group of Hebrew slaves out there, building your glorious temples and tombs, the Children of Israel."

Nothing would sound more outrageous because the Egypt of Pharaoh's time was the greatest empire of the ancient world, brilliant in arts, sciences, formidable in war, and wealthy. The Israelites were a landless people, powerless slaves. Indeed, already in antiquity, those in power believed that the Israelites were on the verge of extinction.

As we study just how spectacular this miracle is, I want to quote one other very unusual source, Mark Twain, an agnostic and a skeptic. He wrote in Harper's Magazine in 1897:

"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way."

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but is heard of, has always been heard of. The Jew is prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it.

The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor; then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone, other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he still remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

That question by Mark Twain, "What is the secret of his immortality" can be answered only one way. As David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel said, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles."

We know the source of miracles in life—it is God. So, why would God create this many miracles over so many centuries and millennium to preserve the Jewish/Israelite peoples and then restore that group of people to the original land of Israel? That is where I want us begin our Biblical study tonight.

Every believer should know what the Bible teaches about the return of Israel and the scriptures that foretell this modern-day return. It is an idea of God and it is one that God has honored when the Israelites were obedient and prospered and when they were disobedient and were sent into captivity or even banished from the land God had given to them. It is a long 4,000-year story that shows that God is both faithful and truthful.

When I was in speech class in High School, my teacher, Mrs. Keller, wrote in my yearbook, "Keep speaking and I will keep listening." She lived that great quote out in my life. This included her attending several revival services where I preached, a Grade School graduation where I was the commencement speaker and a High School graduation at my home high school of Windsor, Illinois; where I was the commencement speaker. It did not make any of the speeches better or worse but it was a wonderful support for me and the choices I had made using her speech training in my ministry. As good as Mrs. Keller was about keeping the promise of her yearbook note to me; it pales to what God does when He makes a promise. Any promise that God makes will come true and it will be done exactly like God said it would be done when He spoke it.

God made a promise to Abram, the father of the Israelites in **Genesis 12:6-7**, The Scripture says, "*Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, to your offspring, I will give this land. So, he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*"

Abram, God later changed his name to Abraham to signify the covenant God had made with him; he was originally from the land of Babylonia, or modern-day Iraq. He was raised in a polytheistic society that had many gods and many idols. But he left the land of Babylon and went to be with his uncle in Haran. During that time Abram became a devout follower of Jehovah and dropped all belief in plural gods and accepted the one monotheistic God as the creator of all. The Bible says that Abram developed a friendship with God and during

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

this time God promised Abram the land that is primarily modern-day Israel. The passage in **Genesis 11** tells us a brief history of God's interactions with Abram. God had called him out of the land of Babylon to direct him to the land God had in mind for Israel; but when the group led by Abram's father Terah arrived at Haran they settled in that land just south of modern-day Turkey and begin to shepherd and live there.

When Abram's father Terah died, God again called to Abraham and told him to take all the possessions and all who wanted to go with him and God would show Abram the land that God wanted Abram and his offspring to have. Abram was promised by God that his descendants would become a large and strong people who would be a barometer for God. Those that blessed the descendants of Abram would be blessed by God and those who cursed or did evil to the descendants of Abram would be cursed by God.

They arrived in the land of Canaan or as we know it today, the land of Israel in 2090 BC or approximately 4,000 years ago. At that time God made this promise to Abram. He would give him this land. God was dealing with Abram, not in a private promise—something just for Abram, but with a prophetic view toward the future and all that would happen in that land. The land where the nation of Israel and later Judah would rise and fall; the land where the Son of God would walk the earth; the land where the Church would begin; and even the land where the Son of God would return to the earth to finalize the ultimate victory over sin and Satan. The truths of God were to be taught there, recorded and given to all of the world. This spot of land, small compared to most nations, was chosen as the most appropriate land for the coming of divine revelation and the salvation for the world.

The world is full of humble beginning stories where God has taken what seemed like an insignificant person in an insignificant setting and changed the world. The great missionary David Livingston, who did more than anyone to open the continent of Africa to Christianity and social progress was the only convert in his entire parish in Scotland the year he accepted Christ. Can you imagine making that report to your boss—"Well, we had one young lad make a decision for Christ this year." "One convert for a whole year in this large parish?" I'm sure the superior of that area was not impressed with any way the report could have been given. One is still just one. But what a one---he was such a tireless worker and intent missionary that the famous saying went around the world, "Livingston I presume?" This was because it seemed when Europeans went to the inner jungles and bush country of Africa, they often encountered David Livingston building hospitals, schools, churches, and other essential buildings needed to change the lives of the natives of Africa. His name was on the lips of many of the people and the changes that he was making were impossible to deny.

Abram realized that God was making a significant covenant with him and so Abram stopped and built an altar to the Lord. I wonder if we have lost the significance of stopping and worshipping the Lord when God is doing something very special in our life. I'm afraid that many of us do not even think we have the time to stop and pray---let alone take a day or more to build an altar and offer a gift of sacrifice to the Lord. But Abram did and he changed the future landscape of the land of Israel. By this act of response to God for the promise of the land, Abram made a clear and open confession of his belief in the one God Jehovah; he established worship of the true God in a land of idols and false gods, and he declared his belief and faith in the Promise of God.

I would encourage you to set aside a special offering, to ask your family to join you for a special time of thanksgiving for something special that God has given to you, and to even mark the time with fasting and prayer so that the event is forever blazed in your mind. One of the greatest tools we have to combat despair and depression is to truthfully remember the great blessings that God has given to us. They will not be remembered as great as they really were---if we do not put time, energy, sacrifice, and gifts into our celebration of the blessing and our remembrance of it. I remember arriving at a Church where I had been

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

called to be the Pastor and had responded with a yes. Because of the ending of the school year and other complications, I actually drove out to the Church by myself. When I arrived, I was given the keys to an apartment on the Church campus where I would stay and provided with a meal but it was late on a Saturday and the host needed to go on their way. I knew this was a significant step in my life and that God had directed it, so I took the next several hours and stopped and knelt in many significant places on the campus to pray for the guidance and blessing of God to be on that ministry. I know that this special time of commitment guided much of my ministry and influenced what God had me accomplish for Him. God was at work and I wanted to acknowledge that and seek Him to bless all that I would be doing for Him.

Is it any wonder that people all over the world still refer to this land as the “Promised Land”? It was promised by God to Abram and his family and it has been restored to them. This was the first place of the true worship of God ever built or used in the Promised Land—the altar of Abram.

But Abram was given the promise again in **Genesis 17**—when God changed his name from Abram to Abraham—which means ‘the Father of many nations’ and changed his wife’s name from Sarai to Sarah—to stress that her name, which means princess, would show that she would be the mother of several nations.

This prophecy that the offspring of Abraham would be the inheritors of the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, or later the nation of Israel became one of the focal points of the Old Testament and from Genesis—Abraham to Malachi the prophets spoke of the things that would happen throughout history. Even today they are still being fulfilled as the land has become one of the most prosperous nations on earth and a garden spot for Europe and the Middle East.

Before we stop this study of Abraham, I want to share two other stories that show how this became the mantra for his offspring.

The first was his son with Sarah, Isaac. All the family was experiencing a great famine and Isaac went to the local Philistine leader and when there was no help available, God stepped in before Isaac did anything very rash.

*The story is in **Genesis 26:2-6**: “The Lord appeared to Isaac, and said, “do not go down to Egypt, live in this land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and did everything, I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions. So, Isaac stayed in Gerar.”*

God did not hesitate to direct the life of Abraham’s son to show him that he was to stay in the land that would be given to the Israelites and that God would direct him where to go. God confirmed the covenant He had made with Isaac’s da and reviewed the key parts of the covenant: the land, the offspring, and the blessing of God upon the family.

God tells us in this passage that we can encourage generational blessings for our family. God takes time to remind Isaac that God will give even more attention to this promise He made to Abraham because of all that Abraham did to follow God.

God lists four specific things that Abraham did that touched the heart of God so much that he wanted to list them out for Isaac.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

1. Abraham did everything that God required of him. What a challenge to all of us. How easy it is to say, “I’m tired” or “I don’t feel like helping this morning”, or “I’ve had my turn, let someone else do all the work this time”—or “I really don’t like those people, why should I keep having to do so many good things for them—when they never appreciate me and just take me for granted?” You might want to fill in some of your own thoughts or words for why you do not want to do what God lays on your heart. It is easy, it seems right and most times we have others who are encouraging us to just draw a line and quit helping or doing. But when God laid something on the heart of Abraham—he did it! I have always been overawed by the passage in Hebrews that says that Abraham longed all of his life to live in that city God had prepared for him. But once Abraham left Haran and went to the area God said He wanted them to live—Abraham never lived in a house—let alone a city. He spent all the years of promise in a tent because that is where he felt God wanted him to live. Even when Abraham and Lot moved apart because their flocks were so large that the herdsmen for each man were fighting with one another; it was Lot that chose to live in a house in the city of Sodom and it was Abraham that stayed in the hillsides and pasture lands outside the city and still lived in a tent.
2. Abraham kept the commands of God. God is not telling Isaac that his father was perfect, but He is telling Isaac that his dad followed the things that God asked him to do; that he repented of the things he did wrong—(like the half-truth that Sarah was his sister and not his wife when he thought her beauty might endanger his life in a foreign land); and he followed what the Lord asked him to do. Again, the challenge that God gave to Isaac to duplicate the obedience of his father is a challenge to each one of us. Do you ever grow just plain tired—or as the Bible says “weary of doing good?” When the commands of God seem more like restrictions and prohibitions than freeing or enlightening? It is at those times I would like to remind us all of two things:
  - a. There are no regrets when we follow the commands of God.
  - b. God remembers and blesses you each time you follow through on what He commands you to do.

For God to take time and list out to Isaac these good qualities of his dad—simply shows how much God values His relationship with each one of us. He wants us to be blessed and He wants us to feel connected to Him. God is a good Father and He is proud of those who follow His commands.

3. Abraham kept the decrees of God. Abraham once again sets the bar high by doing what God had said should be done. It is so easy to miss how significant this really is. We are told to always tell the truth and then most of our adult life we try to figure out when we should disguise the truth or tell the truth. Abraham never had that problem—he just did what God decreed.
4. Abraham kept the instructions of God. I feel that is very similar to the times the Holy Spirit either tells us something or we know that the Spirit is directing us to accomplish something. When God spoke—Abraham did.

God remembers the good deeds and consistent faithfulness of our lives and it is something that He is willing to pass onto our own generations to encourage them.

The second story is the grandson of Abraham, Jacob or as God renamed him, Israel. Jacob had returned to the land of promise and as he neared the area God spoke to Jacob and had changed his name to Israel and said, *“I am God Almighty, be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I*



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

*also give to you; and I will give this land to your descendant after you. Then God went up from him, at the place where he had talked with him.” Genesis 35:9-12.*

God again reaffirmed the commitment He had made to Abraham and Isaac that they and their descendants would possess this land. It was over 500 years later that they actually began the process to possess this land and name it Israel but the promise of God was secure.

I want to look briefly at several other passages that can only be fulfilled by present-day Israel. The first one is from **Deuteronomy 28** where God says He would bring them back from exile and then adds that even if they are scattered to the ends of the earth, He will bring them back and have them possess the land which their fathers have possessed. It is at that time they will prosper and expand the land even beyond the size it was when it was possessed by their fathers. This did not happen until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At one time, until Israel gave back some of the land they had won in war, they were almost twice as large as the country had ever been even under King David or King Solomon.

**Isaiah 11** tells us clearly that God will restore not only the Jews of Judah but the Israelites from Ephraim and they shall live together. This group shall come from Assyria, Egypt, Algeria, Cush, Elam, Shinar, and the islands of the sea. They will gather from the four corners of the earth.

It is at this time that God will protect them with an unbelievable covering of protection as it says in Isaiah 41 and will direct the destruction of their enemies and the elimination of overt war against them, **Isaiah 41**.

God gave the land to Abraham, reaffirmed that with Isaac and again reaffirmed it with Jacob. Then all through the Old Testament the prophets speak of how God will restore the land. That is essential, because when the last book of the OT--Malachi was written in 400 BC; Israel was gone, and Judah was a twice exiled nation that was a mere shell of the area that God had given to Abraham, (approx. 1/6). The Scriptures have only been fulfilled in this past 150 years—a united, restored Israel.

I want to close tonight with one other quote, this from Thomas Newton, the renowned British Preacher and Bible scholar who declared in 1768, long before Israel had become a nation again:

“The preservation of the Jews is really one of the most single and illustrious acts of divine Providence. . .and what but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner as none other nation upon earth has been preserved. Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies, than in their preservation. . .We see that the great empires, which in their turn subdued and oppressed the people of God, are all come to ruin. . .And if such has been the fatal end of the enemies and oppressors of the Jews, let it serve as a warning to all those, who at any time or upon any occasion are for raising a clamor and persecution against them.”

It was the idea of God to return Israel to their land. It is written from Genesis to Revelation and now the real blessing for us will come when we see why God was so intent on restoring the nation.



### #2 - The Preservation of Israel - A Prophetic Miracle

This study focuses on two great chapters of the Old Testament that show God always intended to preserve the Jewish/Israelite nation. You might say, “Pastor Tom, why would you double reference the nation. I thought they were all Jews?” The nation was originally called Israel, just as it is today once it had been restored and the people of the nation today are again called ‘Israelites’. How did the name Jews come into history? After the death of King Solomon, King of the nation of Israel—there was a civil war that broke out in Israel and the ten Northern tribes split off from the two Southern tribes and kept the name Israel. The two Southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin became known as Judah. The tribe of Benjamin had been reduced in size because of disobedience and it was incapsulated inside the boundaries of the tribe of Judah. The inhabitants of the nation of Judah became known as Jews. The Israelite nation quickly was conquered by the Assyrians and was dispersed all over the world. So, the restoration of Jews to the land of Israel is only partially correct—yes, the Jews were restored and they make up the greater number of people with Hebrew descent in the nation of Israel; but God drew His people from the four corners of the earth and that included people from the ten Northern tribes—so modern Israel was repopulated with both Jews and Israelites. The present nation of Israel refers to the Hebrew descendants in the land today as Israelites. They also use this term for all in the country which includes many Arabs, Semites, and other ethnic peoples of the world that inhabit the nation of Israel. They are all Israelites, although many of them have different ethnic origins than being in the line of the Hebrews.

One might be thinking — “Why another lesson in history?” Why not just drop the worry about Israel and let’s focus tonight on all the chaos going on in the United States—I think that affects me the most!!” I would remind us all that being a Christian is never limited to a preoccupation with the present. Our ultimate hope is in the future when Jesus comes to set-up His kingdom on earth and after a 1,000-year reign on this earth ushers in the New Heaven and the New Earth where we will live forever. The present is at best ‘spring training’ for the ultimate life we shall have with Jesus. As the Scripture says, “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see Him face to face,” I Corinthians 13:12. Paul in that great chapter of I Corinthians reminds us that this present life is like our life as a child—we understood only what we could discern with our childish knowledge, and he contrasts that with the time when we will ‘know fully’—in other words, we totally understand because we are in the very presence of Jesus our Lord and Savior. I would also remind us that God intends for the Christian to remember the past and draw hope from what God has done throughout history.

When God inspired the writing of the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Hebrews, He had the author begin the great teaching of the value of the past with these words, “*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*” **Hebrews 11:1** ---the very futuristic look for our hope that I just spoke about.

But how does God prove this is the correct way to interpret our life and put the present in perspective---He inspires the writer to then write: “*This is what the ancients were commended for.*” **Hebrews 11:2**

God inspires the author then to begin with Able and list many people and what they did that demonstrated rewardable faith and ends with a statement about Rahab. After listing the faith statement about Rahab, the author summarizes how this works with a listing of Judges, Kings, and then Prophets. He finalizes by writing

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

about some of the horrible things that happened to many of the people that stayed faithful to God all through their lives or returned to God at the end of their life and ties the past with the future by writing, *“These were all commended for their faith. Yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:19-20*

I have often heard the quotation by George Santayana, *“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”* I agree with that statement and have used it often to make a point about how we ought to read, know, and digest the Bible and its teachings into our life. But I want us to realize something—that is not the way God tried to comfort and assure His people. God did not warn us about the future—He told us to anticipate the future. We have no greater goal than to anticipate an eternity with Him. I think that should direct our life and our work. We need to focus on eternal life with God and let the past direct us to see that God does not keep score of who is valuable and precious like the world does—God says—those who are valuable and precious to Him are those who have taken the ‘faith of our spiritual fathers and mothers’ and applied it to their life now.

- Why would a large estate, wealth, and possessions make you more valuable and precious to God—He owns and controls them all!
- Why would intelligence, talent, and beauty make you more valuable or precious to God—He knit everyone together in their Mother’s wombs—He gave every natural characteristic to us we have.
- Why would fame, achievements, and awards make you more valuable or precious to God—they are fleeting and often fickle.

So, God says, ground your life on what counts and matters. Live the present guided by the teachings and lives of My people in the past with a constant eye on the future rewards for all who believe in me.

One thing this preoccupation with the present has created in the lives of many Christians is a preoccupation with each presidential election cycle in the United States. As the final end times approach, and I think without a doubt they are close—it is amazing to me how many people can suddenly find all these prophetic revelations before and after a presidential election. I remember stopping a discussion one night at our Wednesday Fellowship Church Dinner, 12 years ago, where two men were shouting above the noise of the meal and regular discussion after Barack Obama was first elected president of the United States, their firm and loud conviction, that Barack Obama was the Anti-Christ. I stopped another discussion, 8 years ago, in our Church Foyer a few years later after Donald Trump was elected president where again two people were shouting above the noise in the foyer of their firm and loud conviction that Jared Kushner was the Anti-Christ.

People, if every election that does not go the way you want it to go, ends up with you needing to choose someone off of the winning ticket to label as the Anti-Christ—you are being dominated and controlled by the present. The idea that God has nothing better to do than wait for the latest presidential election in the United States to choose the Anti-Christ and get on with the unfolding of history—shows first of all a great disdain for Scripture and second an unwillingness to let the sovereignty of God guide our destiny.

I want to put the miracle of the preservation of Israel in perspective before we study in depth the passages that prove this was not only the idea of God, but also what has happened.

The preservation of the Israelite people throughout their 2,700 years of dispersion is mind-boggling. Keep in mind that they have been dispersed to over 130 nations worldwide, and they have been brutally mistreated wherever they went. Will Varner, a professor at The Master’s College, has expressed it this way: *“No nation in*

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

*the history of the world ever has been exiled from its land, lost its national existence and language, and then returned as a people to that identical homeland and even revived its ancient tongue. No nation, that is, except one. . .the nation of Israel.”*

The relentless persecution of the Israelites/Jews dates almost from the beginning of their existence as a nation. The Pharaoh of Egypt attempted to murder all the male babies (**Exodus 1: 15-16**). A government bureaucrat named Haman conceived a genocidal plan to exterminate all the Israelite/Jewish people in the Medio-Persian Empire (**Esther 3: 8-10**). The Assyrian Empire conquered ten of the Israelite tribes—then called the nation of Israel—and scattered them throughout Asia. They made all the nation of Israel divide into single family units and only allowed one family at a time to disperse. Then came the Babylonian exile of the nation of Judah—the only two remaining tribes of Israel—and two totally destructive wars with the Romans, 70 and 135 A.D., that left the temple destroyed and the remaining Israelites—now called Jews—dispersed and prohibited from living in the land of Israel.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Israelites/Jews were herded into ghettos and required to wear identifying symbols. They were subjected to pogroms—an attack to kill or expel one ethnic group, witch hunts, and blood libels. They were blamed for all the problems of society—even for the Black Plague. They were slaughtered during the Crusades, they were tortured during the Inquisitions, and they became the object of a complete annihilation during the Nazi Holocaust.

Yet, the Israelite/Jewish people survived and their persecutors ended up in the dust bin of history. How could this be? Chance? Coincidence? Good Luck? A roll of the dice? There are many theories.

Tonight, I want to propose that they survived because God said they would. I hope that this study tonight will bolster every step of faith you take and will remind you that God does not lie; God does not fail; and God does not forget His people! Those are the take-aways from this study. Why can you hold onto the hope that you have been taught and given about your faith in the God of the Bible and His Son Jesus Christ—BECAUSE IT WILL ALL HAPPEN JUST AS GOD SAID!

Let's start with a study of **Psalms 121**.

This Psalm is such a comfort about the future of Israel and the way God would receive those who come to worship Him that it was one of the pilgrimage songs sung by the Israelites as they went to Jerusalem for the Feast Days.

It begins the first of four couplets with this thought:

*“I will lift my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” Psalms 121:1-2.* Although the Scripture refers to God as the keeper of Israel, I want you to note that it is also an acknowledgment that God will keep the individual believer from harm.

**First God is the Helper.** It is very possible that the mountains though unnamed were the very mountains the pilgrims were looking at as they neared Jerusalem. It is clear that one of those was the Temple Mount and the majestic Temple that could be seen for miles as you approached Jerusalem from the East, South or North. The Scripture explains why Israel could be preserved and why the individual Christian could be helped and directed by God. Because the true believer does not look to the creation for help—but instead to the Creator. The mountains are not powerful and they do not give help and guidance to the believer; but the one who made the hills and mountains does. When a believer looks to the mountains,

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

they see something that leads their eyes to the heavens and the recognition that the Creator of the mountains is the helper that they need.

**Second, God is the Keeper** and the second couplet spells out how that is true: *“He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber or sleep.” Psalms 121:3-4*

God is the keeper. Just look at the fact that He kept Israel over 2,700 years from their first dispersion and has gathered them back in the last century to preserve them as a country. It is in the original land they possessed, with the entire nation of Israel and representatives of each of the 12 tribes, as well as the original language, Hebrew, restored in 1991 as the language of the land. The idea that God guides the footsteps of His people even when they are on unstable ground shows that God does care about even the details of our life. He will preserve and restore what is needed and essential. He never rests from His job of protecting and preserving.

We serve a God who never sleeps and although the idols of the pagan world were often seen as sleeping or complacent and the worshippers had to get their attention; our God is so alert and on top of things that He often gets our attention to direct us in a different way than we are going. The great battle between Elijah and the prophets of Bael on Mt. Carmel should teach us something. If you have to yell, gyrate, cut yourself and scream to get your god’s attention—you do not have a god who is a keeper—you have a god who is a sleeper. But look at the idols of our time and how they are only slumbering symbols of worship. If you worship money—will it ever help and comfort you when you have a loss? If you worship adoration and the praise of people---will that keep and sustain you when you are alone in your illness, your grief, and even your own death? If you worship possessions—which one would you not willingly give up to have a strong body again, or the assurance that a lost family member is now safe with Jesus. The idols that we often follow are also ‘sleepers.

**Third, God is the Protector** and the third couplet spells out how that is true: *“The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.” Psalms 121: 5-6*

God is the Protector. He protects where the human need is the strongest. The ‘right hand’ speaks of the place of human need. If you are right-handed, then the greatest need you often have is to guide what you are doing, protecting and defending with your right hand. God is the one who sustains and fills us with energy when the need is great. Remarkable that even though the exiled Israelites learned the language of the countries to which they were dispersed, they continued to study the Scriptures, the Torah, and the rules of their life in Hebrew and kept alive a language not used in any nation in the world from 135 AD to 1991—a period of 1, 835 years. God protects and keeps that which seems to be unprotectable and unable to be preserved. God gives this level of protection around the clock—if the crisis occurs in the day, God will protect you; and if it comes in the night—again God will be the one who protects you.

This is one of those qualities of God that often mankind wants to question. Because we are so present time focused—we want every negative event in our life to be lifted off of us. We wrestle with the idea that we need to have heaven here in this life in order to believe that God is taking care and protecting everything in our life. We chastise God and often speak of our being abandoned by God—simply because He did not protect the way that we wanted. I would ask you a simple question: if you are now an adult—do you not look on the way your parents dealt with you in a different way than you did when you were

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

being raised? Isn't that also true of a strict but good teacher; a firm but instructive coach? Weren't there many things in your life that seemed like no protection at the time that later we realized they were just what we needed to be protected all through our life?

**Fourth, God is the Preserver** and the fourth couplet spells out how that is true:

*"The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." Psalms 121: 7-8*

God is the Preserver. I'm sure that many of us who live only in and for the present immediately begin to look at some of the areas we got hurt and that temporarily we felt we have been left on our own by God. But a closer look at this passage tells us, that God is really preserving us for eternal life. God keeping you from 'all harm' speaks of the fact that He will not let Satan or any other force take you away from Him. You may suffer injuries, illnesses, and loss—but the ultimate evil has no power or authority over you. When the Lord shall watch over you 'forevermore' it is clear that God is telling Israel and us that He will guide us from life to death and lead us through death into His presence.

God protected His people when they were dispersed into 130 nations and He will continue to protect all those He calls His own no matter where they are living and no matter what is happening in their lives.

Let's turn our attention to **Isaiah 49** as we continue to ask the question—'**How did Israel survive?**' Before we look at the answers that come from secular historians and from the Jewish Rabbis—I want to remind us of more promises of God.

**Isaiah 49** begins with the second of four songs in Isaiah about the coming of the Servant of God—Jesus Christ. The wording, as with all the prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament are clear and exact. The first eight verses spell out the task that God has for Israel to do. They are to bring forth the Servant of God from their people and He will bring salvation to the world.

The Servant, Jesus will come through human birth—just as all of us do—but it will be the virgin birth, directed by the Holy Spirit and orchestrated by God to allow a human to come to this earth and live a perfect life to become the perfect sacrifice for the salvation of all who accept Him and believe. This Servant, Jesus, will be able to speak in such a way that He will defeat those who oppose God and He will appear at the right times in the history of the world to accomplish the great job of salvation. He will be the Son of God and also the product of Israeli heritage. This point was so important and both Matthew and Luke take time to list the lineage of Jesus to show how He fits right into the genealogy of Israel. The heritage of Jesus traces back to Abraham—He was born of the line of Israel and was fully a Hebrew as well as the Son of God. He will come the first time, born as a baby and living a life as 'fully man and fully God' and not be received by all but will suffer.

The last two Songs of the Servant in Isaiah speak of the great cruelty and suffering that will come to the Servant at His death here on the earth.

But then in verse 5 Isaiah says, the Servant had more of a task than just bringing salvation to the world through the Jewish nation. He was to also bring the people of Jacob back together and restore Israel. This did not happen during the first time Jesus came to this earth—so this is a prophecy of what Jesus will cause to happen that will make Israel a light to the Gentile world and bring salvation to the entire world.

Jesus started that when He, through the Holy Spirit, started the Church with a group of believers who were all Jewish Christians. They considered their following of Jesus the natural next step as a Jewish believer in God.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

Then starting in verse 8, Isaiah prophetically begins to explain how this will happen: Listen to what he writes:

*“This is what the Lord says: ‘In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people to restore the land, and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, ‘come out,’ and to those in darkness, ‘Be free!’ They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger or thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up. See, they will come from afar, --some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Sinim (Possibly modern China). Shout for joy, your heavens, rejoice, you earth, burst into song, you mountains for the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.” **Isaiah 49:8-13.***

Wow, the lord spreads out clearly how He will restore Israel and it will be through the magnetic pull of God to bring the Israelites and Jews back to the land of Israel. Almost 7 million of the 15 million Israelites/Jews alive on earth today now live-in modern-day Israel. God laid it on the heart of the Israelites to return to the original land and millions did even though most of them did not believe in God. They just knew they were to return to Israel and the testimonies of many of them—’ We are finally home’, or ‘This is where I really belong’, —all verify the fact that God said He would do it and He has preserved Israel and returned her to the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Isaiah then prophetically tells the reaction of Zion or Israel and the reassuring answer of God.

The question, probably fueled by the intense suffering of the Israelites throughout history- states: - *“But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.” **Isaiah 49:14*** God responds to the lament of Israel with words of assurance that answers their plaintive cry. I want to read just two of these verses: *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you.” See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.”* God then promises that the children of Israel will return to the land.

This promise was given after Israel, the ten northern tribes, were defeated and sent into captivity. That is essential—because the nation of Israel was not restored after this prophecy until 2,645 years later. So, God says—even if a Mother would be able to forget the child that she is nursing—God would never forget Israel. God intended to preserve the nation of Israel and return it to the original land given to Abraham.

Isaiah specifically spoke this prophecy about the preservation of the Israelites: *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely, I will help you, surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” **Isaiah 41:10-11***

Perhaps the most graphic of prophecies about the preservation of Israel is what Jeremiah wrote in **Jeremiah 31:35-37**:

*“This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its wavs roar—the Lord Almighty is his name. “Only if these decrees vanish from my sight, declares the Lord, will Israel ever cease being a nation before me.” This is what the Lord says, ‘Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,” declares the Lord.*

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

So, when will the Israelites/Jews cease to exist? When the sun stops coming up and going down, when the seasons of the year cease to come, and only after all the heavens and the depths of the oceans have been explored. In short, the Israelites are—HERE TO STAY!!

Do I need to remind all of us that all these prophecies have been fulfilled? Despite their dispersion, their persecution and the murderous pogroms leading up to the holocaust—almost ½ of all Israelites/Jews alive today—7 million live in the land of Israel and have turned this land once more into a land ‘flowing with milk and honey.’

Now, you can clearly see why the continuing existence of the Israelite/Jewish people is proof positive that there is a God and that the Bible is His prophetic Word—to be fulfilled in every detail.



### #3 - The Surety of Israel Being Restored

If we do not try to understand this difficult question, we will never be able to grasp the full truth of grace, salvation, forgiveness of sin, and restoration of the fallen. It is a wonderful miracle that God never gives up on those who belong to Him and the emphasis is ‘those who belong to Him’. When we miss that point, we work very hard and become very judgmental as we try to ‘earn our way to heaven.’

Let me ask you two key questions tonight for you to judge whether or not you really grasp how great a gift grace, forgiveness and salvation really are:

1. How much of your going to heaven, in your thoughts, depends on how good of a life you live?
2. At your best, do you live your life to please God with your good behavior or do you live your life to praise and worship God?

If you said to question # 1—anything at all depends on you—you will never truly understand grace, forgiveness, and salvation completely.

If you said to question # 2—a little of both but I know I have to live a good life most of all—you may not understand grace, forgiveness and salvation at all!!

It is essential for us to see how diligently and completely God explains that His people of Israel will be restored as a nation for us to understand how completely God seeks to restore each one of us to the way we were when He created us—completely dependent on Him and our mother and in love with Him. By the way, as we saw last week God really never spoke of restoring the Jews—just those who lived in the nation of Judah—those who were really called Jews; God always spoke of restoring all Israelites, those of the 12 tribes of Israel and those who stayed to live in the land of Israel with the Israelites. The nation is full of Hebrew Israelites and many non-Hebrew Israelites. God brushed back into existence the country of Israel and restored it with broad strokes that included many people who even the Israelites may not have wanted in their newly restored nation.

This will be our last in-depth study on ‘The Old Testament Promises that Israel would be restored.’ We will look at a key part of the Old Testament promises, the surety of Israel being restored. There are several definitions that expand the meaning of the word ‘surety’ but the basic meaning is:

“Security against loss or damage or for the fulfillment of an obligation, the payment of a debt, such as a pledge, guaranty, or bond.”

That is what God did—He put His reputation and commitment to honesty on the line and said over and over, “*I will restore Israel as a nation.*” It took over two millennia but it happened just as God said that it would. As I said last week, God does not lie; God does not fail; and God does not forget His people!

We live in a world that is never content with just what the Bible says or what believers give as an explanation as they interpret the Bible and apply it to the things they see happening in this world. They have a variety of statements that make the discussion more to their liking: “I only trust science to give me the answers; I want to be objective when I study this question and just consulting the Bible is not objective; or my favorite—you

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

can't prove the Bible by the Bible"—to which I say—Don't we prove the Constitution by the Constitution; don't we govern our land by the laws of the land; or don't we use mathematical formulations for calculations that are based on the very same mathematical formulas? Our entire life is supported by the proofs for what we are trying to do and when you seek the Bible to support your life, you are seeking the greatest book as well as a Divine Book ever recorded for us to follow. But since much of the world does not like the conclusions of the Bible—they invent reasons to seek other sources. This is really true when people seek to explain how the Israelites were preserved for 2,600 years and then restored as a nation.

We have a host of other reasons that Israel has been preserved and has lasted for thousands of years, many of those years without a country to call their own. I want to start with some of the alternative reasons given for the Israelites having lasted and being preserved other than the obvious one that God spoke it and it came true.

"First, secular historians if they even address the issue at all—settle with the same answers we hear from secular Jews. They say that the overwhelming persecution suffered by the Israelite people created within them an iron will to survive, and their genius as a people produced cunning and crafty methods of survival." But all such explanations about the toughness of the people seem shallow and fall flat in the face of the odds that any people could preserve their existence and identity in the midst of that level of suffering. Also, the fact that they dressed differently than all the other people in the nation; ate different foods than their neighbors; had different customs than the other people in the nation where they lived; and observed holidays totally revolving around the history of their country and not around the history of the nation where they lived sounds neither cunning or crafty. It sounds like the Israelites went out of their way to draw attention to themselves and show that they did live a different life than the rest of the nation. I think this would only heighten persecution and possible extinction.

Another secular argument is that the high degree of education and literacy which was seen in the Israelite community in the Middle Ages, enabled them to more effectively preserve their traditions and it increased their usefulness to society. Instead of living as beggars, they were able to become lawyers, doctors, bankers, and bureaucrats. Once again, the charge against the Israelites/Jews during history has been that they control the money, the stores/commerce, and the professional professions and that has led to their persecution because of jealousy and envy. Hardly, reasons that the race would be preserved.

Another secular argument is that the high level of education and prosperity made it possible for them to be extremely mobile, enabling them to move more easily from one nation to another. They had financial resources and they posed less of a welfare problem than non-Israelite migrants. But again, I would ask, are not those who are persecuted in one country and driven out usually the ones who find it hard to be accepted in any country.

So, I really feel the secular arguments for the preservation of the Israelites is really a listing of the uniqueness of the Israelites and that uniqueness has often been the very reason for their persecution.

Much better answers have been presented by Rabbis and other religious people of the Israelites who offer their reasons for the preservation of the nation. For instance, one famous Rabbi wrote: "The supernatural element of Jewish survival must be squarely faced." Another Rabbi put it this way:

"If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the . . . unique strength of the Jewish people, we must conclude that it is not its peculiar physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, nor its language, manners and customs. . . The only link which unites our scattered people throughout its dispersion, regardless of time, is Torah and mitzvot."

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

Let's look at those two words for a moment: Torah and mitzvot—these are the focus of Orthodox Jewish explanations for the preservation of the Jewish people. Torah represents the first five books of the Hebrew Scripture—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They were written by Moses and are commonly called the Pentateuch. Mitzvot are the commandments contained in the Torah.

What we need to realize is that mitzvot as binding as it is, is subject to many interpretations; therefore, communities and different Rabbis often reach totally different conclusions. So, through the centuries the Israelites have taken the laws of the mitzvot and have made spoken laws called the Halacha—the complete adherence to their spiritual heritage. Let me explain how that works—a famous Rabbi—Akiva used an illustration to explain why the Jewish people must reject assimilation

He said, “A fox was once walking by the bank of a river, and saw fish darting from place to place. “what are you fleeing from?” he asked the fish. “To escape the fisherman” In that case, said the fox, “come and live on dry land together with me.” “Are you the one they describe as the cleverest of animals?”, the fish replied. “You are not clever but foolish. If we are in danger here in the water, which is where we live; how much more so on dry land, where we are bound to die.”

The Rabbi explained his illustration—by telling people that the Torah is to Jewish survival as water is to a fish. Yes, the Jews are in constant danger, but if they put the Torah aside, they will lose their identity and die out as an identifiable people.

Another key element in keeping their identity which is often stressed in rabbinical writings is memory. So, all the Israelite feast days are reminders of either great events in Israelite history or promises of God about the future, or both. The observance of the seven Israelite feasts each year—year after year—kept alive in Israelite hearts the memory of God's call on their life as a nation. They were reminded of how God had come to their rescue time and time again, **Psalm 78** and how He had promised that one day they would become the prime nation in the world, through whom all of God's blessings would flow to the nations of the world. **Isaiah 2:1-4**.

The problem with all of these explanations of Israelite preservation—whether the secular scholars or the Israelite/Jewish Rabbis is they only focus on how the Israelites kept their identity—and not how they were able to survive. As a matter of fact, the maintenance of their unique identity made them an object of hatred and an easy target for abuse.

The result was 2,000 years of unrelenting hatred, persecution, and slaughter. The Old Testament prophesied that once they were scattered, they would be persecuted wherever they went and would be few in number.

**Deuteronomy 4:27**— “And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you.”

**Deuteronomy 28:62**— “Then (after the scattering) you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because you did not obey the LORD your God.”

How did this work out? Roman historians indicate that 2,000 years ago there were between 8 to 10 million Israelites/Jews living in the world. There are 14 million today. How many should there be? In the same period of time, the population of China grew from 30 million to over one billion. The Arab peoples came into existence at the same time as the Israelites. Today there are more than 400 million Arabs. Based on these statistics, the Israelite/Jewish population today should be between 400 and 500 million.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

So, we come back to our question for tonight—How could the bible be so Sure and Certain that the Israelite nation would be preserved and Israelites and Jews would again have a land—the very same one that had been given to their Father Abraham—and they would prosper as a nation and gain the attention of the world?

Could it be as simple as “*God said it and therefore it happened?*” I think so and I want to explain this answer by looking at **Jeremiah 31**.

The preface to this passage is what Jeremiah had written in **Jeremiah 30:1-3**. It is the promise of God and it is unequivocally clear. It takes the two parts of the nation that will be dispersed throughout the world, the Israelites of the ten Northern tribes and the Jews of the two Southern tribes, and put them back in the land of Abraham.

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: “*Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land, I gave their ancestors to possess, says the Lord.*” God laid out a plan where He would restore the nation to their own land and it would be a regathering of Israelites never to be removed again from the land. Since it embraces both the Israelites and the Jews it could not have been fulfilled until 1948 when Israel again became a nation.

But Chapter 31 begins to flesh this out in detail how this was to happen:

1. This will be a universal call to the people of Israel and Judah to return to the land and God will not limit this call by any judgements the world might make: prosperity, excellent reputation, etc.; but all will be called and all may come to the land. **Jeremiah 31:1-4**
2. The land will produce in abundance and the land will prosper in all ways. It will be known for its agriculture—which it is—after all almost all the irrigation improvements in the world—like drip irrigation were first invented and practiced in Israel and its architecture—which it also is. God uses the O T descriptions of the land but the locations are the same: Samaria is once more within the borders of modern-day Israel and the hills of Ephraim are also a strong part of the present-day nation of Israel. **Jeremiah 31:5-6**
3. God will protect and deliver them from nations even stronger than they are. That has been the history of Israel, whether it was Syria, Egypt, Jordon—who all fought one or more wars against Israel, or even present-day Iran—there has not been a nation that opposed Israel that was stronger; had a larger army; and would have been considered the favorite in a war between them and Israel. **Jeremiah 31: 10-12**
4. God will restore the nation by bringing people from the lands of those who hate and oppose the Jews/Israelites and they will find freedom and new opportunity in this restored land. They will return after sorrow, just like Rachel, or the Tribe of Benjamin had when the Babylonians took the children of Judah into captivity herding them to the small town of Ramah. It was the same reference used in the Bible when Herod came through the area of Bethlehem and killed all the young boys in an effort to destroy and kill the baby Messiah Jesus that the wise men from the East had told him about. It will again be out of suffering that the good thing—the nation of Israel will come. **Jeremiah 31:15-17**

It would be impossible to eliminate the impact that the Holocaust had on the civilized world when it came to making Israel a free and independent nation. The sympathies and horror of many in Europe and the United States seeing what the Jews had endured in World War II led to activism that helped allow Israel to become a nation again. After all it was a vote of the United Nations that declared

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

Israel a new and free restored country. It was not wars, edicts from kings or emperors but a body of nations that created the country of Israel. Ironically, that same body has voted more times to censure Israel than any other country in the world—even North Korea, China, Iran, etc. Again, it was the voice of Ramah crying out for all the people who had been lost and killed by the Nazi war machine.

5. God will allow this restored nation of Israel to become a self-sufficient and exporting nation who sells the plentiful goods it raises and manufactures and they will be dependent on no one. This has also happened. Israel is the smallest of nations in those who trade throughout the world that is totally independent and now that large oil beds have been found in Israel, they will not even be dependent on fossil fuel—if it remains as the major supplier of energy in the world. Israel has led the world in solar exploration of energy and especially in water desalting plants. Israel takes a major part of their water supply from the Mediterranean Sea. ***Jeremiah 31:23-25***
6. God will establish a new covenant with His people and it will not be the covenant of Mt. Sinai, or the 10 commandments and the laws the people received while in the wilderness. It will be a covenant that was begun by Jesus Christ and will continue to expand until all are offered this covenant. It is the explanation of salvation that comes through grace and the forgiveness of sin. It will be the basis of those in heaven and those in the Millennial Kingdom. Those who were saved through faith like the faith of Abraham and through that same faith that came through the Church, and the same faith of those saved after the Rapture of the Church in the time of Tribulation will all share together in this great time of reward.

It is so cool how God prophesied it would happen, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.” Declares the Lord.” ***Jeremiah 31:33b-34a***

God wraps up this great teaching with the true explanation of grace, forgiveness of sin and salvation when he says in ***Jeremiah 31: 34b***:

*“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

This great passage has such a ring of freedom to it, that the author of Hebrews included it in the letter of Hebrews two times.

7. Finally, God speaks of the totalness of this great prophecy. This is why we can safely say—There was a Surety from God about the restoration of the nation of Israel.

It is verses ***Jeremiah 31:33-37*** and it lists 6 creations of God that prove this will happen:

- 1) The sun coming up every morning—it would have to stop before this promise is not true.
- 2) The moon and stars to shine out in the night—again it would have to stop before this promise would not be fulfilled.
- 3) The waves of the shores of all oceans and seas would have to stop and every large body of water upon this earth would have to become still and non-moving.
- 4) God would have to forget that He ever said that Israel would become a restored nation.
- 5) The heavens would have to be measured and explored in every way before this promise would fail.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

- 6) The foundations of the earth would have to be explored and mapped. No one has ever penetrated the 10 feet core of solid rock mass that separates mankind from the molten center of this earth. We have no way now to explore any part of that core.

Let's look at **Hosea 3**. God gave the prophet Hosea a very difficult and discouraging mission to prove a prophetic point. God ordered Hosea to marry a promiscuous wife, who would serve as an illustration of how God would love the Israelites—or you and me—through times that we did not deserve to be loved and would restore the home and the marriage—just as He has restored Israel to the land of Abraham and allowed the land to prosper greater than it ever has.

Chapter three summarizes the relationship of Hosea and his unfaithful wife Gomer in comparison to the God and His unfaithful people Israel. I want us to focus on three thoughts out of this chapter tonight.

1. God seeks out His people in their sinfulness and woos them back to Him. Just as God told Hosea to go and get Gomer while she was living in adultery with another man—so God has continually sought out His people to return to Him even when they are worshipping idols and living a life foreign to what God has told them to do. God never sees His judgment as complete based on what we are doing—God will continue to woo us back to Him as long as our heart is willing to be moved back to the worship and praise of God. **Hosea 3: 1-2**
2. God told Hosea that he was to purchase Gomer out of adultery—we would probably say prostitution, and he was to not resume being a husband to her until she was ready to come and seek the forgiveness of her husband. God had Hosea tell the people that is what God would do for them. He would travel the world and pull His people back from the four corners of the world after they had realized that they needed to be back in the land of Israel. (Thousands even millions migrated to that area long before there was a restored nation.) Only then would God allow them to set up a land and control it. **Hosea 3:3-5**
3. Just as Gomer would return to Hosea, so in time the Israelites would return to worshipping God and seeking David their king—a phrase used for an acceptance of the Son of David—Jesus the messiah. They will be obedient and ready to serve. I see this happening in the Book of Revelation when the 144,000 Jewish Christians spread out over the entire earth and win many to the Lord.

The Bible speaks of many world political signs that will be a part of the ‘final last days.’ They include:

1. The reestablishment of Israel. **Ezekiel 36:22-37**
2. Arab hostility towards Israel. **Ezekiel 35:1-36**
3. Russia as a menacing power to Israel. **Ezekiel 38:1-39**
4. Asian nations capable of fielding an army of 200 million. **Revelation 9:15-16**
5. Wars and rumors of wars. **Matthew 24:6-7**
6. Kingdom against kingdom. **Matthew 24:7**
7. Reunification of Europe. **Daniel 2:41-44**
8. Movement toward a one world economy. **Revelation 18**

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

It is not hard to see that these are or will be coming very true now. But they all begin with the restoration of Israel as a nation in the land that God first gave to Abraham and told Abram that his seed would live in that land.

Sometimes the clarity is shocking as we who have been alive since 1950 will testify. It is unbelievable that this small nation of Israel, formed with three little triangles less than the size of Rhode Island—has become a world player in almost every arena and continues to grow as people continue to migrate to the land of Israel.

I would close with a great promise from **Amos 8:14-15**:

*“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them”. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them.”*

Prophet after prophet in the Old Testament, many of them writing while either Israel was still a nation or even later when Judah was the only nation left out of the clan of Abraham, said with SURETY—Israel will be restored to this land. I still say the greatest reason that it has happened—is that God said that it would and when God says it will happen—it happens.



### #4 - Seven Themes of Ezekiel 34-37 Found in the New Testament

The Book of Ezekiel has always been one of the main books of the Bible to explain the restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Israel. It became a real focus for some Christians when the Puritans of the 17<sup>th</sup> century studied the prophecies in Ezekiel and other books of the Old Testament and began to teach that the restoration of Israel would be fulfilled literally. It then became a stronger part of the Christian faith in many circles and the “Zionist Movement of the 1880’s” brought a real focus on the restoration of Israel and the rebirth of the nation—declaring it was being fulfilled. Many now believe that the restoration of Israel to the land first given to Abraham is a fulfillment of Scriptures and the fact that Israel is prospering just as the prophecies said is proof that these prophecies were really about the land of Israel and not some spiritual Israel that has been replaced by the church.

We are going to study to see if there is a link between the Book of Ezekiel and the New Testament, especially a link in the three chapters of ***Ezekiel 34-37***.

It is very important for us to put some context around these chapters tonight, so we see what Ezekiel was saying to the people of his day—after all the book was written to them and it was not to be some mysterious writing that would have to be interpreted thousands of years later. It was a declaration of where Israel stood with God and what God intended to do with the people and with the land.

Ezekiel had a very tough task. God had given him a prophetic message for the readers of his book and the listeners of his prophecies that was not pleasant or encouraging. God had given the message to Ezekiel that the city of Jerusalem would fall, the Temple would be ransacked, and many of the nation would go into exile. What a dismal message and it was not well received. In the first 33 chapters of the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet explains that the people of Israel had taken the covenants of God and had broken them over and over. They had established false gods; they had made graven images; they had rebuked the Sabbath and turned it into another day of commerce; they had rebuked and mistreated their parents. . . You could go down the list of all 10 commandments and take the various laws given by God on Mt. Sinai and show that Israel had broken every one of them. That is what Ezekiel does in the first 33 chapters of his book and it is so emphatic that really no one questioned that it was true.

Ezekiel taught that God would take four of the most fundamental and significant gifts that came with the Covenant because the people did not follow the covenant, they just used it for their advantage when they wanted to.

#### **Four Covenant Gifts:**

1. **The Land**—given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—it would be given to those who conquered Israel and later Judah and would be divided among many tyrannical nations. That happened as Babylon, Assyrians (Known as the Medes and the Persians), the Greeks, the Romans, the Turks, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Syrians, the Ottoman Empire, the British and others controlled the land from 450 BC to 1948—literally 2,400 years.
2. **The City of Jerusalem**—this city often called the City of David and even the City of God would be destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed again. The fact that we have the City of Jerusalem today shows that

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

God preserved the city even when it was not under the control of Israel or Jews. It became a part of Israel again in 1967 when the Israelis conquered the city in war.

3. **The Temple**—the center of religion, culture, and significance for Israel was totally destroyed in 70 AD and every stone above the ground was taken a part, so that no building was seen where the Temple had set. Not even ruins. The Western Wall is an area excavated by Israel to allow the Jews to have a place of worship, but it really is just the foundation stones of a previous temple building. To complicate the situation, the Mosque of Omar now sits on the Temple ground area and it is considered the third most holy site of Moslem believers.
4. **The Monarchy**—the lineage of the Kings of Israel was totally interrupted by this exile and by the time of Christ, the governing body was not a king but the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 men who were the spiritual leaders of the nation and they became the governing leaders of the nation.

Then Ezekiel gives hope for the future to the people of his day, **Ezekiel Chapters 33-47** and most of those prophecies were not fulfilled until our time. Even in the time of Jesus, the Jews looked with anticipation to these prophecies. In the time of Jesus Christ's ministry on the earth, Israel was not a nation—only Judah existed and it was a small area under the management of Syria who represented the Roman Government. But we see the people very much clinging to some of the hopes from prophecies like the one we are studying tonight in Ezekiel.

They visualized a supernatural figure coming on the clouds or a military figure who could defeat any enemy they had and they took these dreams and hopes and gave this man a name— "The Messiah". Especially Luke captures these feelings in his Gospel: The Messiah was a prophesied person in the Old Testament, but not the military leader or the magical super-power person the Messiah became in the minds of many New Testament Jews

We see this thought and hope and Luke especially makes several references in his gospel. When the parents of Jesus dedicated him in the Temple, Luke writes: "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout, He was waiting for "the consolation of Israel", and the Holy Spirit was on him." **Ezekiel 2:25**

After they had the blessing of Simeon, while still in the Temple, Anna came up to them:

*"Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all "who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." **Ezekiel 2:38***

When Jesus increased His ministry—John the Baptist sent disciples to ask him:

*"John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, John sent them to the Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"*

On the Road to Emmaus, one of the disciples told Jesus:

*"The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was "going to redeem Israel." **Ezekiel 24:20-21***

When we look at the history of the people in the land of Israel after the return from exile, it is hard to see much evidence of national and spiritual renewal and revival that Ezekiel had written about. It was not surprising, the nation was small, the nation had no power, the nation was not allowed to have kings by those who overruled the land, and the nation had few financial resources. During this 400-year time frame between

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

the last book of the OT and the birth of Jesus Christ, people began to dream of a time when God would intervene in miraculous ways to fulfill the visions of the prophets. Some visions and hopes centered around the lure of a Messiah—who they thought will rally the people, be victorious in all battles, and restore the glory and majesty the nation had when David was their king. So, we can really disregard our study of the fulfillment of the Book of Ezekiel in the 400 years from the end of the Old Testament into the time of the New Testament. But the people wanted the nation restore—more in glory than just restored as a nation.

These first three chapters of **Ezekiel 34-36** can be divided into seven themes that are all referred to in the New Testament. We will study each one of the seven by itself and see how it was visualized in the New Testament:

**1. Theme one: God Would Bring the Exiles Back into The Land of Israel.** Ezekiel declared this:

*“I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. . . . I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”*

**Ezekiel. 34:13, 14, & 16**

Here is the promise of a literal regathering and restoration of the people of Israel to their own land from their world-wide dispersion. The scattering was literal and the regathering has been as well. The land has prospered greatly since God began to call the people back to it; but this is only an overture of what will happen in the 1,000-year reign when Jesus is the King over restored Israel, they will lack nothing at that time and the contrast will be great between—the Old Testament Shepherds—leaders—who worried only about themselves and the new Shepherd King—Jesus Christ who will lead them beside still waters, lets them lie down in green pastures, handles all of their enemies, and is the ultimate “Good Shepherd” over all of their lives.

Ezekiel also declared:

*“But your mountains of Israel will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home.”* **Ezekiel 36:8** and again: *“Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.”* **Ezekiel 36:28**

Ezekiel prophesied that the land of Israel would be productive, populated, and peaceful. Every step back to a nation: return from Babylonian captivity; the rebuilding of the Temple with Zerubbabel; Ezra, and Nehemiah; and even the completion of the Second Temple by Herod was only a taste of what God had in mind. The fact that none of these included the 10 Northern tribes, or an independent nation; or a nation with its own government show they were just the foretaste of what God had in mind. These have all started to be fulfilled in earnest now that Israel is a restored nation. Growth: 1 million in 1948; 3 million in 1973; 6 million in 2001 and 8 million in 2020.

Ezekiel goes ahead to prophesy that this restoration will lead to a new heart for the people; a cleansing of their sin; and a renewal of a right relationship with God.

This promise was often referenced in the washing of sin in the New Testament: **Hebrews 9:13** and **10:12** both speak of the cleansing that comes through the washing of God; in **Ephesians 5:26**, Paul talks of the need for the cleansing of Jesus Christ in our lives as something that Jesus has done to take care of His people; and Jesus said the same very clearly to Nicodemus when Jesus told him that all must be born again of the water and the Spirit. Over 50 % of all Jews who have accepted the Messiah as Savior have been since 1948 and 70 % since the first Zionist Conference.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

### 2. Theme 2 - God Would Act Through a Shepherd King:

Ezekiel wrote: *“I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them, he will tend them and be their shepherd.” Ezekiel 34:22-24*

Something that starts when Israel is restored as a nation will be finalized when Jesus judges over all—and separates the goats from the sheep by seeing how they have treated those who were unable to defend and feed themselves, Matthew 25, the leader will be Jesus, who is Israel’s ultimate king and will rule over the Millennial Kingdom.

This promise was often referred to in the New Testament as Jesus spoke about the separation that would come from those who followed what God had asked people to do in contrast to those who did not. The references to Jesus as the final king of the earth are many and He would guard His people like a Shepherd.

### 3. Theme three - The Hallowing of God’s Name:

*Ezekiel 34:30-31* says, *“Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord.”*

Paul in *Romans 9-11* traces what will happen to the Israelites/Jews through history and ends with a great declaration, *“And in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”*

### 4. Theme four - Enjoying Prosperity in the Restored Land. This is a common theme in *Ezekiel 34-36* and I just want to select one passage to tell the story.

*Ezekiel 36:35-36* *“They will say, “this land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden, the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited. Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the Lord have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.”*

This is a particularly frequent prophecy of what will happen when Israel is restored as a nation and without a doubt it is very true. It will be even more true when Jesus restores a Garden of Eden existence during His 1,000-year reign on earth.

### 5. Theme five - Cleansing from Sin.

### 6. Theme six - Gift of a New Heart of Obedience.

*Ezekiel 36:24-27* says: *“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”*

Along with a physical return to the land God pledged will come a spiritual renewal and it will include: a cleansing from sin; a new heart of the New Covenant; a new spirit or disposition inclined to worship God; and His Spirit dwelling in them. This sounds a lot like the very steps of salvation and **Romans**

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

**11:25** tells us it will happen. Paul writes: *“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in and in this way all Israel will be saved.”* This has not happened yet, but Paul tells us that without a doubt—it will.

7. **Theme 7 - A Covenant of Peace with the People of Israel and God.** **Ezekiel 34: 25-26** says, *“I will make a covenant of peace with them (Israel) and rid the land of savage beasts so that they may live in the wilderness and sleep in the forests in safety. I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season, there will be showers of blessing.”*

This will start as soon as Israel is restored as a free nation but it will be completely restored as the animal kingdom changes to become totally peaceful in the 1,000-year reign of Jesus on the earth and Jerusalem, and the hill of the Lord becomes the very hub of the world during this time.

In the New Testament, Peter preached about such a day and encourages the Israelites who were a part of the time when Jesus was killed, to repent and receive the cleansing that comes from God.

*“Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.”*

This will wipe out off the curses of **Deuteronomy 28:15-68** where God warned of what would happen if His people became disobedient. But it is especially **Ezekiel 37** where I want us to direct our attention as we look at the reality that God always intended to preserve Israel as a people and restore Israel as a nation on the very land that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God gave Ezekiel two illustrations to show how He would restore Israel and combine the nations of Israel and Judah forever.

### 1. The First was a Valley of Dry Bones.

This vision was given to Ezekiel the night before the messenger came with the news that Jerusalem had been destroyed. It was given by Ezekiel to the people to ease the gloom of the people; but it is a great historical vision that has been realized in our lifetimes. It represents the entire world area where Israelites had been scattered.

The language tells us that the bones were very dry and showed a nation that was lifeless, scattered, bleached and one that only God can give back life. The many dry bones picture the nation of Israel dead in their dispersion and scattered throughout the world. It is not about the restoration of dead people, that is a separate restoration that is called a resurrection. It was a symbol of the death of a nation.

God begins to give a series of commands to prophesy for Ezekiel to carry out.

- a. The first is to tell of the dry bones about God’s pledge to reassemble Israelites from all over the world and restore the nation of Israel—that is truly the purpose and plan of God. He intends to give them His Spirit and it is a true pledge of god to resurrect Israel as a nation and to oversee their spiritual regeneration. Ezekiel is completely obedient and the dead bones become a living nation.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

- b. Then God takes these standing bodies, now breathing in the vision and He promises the Israelites in this prophecy to restore and regenerate Israel to the land of their heritage.
- c. Finally, God in the vision and prophecy promises them that he will bring back to life, the reality of an Israelite nation and people. This is significant, because the Israeli people had buried the idea and had laid it in a grave never to believe that it would happen.

### 2. The Second was Two Sticks

Once this vision is clear to Ezekiel, God orders him to take two sticks and to bind them together to show that God intended for the first time since 931 BC, when the land left by Solomon to his son was divided into Israel and Juda, that God would unite the two countries again into the one nation, Israel.

God made three promises in this great chapter that summarized His future plans for Israel:

- 1) He would restore the two nations into one, with only one ruler, and this restore country would never be split again. Vs. 21
- 2) He would unify the nations into one vs. 22
- 3) He would purify the nation. vs.23

In this great summary of what God will do, God fulfills the covenant to Abraham—that his seed would live in this land; God fulfills the covenant to David that from his seed a ruler would again be over Israel; and the New Covenant that we are saved by the cleansing of God and not by obedience to laws.

It is that final covenant that binds us with the restored nation of Israel and all that God intends to do with that nation. The New Covenant is in full force, where people can receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior and be a part of His kingdom. It has not yet been realized but it will? **Romans 11:25** promises that it will come to pass and at that time in history—all of Israel will be saved.

When all of these covenants are totally fulfilled, then God will live with His people. This is a promise that God has often repeated: before the time of Moses, **Genesis 17:7-8**; In the time of Moses, **Leviticus 26:11-13**; in the church era, **I Corinthians 3:16**; in the time of the Millennial Kingdom, **Ezekiel 37:26-28**; and in our eternal future, **Revelation 21:3**.

### #5 - The Dry Bones Come Alive

We are going to look at the most dramatic story of the nation of Israel in 2,500 years and one of the most improbable miracles ever. I do not think we have anything like it in the thousands of years of the history of Israel. Because the great miracles of the Old Testament and the Israelites, crossing of the Red Sea; 10 plagues on Egypt; the Sun standing still; and the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai all occurred when Israel was a nation; this miracle seems more improbable because it occurred when Israel was scattered all over the world. It is the story of a group of people who were dispersed all over the world, had basically not grown much larger in that 2,500-year time, and had nothing that kept them bound together. Each small group and settlement were basically on their own. There were no great world-wide Jewish bodies, nor was there an alignment of the people of Hebrew faith throughout the world on any level. It is that story I want us examine in detail tonight.

**God Gave Ezekiel Four Major Visions that are Recorded in His Book of Prophecy:**

1. Ezekiel called to become a prophet for God. *Ezekiel Chapters 1-3*
2. Ezekiel receives a vision from God that Jerusalem would be destroyed in judgement by God. *Ezekiel Chapters 8-11*
3. Ezekiel has a vision about Israel being restored. *Ezekiel Chapters 34-37*
4. Ezekiel has a vision of the New Temple. *Ezekiel Chapters 40-48*

We are going to examine these last two visions as we ask ourselves the question, “Why Would God Restore Israel”

**First Theme of Ezekiel 37 - The Vision of The Restoration of Israel**

What was it and what does it mean? *Ezekiel Chapter 37* as we looked at last week is explicit and clear in what God is showing to Ezekiel. Ezekiel is still living in a land that is free. It is being invaded by the Babylonians but Judah has not completely fallen, Jerusalem although besieged is still a city, and the Temple has not yet been destroyed.

God takes Ezekiel in his vision to a valley that is filled with dry—very dry bones. It is not a place that has life but is filled with death. We are not told the rest of landscape because the vision was just these plentiful and very dry bones. They are not in a pile, but scattered all over the valley where God is giving this vision to Ezekiel. They are so plentiful that Ezekiel twice refers to how many bones there were: “full of dry bones”, and “great many dry bones.” God has not only given the vision to Ezekiel—God is in the driver’s seat and so he asks the prophet a pointed question, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

Now we know separate from the power of God, the answer is a big clear NO!!! It is beyond human ability to take a valley of dry bones and bring life back to them. This is something that only God can do and really no one can argue that restoring a valley of dry bones to living humans is within the ability or capability of any person.

But I want us to see something in this teaching that puts it in context for each of us. God has just had Ezekiel tell the children of Judah that their nation would fall, Jerusalem would be captured, and the Temple would be destroyed. When they heard that, I am sure that they were defeated, disappointed, and crushed. What they



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

had based their life around—would all be gone. Then God asks a question of Ezekiel that gives some hope. Can these dry bones live again?

I wonder if that is a question that God asks us sometimes? Maybe you have a strained or a non-existent relationship with one of your children and in your mind, it can never be restored. Perhaps God is saying to you—"that is true if you only want to consider what people can do—you are right without divine thinking and intervention; this relationship will never get any better." But this may be the very prelude that God is using to get you to see that He can intercede, resurrect and restore a relationship that is dead.

My brother Howard was an alcoholic and died a difficult and lonely death a few years ago. When he was first married, he brought his wife out to Illinois to visit all of his family. We were thrilled to see Sandy again, he had met her in Colorado and we had only met her at the wedding in her hometown of Wibaux, Montana. They stayed with Sharon and I for a few days and during that time, I managed to make my brother angry enough at me that he left our house, went to our parent's home and started an estrangement between us that lasted over 35 years. We had very little contact with each other and almost no interaction. Sharon and I reached out when we were at a Church convention in Anaheim and on his terms saw their family one time when they lived in San Juan Capistrano, California. That was the only time the first cousins met each other until much later in life. In those 35 years many things went wrong in his life: he left his family and moved to Alaska, he was estranged from his ex-wife and his three children. He had a very disastrous second marriage in Alaska with a lady he had met in AA. He finally moved back to the town where his ex-wife lived and one of his children, Billings, Montana. He was forbidden by his son to make any contact with his ex-wife or the son's family. He could no longer work—drinking and a reckless life had ended his ability to work and he lived off of the inheritance he had gotten from the estate of our Father and Mother. It was sent to him in increments by our older sister. I felt that we would never have a restored relationship, because I knew no way to make it happen. It was a 35-year-old valley of dry bones with no life left. I contacted him, found out he had a need, mailed him a check he asked for, and left it in the hands of God. A few months later, he called me one day at the Church office and we began a new relationship for the last few years of his life. He would never let me visit him; but he did come to Phoenix and spent almost three weeks with us one January. When he passed and the police found his body in the old trailer he lived in in Billings, they called me and that opened up a relationship with his three children.

My brother and I never had a fabulous relationship—when we reconnected in our sixties, but what we had was given as a gift from God. My brother Howard always did the calling—I did not know how to get ahold of him—(the number he had given me was to a disconnected line) but when he called, he was usually a little drunk or at least high but God had taken a 35-year valley of bones and brought life back to them.

Perhaps there are other areas of your life that are filled with dry bones; maybe a financial obligation that you just feel like you never have enough money to pay; maybe some legal issues with members of your family; maybe a sin that you have felt could never be overcome, and perhaps the Lord is asking you, "Can these bones live?" I would say if it is on your heart and it seems that God is communicating with you—make the first move and seek God to help bring those dry bones back to life.

Ezekiel is faithful in giving the message to the people that are listening and although those listening did not see the vision fulfilled that God had given Ezekiel, they did not see the captives come back to Judah from Babylon after the Babylonian kingdom fell. They only saw a part of what God showed Ezekiel in the vision. It still happened.

It was 1948 AD and not 550 BC; but it did happen. It was a remarkable scene that God showed Ezekiel, and Ezekiel shared it with the people.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

God would restore life to this valley of dry bones in stages:

1. **Stage One** - The Bodies Were Restored in Perfect Form—But Had No Life.
2. **Stage Two** - The Bones Received Life and Became Living Creatures.

It was God saying to Ezekiel and all who would read this passage that Israel would come together in these two stages:

1. The desolation would end and they would want to come back to the home land of Israel. That happened in a variety of ways—some were so persecuted that they wanted out of Germany, Austria, Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine; others were just feeling like they did not belong in the land where they lived; and still others could not put a real reason to their need to get back to the land of their ancestors—they just knew they were compelled to go.
2. God would restore their nationality. When Babylon destroyed Judah and Jerusalem, that was the first time that Judah was not a national country and the first time they had ever lost their freedom since they captured a large part of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua and established the nation of Israel. God would rekindle hope and a desire to live in the land He had set aside for them, and then God would put together an unbelievable series of events that would lead to the new nation of Israel.

It is clear that God felt the nation needed to be restored but first the Israelites needed to be resurrected to a moral life that God had taught them to live—that would lead to the restored nation. The restored nation of Israel was not started as an overtly religious nation—most were either atheists or agnostics but they were a moral people and the crime rate was low, the esteemed value of each person was high and care for each other was intense and bonding. God had put His Spirit in them and although they slowly turned to faith, they had the moral backbone to create a nation that would last.

### **Second Theme of Ezekiel 37 - The Unity of Israel and Judah.**

This is so foreign to our present concept of modern-day Israel—that we have to be reminded that is only true because God prophesied it and made it true. God was very demonstrative with Ezekiel:

1. Take one stick and write 'belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.
2. Take a second stick and write 'belonging to Jacob (or Ephraim, a tribe named after the son of Joseph, and all the Israelites belonging to him.

God said take these two sticks and place them in your hand as just one stick. Then God said that the two nations would never divide again or try to be two nations. Can you imagine what God is saying---the disruption that started among the sons of Jacob or Israel, the bitterness, the jealousy that led to Joseph being sold by his brothers into slavery, the attempted murders, the many divisions of the land, the Civil Wars between the tribes, the false gods that grew out of the division---ALL WOULD BE GONE! God would restore Israel just as He had first started Israel: united, purified, and following one leader.

I feel God is giving us this lesson for the United States right now. I would encourage you to pray for God to restore the United States to a spirit of cooperation, a sense of brotherhood, and a desire for all to move in a way that blesses God and His people. Like Israel, the United States did not always get it right; we started as a nation that still allowed slavery, we did not allow non-land owners to vote, and we did not let the women of this nation vote. We had many things to correct as the nation grew and developed. Those have been changed

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

through war, protests, and the vote but the real key to being a nation that brings glory to God and others is to be unified in the desire for all to be able to advance; to see every child of this nation as a bundle of opportunity and to have a bond and care for others that makes our nation strong.

Once God had given this great message to Ezekiel, that includes the final celebration of life in the Millennial Kingdom, the 1,000-year reign led by King Jesus (Son of David), with a restored Temple, and a new Covenant; He then focuses the next two chapters on a large and merciless force of nations that comes to attack Israel.

Why is this a part of the message of restoring Israel? Because God has promised that when He restores the nation, it will never be captured or destroyed again! It will never be divided into separate tribes again and it will not worship false gods every again! This is such an emphatic point that God illustrates the extremes to which He is ready to go to make sure that happens.

He starts by having Ezekiel condemn those who would come to attack and destroy this restored and united nation in **Ezekiel Chapter 38**. It starts with a condemnation of Gog and Magog, used here and again in **Revelation 20:8**—we know these are adversaries from the north of Israel that come to attack and ravish the land and its valuables. They will have a northern force of several nations and this coalition of nations is targeting Jerusalem as the point of attack. Many have seen this group as Russians, Turks, and other western European/Asian nations that are probably led by Gog, a prince of Magog. They are joined by Persia, Iran; Cush/Ethiopia (Northeast African nations); and Put/Libya (North central and Northwestern nations of Africa).

The absence of forces from right around Israel has troubled many and have led them to say this description is not a real description but only a ring of nations around the known world at the time of Ezekiel—to show that there will come a time when all the world is against Israel and many say this is really the persecution of the spiritualized Israel, the Church

However, if we take the prophecy of **Psalms 83** as real, then we know that the enemy neighbors of Israel have been defeated and Israel has been allowed to live in peace. Therefore, they have unwallled cities, no gates and bars, and are at peace with their neighbors and each other.

This great attack—not as large as the attack at the final battle of Armageddon—will show that God is intentional in what He has had Ezekiel prophesy. It will be a time in which though vastly outnumbered—the scripture says, *“You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land.”* **Ezekiel 38:15**

God has had Ezekiel tell the people this is unlike any invasion they have ever seen. The invasion of the Babylonians and the Assyrians was used by God to cleanse the land of Israel and Judah and to punish the people for following false gods and evil and living out immoral ways. This time God is bringing this vast army into the land of Israel to show that He the God of the restored nation of Israel will defeat whatever foes come against them.

Beginning in **Ezekiel Chapter 38 verse 19**, God begins to list all the things that He will do to fight the battle for the Israelites and make them victorious over this vast, armed enemy. The list is amazing and daunting:

1. **A giant earthquake in all of Israel**—no need to restrict this to the earthquake of Jerusalem **Revelation 16:19**—which will destroy Jerusalem and the cities of the world—no this earthquake will affect all of Israel and will rattle and disrupt the invading army.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

2. **It will disrupt nature**—fish, birds, domesticated animals, and even those animals that crawl on the ground. Most of all it will cause panic among people, because it will reshape mountains, take cliffs down in a heap of rock, and every wall that has been built will collapse.
3. **God will then cause the enemy armies**, all on the mountain tops of Israel for reasons of strategy to become so distracted and distraught that they begin to kill each other in their confusion.
4. **God will send plagues**--probably a series of pestilences that attack the human body-- against this vast army that will create bloodshed and death.
5. **God will follow that with intense torrential rains producing floods**; large hailstones capable of injuring and killing troops, and finally fire and brimstone- (burning sulfur), or the ultimate form of judgment from God. It not only kills—it leaves the area covered uninhabitable.

God will do this by His Divine intervention and it will not include an earthly army that will oppose the enemies of Israel.

God then has Ezekiel add even more details to what will happen after God has vanquished those who followed God and Magog. His protection of the restored nation of Israel is total and the defeat of those who were opposed to Israel and who had set their sights on plundering Jerusalem and all that Israel possessed is described on even more detail.

God will protect Israel by disarming, then destroying these invaders. He will then have them fed to carrion birds and carnivorous animals and they will clean the flesh, the fat and drink the blood of all these who have fallen under the hand of God.

Israel will burn the weapons that were left as the armies were destroyed and it will be seven years-worth of fuel. This would be wood, metal, and other equipment left as the army died. Then God will have Israelites sweep through the battle areas, collect the dead bones, and bury them in Valley of Hamon Gog, near a town called Hamonah. This will be to cleanse the land of those who opposed God and after the bodies are buried, then God will have the same force of people come through and mark every human bone and have it also buried. There will be no trace of these godless enemies in the land of Israel. It will be as if they never existed.

This remarkable battle that God won for the nation of Israel will have a strong effect on the world.

1. The nations will realize that God is the true God and that He is the first and only needed line of defense for the nation of Israel.
2. All nations, even Israel will see that God allowed the nation to go into captivity to correct their ideas of the worship of idols and the co-mixing of immorality and worship.
3. Israel will see what God has done and they will come to worship Him without shame or doubt; but will be the faithful people that Paul spoke about in Romans 11:26 when he wrote, "At that time all Israel will be saved."
4. They will be totally restored at that time and not another Israelite/Jew will live in any other part of the world other than Israel and God's Spirit will rest upon them.

This great love story, told over three chapters, tells us that God did not forget Israel—He never could—but instead He corrected them and when the time was right, He brought them back to Him and protected them then and all through eternity.

### #6 - The Spiritual Impact of Israel Restored!

Previously, we had a chance to study one of the great love stories of the Bible. It had nothing to do with romance or the ecstasy of the physical relationship between a man and a woman that is the Song of Solomon; but it was a tremendous love story. It was the story of God bringing all Israelis back from the four corners of the earth and restoring them as a nation in the land that had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—or Israel. It told of this great plan of God to take dry bones and restore them to life and make them into a nation. It told how this restored nation would be protected by God through all eternity. The nation would not be divided, destroyed, or dispersed ever again after it had been restored.

The prophetic love story then told of how God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would defend this nation against a collation of world armies that would march on Jerusalem to take all the valuables from the land and to plunder the nation for their own good. This war called the war of God/Magog in the Book of Ezekiel shows that God will totally defeat that army on the mountain tops of Israel and that the defeat will be so total that all of the weapons left will provide seven years of fuel for the nation and that everybody and bone will be buried from this invading army and the nation will be cleansed. God will continue to defend this nation, even though the great Tribulation and when Christ comes back, He will not only preserve this now Messiah accepting nation but will be with them forever.

The next part of this prophetic love story is fairly foreign to our way of thinking. Because the very next vision that God gives to Ezekiel is not a vision of heaven or a vision of what it will be like when God and all of His people are united, it is not even a vision of how beautiful this Millennial 1,000-year Kingdom will be---no, it is a physical description of the Third Temple. How could that have been so comforting to the people of Israel?

For 2,000 + years the temple was the center of God’s relationship with His people; it was the source of social contact for the nation; and it was the hub of activity for the nation. Nothing was more important nor valuable to the average Israelite than the Temple, so when God begins to prophetically tell them what this Temple would be like—He definitely had their attention. It was the most important physical structure upon this earth to all believing Israelis.

This leads to a question that I think we should look at:

#### **“Why Hasn’t the Temple Been Rebuilt Before Now?”**

If it is that important and valuable to the Israelites then, why has there been no Temple from 70 AD to 2021?

First, Israel has occupied the Temple Mount for only one short period of time in the last two thousand years, and that was 1967 when the Israeli forces captured the entire city of Jerusalem in war. But either to gain world acceptance or because the Prime Minister at the time, David Ben-Guion was not a believer in God—the entire Temple Mount was given to the Jordanian Royal Family. It did incite the Israel Orthodox religious leaders to form several groups: 1) The Temple Mount Faithful; 2) The Temple Institute and 3) The Royal Priesthood. These groups have embarked on training many Jewish men to be immediate priests should Temple worship begin tomorrow and also the forming of a Sanhedrin Institute to rule over the nation. The nation, at least on the Orthodox Jewish level is ready to restore Temple Worship at any time and the fact that

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

they plan to erect a tent Temple, Old Testament called it the Tabernacle, to start and then begin the building of the Temple means they could start worship in one day. They have also built the items needed in the Temple for Worship and sacrifice; they have followed OT guidelines and sewn Priestly garments and Levitical garments for all who would be working at their special services. They have formed a Sanhedrin Institute to rule over the nation. Never again will Israel have the opportunity to control the Temple Mount and not take it.

But also, I want to share some of the attempts to rebuild the Temple. It was not a devoid part of Israelite history.

1. The first attempt was by Rabbi Zakki who after the destruction of the Temple asked all priests to observe preparation days as though they were serving in the Temple.
2. Rabbi Chananya headed up fund-raising after the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, but his group was labelled as terrorists and traitors so Hadrian forced great persecution on them and they dispersed.
3. Bar Kokhba's Rebellion, was in response to the fact that the Romans were going to build a secular Roman Temple on the site. It was a rebellion where they recaptured Jerusalem but it is unknown if they offered sacrifices and after Hadrian put down the rebellion in 135, he rebuilt the city and named it Aelia Capitolina. He did build a temple on the Temple Mount site to Jupiter with a statue of himself in it.
4. Moses ben Maimon—commanded the people to rebuild the Temple in 1165. He wrote that the rebuilt Temple must have three components: animal sacrifices, the vessels of the Temple rebuilt as the Old Testament describes and the accepted design of the future Temple. It coincides with the design of the Ezekiel Temple.
5. The Tosafists—they were Jewish immigrants from France and they determined to reestablish services. They loosened the controls to include Temple services with congregational sacrifices for only the Jews in the county and anyone could serve as a priest. They were stopped and the rebuilding of the Temple was never really started.
6. Pre-1948 Developments---As Jewish people from the late 1800's on began to migrate to Israel, there was an effort by Rabbi Kalisher who asked Baron Rothschild to purchase the Holy Land from Ibrahim Pasha, King of Egypt, who owned it and if not the whole land, then at least Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. It did not happen and the group never had an alternative plan other than the Rothschild purchase.
7. Several Jewish groups, mentioned at the start are full—fledged in their training and preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple. Two schools teach elaborate details for temple service; Temple implements necessary for the ritual of sacrifice are ready; they are finalizing the breeding and the saving of the ashes of a 'red heifer' so the ashes can be prepared for the ritual cleansing of those entering the Temple area, **Numbers 19:1-10**.

Jewish historian David Solomon insists that a new Jewish Temple is essential. He says, "It was the essence of our Jewish being, the unifying force of our people."

Other Jewish people reject the literal interpretation of Scripture that leads many to expect the rebuilding of the Temple is more figurative than literal.

Those who are hopeful and expectant regarding the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple admit that it may be a long time before construction actually begins. Zev Golan, representing the Temple Institute acknowledges,

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

“No one can say how, and no one wants to do it by force. But sooner or later, in a week or in a century, it will be done. And we will be ready for it.”

We can see from the complete dedication of these Jewish teachers that the Temple being rebuilt is constantly on their mind. It would be the most important way that God could tell them that He loves them—to oversee the Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem and the Israelite way of life returned to the way God had established it when He allowed Solomon to build the first Temple. But before we examine these three chapters, *Ezekiel 40-43*, I want to ask another question tonight:

### Whose Temple Will This Be?

There are those that argue this Temple can only be something that is built and is used during the Millennial Kingdom. The line of reasoning is this: They are horrified that the Antichrist could be in this final Temple and it is just repulsive and offensive to them. But we need to also realize that the first Temple was desecrated by the Babylonians; Antiochus Epiphanies desecrated the Second Temple by sacrificing a pig and in AD 70 the Romans looted, burnt, and destroyed God’s holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Those first two desecrations did not ruin the Temple which would imply that the future Temple could be desecrated by the antichrist but not totally ruined. We have two sets of prophecies that talk about a Temple restored.

**First Set of Prophecies** speaks of a Temple that will be in existence during the 7-year Tribulation.

*Daniel 9:27* tells us that a sacrificial system will be put back into place in the Temple. *Daniel 1:31-12:1*—these prophetic passages predict the abolishment of regular sacrifice and the setting up of something called the abomination of desolation. This will have to happen in a future Temple.

*Matthew 24:14-15*—Jesus says the Abomination of Desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet was still to come. Antiochus Epiphanies and his sacrifice of a pig in the Temple of Zeus, had already happened when Jesus spoke this prophecy.

*II Thessalonians 2:3-4*—this passage also tells us that the desolation will come after the time when the church has been established.

I conclude from these Scriptures that a Temple will be built before the time of Tribulation and it will be a mirror image of the first two Temples; The Temple of Solomon and the Temple of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

**Second Set of Prophecies** speak about the Temple and the role that the Messiah, Jesus will live out in this Temple during His 1,000 Millennial Kingdom reign.

*Jeremiah 3:16-17* tells us the new Temple will not feature the Ark of the Covenant but it will have the Throne of the Lord.

*Ezekiel 43:5-7* tells us the future Temple will have a throne for the Lord Jesus, who will be recognized as the Messiah of Israel.

*Micah 4:1-2* Tells us when the Temple is reestablished, peace rules, and this can only happen in the fulfillment of the Messianic Age—or the Millennial Kingdom.

What do we clearly know about the final Temple(s)? Biblical prophecy reveals that a Temple will be built in Israel that will be subsequently desecrated by the Antichrist. A Temple will also be built in Israel that will



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

feature the throne of the Messiah and an absence of several parts of the original Temple. Could these two Temples be one and the same? Or are they entirely different Temples without any physical connection to each other except location?

History will determine the facts; but the prophecies speak of far different settings and I especially do not believe that the Third Temple of Ezekiel could be built and fit into the area where the original Temple was located.

I want us to take a strong look at **Ezekiel 40-43** and see the hand of God as He continues His love story to the Israelite nation:

**Chapter 40:** The year was 573 BC and a quarter of a century had passed since Ezekiel had been taken into captivity. Israel's capital city, Jerusalem, had been lying in ruins for 14 years. It was enough to make a Judean lose hope. It seemed as though God had judged His people and then forgotten them in Babylon.

What did the future hold for God's people and their beloved Jerusalem? This was a question that must have entered the mind of God's prophet Ezekiel as he lived in Babylon among the exiles. Then one day it happened. God gave Ezekiel four prophetic visions in answer to this perplexing question. The first two visions occurred while Ezekiel was still in Judah—the call to be a prophet and God's judgment on Jerusalem. But these last two visions: the restoration of Israel and the design for the Third Temple were given to Ezekiel while in exile.

**Ezekiel 40:2** says that the prophet was taken "*in the vision of God*" to the land of Israel. The Lord deposited him there on a high mountain north of Jerusalem. Most would agree that the high mountain must refer to Mount Scopus, the northern extension of the Mount of Olives. **Ezekiel Chapter 48** states that the Temple will be in an area north of the city. That could mean this mountain might be entirely different than now. After all, **Revelation 16** tells us that a giant earthquake will divide the city of Jerusalem, will lower the mountains, and will destroy the cities of the world. **Zechariah 14** tells us that this great earthquake will allow a part of the Mediterranean Sea to flow into Jerusalem. It would seem that these mountains will all change.

In the vision, Ezekiel encountered a man with the tools of a surveyor—a line of flax (linen) and a measuring rod. Ezekiel was then instructed to give his careful attention to what was going to be revealed. He was commanded, "*Declare to the house of Israel all that you see.*" **Ezekiel 40: 4** This is the start to one of the most intriguing and controversial prophetic revelations of the Bible. We will start with the vision and look at what it means following these two important concepts:

**Concept # 1:** The Bible is the Word of God and is always absolutely correct. As Jesus said in **John 17:17**—The Bible is always correct and that means it is accurate in what has and what will happen.

**Concept # 2:** When it comes to prophecy, what the Bible reveals is always very specific. Many prophecies including those from the city of Delphi, representing the god Apollo were so general that it could mean anything. Think of the clairvoyants of our time. That is not true of the Bible, they are very specific and there is only one way for such prophecies to realize their actual fulfillment.

Ezekiel introduces the prophecy with several very vital details. We see in **Ezekiel 40:1-4** Ezekiel tells us the time, (the 25<sup>th</sup> year of his captivity), and then the place of the vision (a high mountain in the land of Israel), where to the south Ezekiel could see a 'structure like a city.' A clear reference to the city of Jerusalem.

Verse three describes the measuring instruments that he will use to measure the Temple. The line of flax is the measuring instrument that functioned like a tape measure. It is a long rope with knots tied every cubit. A surveyor could stretch out the flax line and determine an exact distance quickly and conveniently. The second

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

instrument was a measuring rod. It functioned like a very long yardstick. It was 6 cubits long and by repeatedly laying to down, someone could take the measurement in what Ezekiel calls rods—or reeds. The attending angel in Ezekiel’s vision uses the flax line and the reed instruments interchangeably.

We will assume that Ezekiel was using the Babylonian cubit—which was 21” Long and his measuring rod was 10 ½ feet long.

We might ask— “Why would God want Ezekiel to write all this down? The answer to that question is found in **Ezekiel 43:10-12**. Ezekiel was to record what he observed so he could present an important message to the Jewish people and let them know that God thought of them and planned for them, even though they had gone into captivity

1. God wanted them to hear, study and understand the words Ezekiel would tell them about the future Temple. How God could have let the Temple be destroyed—yes, it happened but this did not eliminate the Messiah coming. God wanted the description of the future Temple to cause the exiles to grow in their faith. They were to be ashamed of their lack of faith—a Temple built by the Lord the first time could certainly be built by the Lord another time. They were to seek God in faith to “do it again.”
2. God wanted the vision to also help people understand God’s promise about the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His future kingdom.
3. God wanted His people Israel to be encouraged and to build the Temple just as he had designed. So, He had Ezekiel write: *“Son of Man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider its perfection, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations.”* **Ezekiel 43:10-11** God wanted this prophecy to encourage them and also wanted them to build this Temple just as He had laid it out.

And the message for us is: God wants us to understand the significance of the Temple for the kingdom age, embrace its truth, and prepare ourselves for the return of the Messiah.

There are five major interpretations of this prophecy and they are important to our seeing why God would give this description of the Temple as a part of His love story to Israel.

1. Some believe that it was a memorial to the Temple of Solomon—but that Temple is well chronicled in Kings and Chronicles. The details of the two Temples simply do not match and God will not give two sets of dimensions to speak of one Temple.
2. Some believe it was a Temple that was to be built by the Jews after they returned from the Babylonian captivity, but that Temple built primarily by Ezra and Nehemiah resembles the Temple of Ezekiel even less.
3. Some believe it is a depiction of the future consummation of the kingdom of God. However, it clearly states that there will not be a Temple in heaven: **Revelation 21:22**—because God Almighty and Christ the Lamb will be the literal Temple.
4. Some believe it is the depiction of the present Church Age and interpret this vision spiritually. They see this as the Christian church in its formation. But there are no details of this Third Temple of

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

Ezekiel and the start of the church that match. There is not any accurate correspondence between a Church that met where it could and the Temple, planned and drawn out by God

5. I believe that it speaks of the literal future Temple; and many prophets in the Old Testament confirm the view that there will be a literal Temple in the future kingdom—ruled by King Jesus—an age called the Millennial Kingdom. **Isaiah 2:3; 60:13; Jeremiah. 33:18; Joel 3:18; Micah. 4:2; Hagar. 2:7-9; Zechariah. 6:12-15; 14:16, and 20-21.**

Ezekiel was given a vision of a Temple yet to come. This Temple will exist in the Messianic age, as the center of the government when Jesus rules this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The last thing I want to share is how I think the restoration of Israel and the Third Temple will have a spiritual impact on the world.

First, it is important for us to remember that God has never designed a Church building and Jesus did not command His followers to build Church buildings or meet in a Church building. The Church began in the Temple in Jerusalem and met in the Temple until persecution forced them to start meeting in private. God did design two Temples and put the dimensions and directions about both Temples in the Bible: The Temple of Solomon and the Third Temple of Ezekiel. God has always intended the Temple to be a part of the final days on the earth and the Temple building will be eternally fulfilled by the presence of God and Jesus in the new heaven and the new earth. They are our final Temple.

Let me trace the history of Jewish Christianity. During the first century as Christian missionaries like Paul, Peter, Philip, Silas, Barnabas were spreading the Gospel throughout Europe and Asia—many in the Jewish community were accepting Jesus as Messiah and still remaining Jews. They called themselves Nazarene Communities—fully Jew and fully a follower of Christ. But in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries after Rome had consolidated the leadership of the Christian Church; these communities were persecuted until they finally disappeared. The new standard adopted by the Church was that any Jew who wanted to become a follower of Jesus must: drop the celebration of the Jewish Feast days and accept the Christian holy days—even though they were often only a coating over pagan holidays; drop all kosher and food laws; and accept the new leadership direction of the Catholic Church, (Popes, bishops, etc.)

This drove a terrible wedge between the Jewish believers and the Christian believers and when the Church added the charge that “Jews were guilty of killing Jesus”, the schism was complete and the persecution intensified. There were almost no conversions from Jews to Christians with this strange and non-Biblical approach.

But in 1882, a famous Rabbi in Moldova and Rabbi Joseph Rabinowitz made a trip to the land of the former nation of Israel and had an encounter with Jesus while standing on the Mt. of Olives and came back to Russia and started the first Messianic Synagogue in modern history. He stayed a Jew who accepted Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah. But the Russian agreement was just with Rabbi Rabinowitz and when he died, the government withdrew their approval of this hybrid synagogue.

In 1967, after many Jewish people had accepted Jesus during the Jesus Movement. The desire to start new synagogues that followed Jewish teaching and also a full belief in Jesus as the Messiah—we say ‘Lord and Savior’, these sprang up in many cities. In 1975 the group was renamed The Messianic Jewish Alliance of America and they have had a great influence on Christianity both in the United States and other parts of the world.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

The rebuilding of the Temple will only increase the belief that God keeps His Word and fleshes out all of His prophecies and we can see from the many prophecies about the Millennial Kingdom—this 1,000-year reign by King Jesus will center around the Temple in the land of Israel.

I want to close with a quote from Don Finto in his book, *“Your People Shall be My People”*

“The return of so many Jewish people to the Messiah in our day reaffirms God’s covenant love for His people. We are living out the fulfilment of Isaiah’s vision when Jewish eyes would be open. We are experiencing what Hosea predicted—Israel coming ‘trembling to the Lord’—**Hosea 3:5**. We are watching the breath blown into the resurrected body of **Ezekiel 37**. Paul’s words concerning the regrafting are taking on more weight. And we are pondering anew the words of Jesus from that day overlooking the Temple when He said, *“When those things begin to take place. . . your redemption is drawing near.”* **Luke 21:28**

The Lord refuses to close the curtain of history without His beloved Israel. Without a doubt Israel, the Israelites and the Christian Church will come together in these final years of the last days.

### #7 - The Restoration of Israel Slotted into History

In the previous lesson we studied the question: “Why would God Restore Israel?” We have seen from **Ezekiel 34-43** that God clearly would reestablish Israel, that He would defend the nation against all enemies—including the tremendous defeat of the enemies of Israel in the Gog/Magog War; and the reestablishment of the Temple - we concluded both in the end of this age on the earth and then the Third Temple of Ezekiel during the 1,000-year Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ.

Now we will direct our attention to one other very special Old Testament prophet, Daniel and what he wrote in **Daniel Chapters 8-12**. No prophet was given more insight into the future of the world than Daniel. God gave him special insight to see the kingdoms of the world and as he writes his book, he gets to the point where Israel rejoins his prophecy. I want us to take a close look at these 5 chapters of Daniel tonight and see how the restoration of Israel was put into the history of this world. I think it will encourage and boost your faith in the teachings of God. Let’s look at these great prophetic insights.

Daniel, like Ezekiel was captured by the Babylonians when they captured Judah and like Ezekiel, Daniel was taken into captivity and put into the service of the Babylonian government. God blessed Daniel and gave him great prophetic insights into what would happen in the world and how it would involve little Israel. First, Daniel was given revelation by God to show the progression of world domination. Daniel was given a great vision where it was outlined for him in an interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar what would be the successive world powers after the first—The Kingdom of Babylon. They would be the Kingdom of the Medes and Persians; then the Kingdom of the Greeks; and finally, the Kingdom of the Romans. Long before these last two nations were hardly anything, Daniel was already prophesying that they would be world kingdoms. This step-back by God from having Israel become of any importance in the world to being dominated by world powers was lengthy and total. It included: Babylon 605-539 BC; Medo-Persia from 539-331 BC; Greece from 331-146 BC; and Rome from 146 BC-476 AD. These stages of Gentile power over the area where Israel had been a country were outlined in **Daniel Chapters 2-7** and are repeated in **Daniel Chapters 8-12**, our current study passages.

The key aspect of this theme of prophetic world dominance was to show the future Kingly control of the Messiah in the final Kingdom. The Book of Daniel also contained the prediction and prophecy of the first and second coming of the Messiah. If we are looking closely at what God’s plan was for Israel throughout history—we need to stop and look closely at the first coming of the Messiah.

Daniel prophesied that certain events will occur among the Jewish people over a period of 490 years, or 70 weeks of years. He states very clearly that the Messiah will come before the end of 483 of these years. Daniel even tells us when the countdown will begin. It will start with the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, “Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be 7-sevens and 62-sevens. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble!” **Daniel 9:25**

I want to share this great historical miracle with you. After the Babylonian Empire was overthrown by the Medes and the Persians, three Persian kings issued edicts regarding the return of the Jews to their homeland. (This was all in the Old Testament time frame.) The first came in 538 BC when Cyrus authorized Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, **Ezra 1:1-3**; the second, issued by Artaxerxes in 457 BC gave Ezra permission

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

to reinstitute the Temple services, appoint judges and teach the Law, **Ezra 7:11-26**; and in 445 BC Artaxerxes issued a decree for Nehemiah to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its walls, **Nehemiah 2:1-8**. We will take our dating of this prophecy from the third edict because it was the only one that specifically says the city should be rebuilt. So, if we use 445 BC as our starting point, experts on Biblical chronology have concluded that the terminal point of the 483 years would be 27 AD, at the earliest and 33 AD at the latest. The difference depends on whether you calculate using solar years, as we now do in the western world or 360-day lunar years, as the Jews did at the time of the Book of Daniel. Jesus was born approximately 4-6 BC and His arrival fits the prophecy since His birth occurred before the latest possible terminal point of the prophecy. This is a very strong problem for Jews that do not accept Jesus as the Messiah and they have often resorted to saying, the birth of the Messiah was delayed because of the sin of God's people. But sin has never stopped God from completing His prophecies, they have often occurred in the middle of a sinful time and this has made them very clear and emphatic—example: the flood in the days of Noah. The point that I am making is that Daniel's prophecy clearly revealed the time of the Lord's First Coming.

We will start with **Daniel Chapter 8** to see how Daniel tells us this history, from his time of writing to the birth of the Messiah will unfold.

Beginning with the actual time of Daniel, he has moved past the Babylonian Empire which will shortly fall to the Medes and the Persians and begins to describe the rise of the Second World Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Medes and Persians. This kingdom is pictured as a two horned ram and the outline of how it would travel is just exactly what this world kingdom did: It conquered east to west and then north to south as predicted by Isaiah in **Isaiah 45:1-7**. 150 years before it took place and is reaffirmed here in the Book of Daniel.

Then Daniel moves to the third world kingdom, the kingdom of Greece or the goat and the great horn which represented the leadership and military brilliance of Alexander. He and his army of 35,000 men moved so fast that Daniel pictures them as not even touching the ground. The horn that broke is the death of Alexander and the four horns are the generals who became kings over sectors of the Grecian empire after Alexander died.

It was at this point that the prophecy of Daniel highlights what happens to the nation of Israel during this time of the four-fold division of the world under the Greeks. It speaks of a "little horn" that is prominent in the coming of the first Messiah and is prophetic of the Anti-Christ in the second coming of the Messiah.

The first 'little horn' in verse 9 spoke of the time when the Greek Empire was split into four parts. Out of the third empire, a small horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, who rose from the third empire to rule the Syrian division in 175-164 BC and is the same king dominant in the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Daniel. The second reference to the 'little horn' is the Anti-Christ and the reason both are described as 'little horns' is because one prefigures the other and they are not the most powerful leaders, and both are opposed to God Jehovah and His people. Antiochus's persecution was intense, and it reached even the 'stars', God's people who were put under domination from Antiochus. He first desecrated the Temple as the Abomination of Desolation when he sacrificed a pig, the animal of worship and sacrifice in the Syrian nation and he blasphemed their God Jehovah with a swine sacrifice to his god.

The vision stays on the nation of Judah and the question is asked, "how long will this last before the Temple can be reconsecrated?" The prophetic answer is 2,300 evenings and mornings, the same terminology that Genesis uses to describe the days of creation. This was also accurate, because the persecution of Antiochus was exactly 3 ½ years and after his death, the Jewish people celebrated the cleansing of their Temple with the Feast of Lights or Hanukkah and when the oil was miraculously furnished by God for the needed time of the Festival, this celebration of the restoration and reconsecration led by Judas Maccabeus is celebrated yearly.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

The angel Gabriel, named here for the first time in the Bible, appears to Daniel and tells him that the vision he has just seen is going to have a two-fold unfolding. It will be fulfilled now in the rise and persecution of the Jews by Antiochus; but it will have a greater fulfillment in the time of the second coming of the Messiah. Antiochus ruled over Judah until 164 AD, but he died, as one historian wrote, “broken without human means” - it was insanity and disease of the bowels. The future fulfillment of the ‘little horn’ prophecy is spelled out in **Daniel 8:23-25** where the role of the Antichrist in the time of Tribulation is prophesied.

After this prophecy of the role of Antiochus and the future role of the Antichrist; Daniel returns to the prophecy of the 70 weeks and tells us at week 63 the Messiah shall come. He was praying and knew from Scripture, **Jeremiah 25:11-12** that the desolation of Jerusalem would last for 70 years. Daniel was repenting for his people and seeking God to shorten this period. So, Daniel confesses the sin of the people, they had not kept the Sabbath rests but had ignored them. Daniel claimed the promise of **Leviticus 26:40-42**, where God promised that even in a time of judgment, if Israel would confess their sin, He would bring blessing again. Daniel appeals to God to restore, your city, your sanctuary, and your people; and in verse 24 God addresses all three.

Gabriel comes to Daniel again and gives him an answer for the plea of his prayer. It is also spoken in prophetic words, so it must be explained. The curse came because the Israelites had neglected the Sabbaths of rest and here the vision takes this thought and speaks of the weeks of years. It is a time span from the decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah’s kingdom. It has three elements: 7 weeks—perhaps to symbolize the finalization of the streets and walls of Jerusalem; and then 62 weeks for a total of 483 weeks which was fulfilled on 9 Nissan, or Sunday 30 AD when Jesus made His triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem and was declared the Messiah by the throng of Jewish pilgrims. It was exactly 483 years from the pronouncement of Artaxerxes to the Triumphal Entry.

But Daniel is told that the reception of the Messiah will not be good. He will be ‘*cut off*’, a common reference to death and ‘*the people of the ruler*’ - in other words the soldiers of Rome will come and destroy the city of Jerusalem and destroy the Temple - which happened in AD 69-70.

But God is prophetically answering the prayer of Daniel at the first coming of the Messiah and the second coming of the Messiah. In verse 24 - God promises two sets of three accomplishments in two different settings.

1. **First set** is to remove transgressions, put an end to the power of sin, and make reconciliation for the effect of sin. (This was accomplished the first time by the sacrificial death of Jesus; and the ruling in perfect justice in the Millennial Age.)
2. **Second set** is to: bring everlasting righteousness; to state no more prophecy is needed—this will complete what is to happen; and anoint the most holy place which happens in total during the reign of the Messiah, Jesus after His second appearance.

The first appearance of Christ focuses much more on the removal of sins which will be finalized when He returns; and the second appearance of Christ will focus much more on the establishment of a kingdom on earth as God designed it to be and led by King Jesus. Then in the prophecy Gabriel speaks to the second coming of the Messiah and the end of the age, the Tribulation period. This can only be fulfilled when Christ comes again and it will be the last week of the vision. This focus on **Daniel 9:27** is on the Antichrist, the other ‘little horn’ of the prophecy. Gabriel tells Daniel three great insights into the actions of the second ‘little horn’.



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

1. He will make a covenant with Israel and the world. Israel has been restored and the Temple has been restored and animal sacrifices have been put back in place.
2. The Antichrist at the middle of the week, 3 ½ years into the Covenant, will break the covenant with Israel—maybe other nations as well—but the focus is on what happens to Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple—and the Antichrist will stop the animal sacrifices and set up an image of himself which is to be worshipped and adored—or else those who refuse will be executed.
3. Then God will destroy him and all who join with him to attack Israel and Jerusalem.

At this point in the passage, Daniel is still lamenting over Israel and the destruction of Judah, Jerusalem and the sacking of the Temple. He has fasted for 21 days and has given up every convenience, lotions, food, and drink, and during this fast. **Daniel Chapters 10-11** Gabriel again appears to Daniel and gives us insight to the future of the nation of Israel and the future of the earth. Daniel Chapter 10 is a dialogue from Gabriel to Daniel, in which he tells Daniel how important his prayers and seeking God really is and tells why he did not get to Daniel to answer his petitions earlier. He gives some descriptions of the war between the angels and the demons to explain the delay. Then he begins to answer the questions and admonitions of Daniel.

This description starts in **Daniel Chapter 11**.

I want to share one thing with you about this chapter. It seems very historical to us and it is; but it is all spoken as prophecy. The detail of this history is so minute and accurate, so confirmed by history, that unbelieving critics have -minus evidence - insisted that it was written 400 years after the life of Daniel. But the Dead Sea Scrolls, which had many copies of the book of Daniel have proved that this is not true.

This prophecy begins with what will happen to Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple in the next 400 years and tells of a political volleyball game between Egypt and Syria to control the area that is modern day Israel. The Egyptians are referred to as the South or Kings of the South and the Syrians are referred to as the North or Kings of the North.

Gabriel pauses in this prophetic explanation of what will happen to Judah to tell of what Antiochus, the first Abomination of Desolation, will do to Jerusalem and the Temple, **Daniel 11:31-32**. Gabriel says, *“His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.”*

Antiochus’s soldiers profaned God’s temple by spreading sow’s broth on the altar and banning daily sacrifices as described in I Maccabees 1:44-54. Both Daniel and Jesus said this atrocity was only a preview of the abomination that would happen later under the final Antichrist, **Matthew 24:15 (Jesus)** and **Daniel 9:27 (Daniel)**

This transition from the actions of Antiochus to the actions of the ‘king’ of **Daniel 11:36** are a perfect transition to the time of the Antichrist when Christ will come a second time. It tells in clear prophetic form.

- Israel will be a nation again.
- Jerusalem will again be restored and will be the seat of worship for all believers in Jesus Christ.
- The Temple will be functioning again with daily sacrifices and the life that revolves around the Temple.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

The prophecy again focuses on the last 7 years of life as we know it on the earth. We commonly call this the time of Tribulation. It will be the time of the end, **Daniel 11:35** and it will be during the last week of the vision of 70 weeks in Daniel. The Antichrist will be ruthless in his desire for power and it will be his only god. He will not delight in any other god or even in the company of women; but will seek to destroy fortresses and consolidate even more power. He will consolidate his power with great victories over the armies of the South and of the North and will establish himself in the 'Glorious Land', the land of Israel, where I feel he will commit the Abomination of Desolation upon the Temple. He will set up a defense to battle other armies of the world, but no one will be able to defend him against God and in **Daniel 11: 45** the return of Christ will seal his fate forever. He will be defeated and will be annihilated.

Gabriel completes the prophecy by telling about two events:

1. Michael, the arch angel who protects the Israelites will be sent to protect the Israelites during this horrible time of Tribulation when the Antichrist oversees the area. He will seal those of the Israelites who are believers, whether they die as martyrs here on the earth or are saved to the end. The result will be the same, they will be taken to heaven to be forever with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. It is during this Tribulation Period that many Israelites will find answers and help in the Book of Daniel and it will serve as a guide for the end times.
2. The figure of Christ, the one dressed in linen, hovering over the water of the river without touching the water will share the last part of this prophecy with Daniel. The final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, or the last ½ of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel will see many things happen that affect: Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple.
  - a. Salvation will come to many Israelites: **Zechariah 13:8-9; Romans 11:26; and Revelation 11:13.**
  - b. Daily sacrifices will be stopped in the restored Temple in restored Jerusalem and the temple will be desecrated by the Antichrist, now possessed by Satan.
  - c. This will begin a time-line to the end: 1,290 days after this desolation of the temple the end will come. It will be final and complete.
  - d. Israel who had been trampled on by the Gentiles from 550 BC to the end times of the final days will not only be restored as a nation; it will not only have Jerusalem again be the religious capital for all Jews and Christian Messiah followers, it will after an additional 45 more days—or 1,335 days from the abomination—be the place of the new Temple of Ezekiel and be the center of the earth as King Jesus rules the earth as it should be ruled for 1,000 years.

The angel Gabriel then tells Daniel to be faithful for the rest of his life, he will rest "die' but will rise again to share in the rewards that God had designated for him.

It is clear as Daniel interprets the future of the world considering what happens to Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple that he clearly states that Israel and Judah will disappear from any significance in the world of politics. Even the Messiah when He comes the first time will be killed and the people of the nation of Judah will be dispersed; but Israel will rise again to prominence in the last week of the 70 weeks of Daniel. And the Antichrist himself will center his last decrees, his last battles and his last stand in the land of Israel. His worst crime, the Abomination of Desolation will occur within Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple. He will die in Israel.

The nation will not only be restored - it will be the most prominent nation as this world ends and the new Millennial Kingdom begins. God does not forget His people, never has and never will.

### #8 - Was the Restoration of Israel Only an Old Testament Thought?

We have approached this question, ‘Why Would God Restore Israel?’, primarily from the view of the Old Testament and it is obvious that the Old Testament accurately predicts: the fall of Israel, the fall of Judah, the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. But the prophets are super busy telling us about the time Israel will be restored; Jerusalem will again be a powerful city and the Temple will be rebuilt and back in service. Is that also a thought of the New Testament?

Before we tackle this exciting question, I want to pause and share with you one more archaeology truth of the Old Testament. When our team met to plan out the teaching direction for this year, 2021, we all settled on this first study—why Israel would be restored. We felt it was relevant to today—the world is mesmerized by the events in Israel and the Middle East; it is good insight into the tenacity and kindness of God towards His people. The Israelites did not follow God exactly right and the majority of the nation rejected Jesus as their Messiah and yet God is restoring them and giving them a very prominent role during the last years of this world and center stage all the way through the Millennial Kingdom; and it shows us that God is certainly in control of His creation. God does what is right not what is suggested by everyone else. During our discussion, I mentioned that I wanted to do a special teaching on **Ezekiel 37-43**, and we all agreed that passage was essential and then all three of my team members asked if I was going to do any teaching on the Plates of Ezekiel. I truly did not know if this was a new pattern by Lennox or maybe a more everyday style by Pfalzgraff. I was at a loss and they informed me it was the marble plates found in the tomb of Ezekiel with the writing of his entire book inscribed in Hebrew on the back sides of the plates. That piqued my curiosity and I said, “Sure, I want to share that information.” Well, tonight I want to share with you about the plates of Ezekiel.

Several years ago, the tomb of the prophet Ezekiel was found next to the Euphrates River in ancient Babylon (modern Iraq). Part of the tomb was covered with 66-12” high square marble plates. When the squares were removed the entire book of Ezekiel was found in raised letters on the back of the plates and today, they are housed in the Yad Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. The plates are very close in wording to the modern Bible book of Ezekiel, just a few small textual changes. The Israel Museum is testing two of the plates to validate their authenticity.

The first 35 chapters of the book of Ezekiel were all fulfilled while Ezekiel and the Jews were in captivity in Babylon; but as we saw beginning with Chapter 36, the shift is on and it starts with a prediction of God’s judgment on those nations that seek Israel’s destruction. It ends with the promise of a New Covenant between God and Israel and finally the Millennial blessings to come.

It is so relevant to today. It begins with God regathering the nation from around the world; turning them from a death-filled valley of dry bones into a spirit filled live nation. The nation is united never to be separated again and it tells of the future rule of Jesus on this earth—in **Luke 1:31-33** the Bible says, “*And, behold you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.*”

A totally clear scripture that tells us that Christ and not the resurrected David is to rule Israel during the 1,000-year reign of Christ. Then Ezekiel writes of those who will oppose Israel and how Jesus will defeat them for Israel. I want to share just one more thing with you tonight about the Plates of Ezekiel:

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

It is what was written in the Jerusalem Post when they were originally found:

“There is an old Talmudic tradition that Israel’s prophets and other great sages were often buried with copies of their writings. One such Talmudic legend held that the original book of Ezekiel was buried with the prophet in his tomb and was left there to be revealed in the last days.” Legend or not, it is exactly what has happened, and the timing could not be more dramatic.

Now to study the answer to our question — “Is the Restoration of Israel Just a Thought of the Old Testament?” It is very true that the Old Testament prophets spent much more of their time and writing to talk about the restoration of Israel, but that does not mean that it was ignored in the New Testament.

We saw clearly from Ezekiel that God would have to bring life back to a valley of dry bones and even more clearly that Daniel when he specifically prayed for Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple was told that they would all disappear for a time and the country would be under the oppressive heel of Gentile powers. But each of them also concluded with the clear fact that God would in the end times of the last days restore Israel as a united nation; restore Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the religious center of the day; and the Temple would be rebuilt and operating

At the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, the nation was reduced to a territory of the Roman empire named Judah, and it consisted of only two of the twelve tribes. It was just a shell of the nation of Israel. And even then, Jesus, who knows all that will happen painted a very bleak picture of what would happen to the land of Judah. In **Matthew 23: 34-39**, Jesus is just as clear about the fate of the Judah of His day as was Daniel. The teachers and leaders had mistreated the prophets and spiritual advisors and even the teachers that God had sent to them. They killed them, they had them crucified; they beat them publicly in the synagogues and they pursued them from house to house and town to town to eliminate and destroy their message.

But God had recorded all those deeds including the martyrdom of those whom He had sent and had been mistreated by the leaders of the land of Judah; God had counted those deeds against the land and to the very generation that Jesus spoke, the punishment and wrath of God was to come. The Temple would be destroyed, the city would be ransacked and plowed under and shortly after that the nation of Judah would be wiped off the maps and would be no more until God said the dry bones should come alive.

Christ was very clear in this passage. God had repeatedly wanted to restore Israel but the people and leaders of Jerusalem would not let it happen. **Matthew 23:37**. This is not a suggestion or teaching that the sovereignty of God is ever limited or that God changes His mind on a whim or ever changes His mind: what it is showing is that God is full of compassion, sincerely doing good for all, desirous of good not evil; and therefore, not delighted with the destruction of the wicked. Simply put, God pleads for the repentance of the sinner; He offers goodness and mercy for them to change; but that never decreases or limits His sovereignty. Jesus goes ahead and explains one of the prophecies of Ezekiel in verse 38: Christ had referred to the Temple as His Father’s house **Matthew 21:13**, and when Christ left the temple **Matthew 24:1** the glory left with Him and He took His disciples to the Mount of Olives to teach them about the destruction of the Temple and the End times. Ezekiel in his vision in **Ezekiel 11:23** described the departure of the Shekinah glory that would happen in his day as well as the future; and said that the glory of the Temple left and stood on the Mount of Olives for three days; the very route that Jesus took when He left the Temple. Although the Temple would stand for another 40 years—timing of God— “Why” I feel for the nation to have time to repent of what they had done to Jesus and His followers and accept the dead, buried and resurrected Christ as their Savior. The Shekinah glory had left and it will not return until the Temple is reconstructed in these last days.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

But in verse 39, Jesus tells those who are listening closely a direct prophecy—but God will restore you— “you will see me again”—not just as individual people but as a nation and it will be when I come the second time and you truly acknowledge me as your Messiah. Jesus taught that Israel would be a nation once more and it would acknowledge Him as their Messiah. His public ministry has wound down and it is basically finished, and soon He will withdraw until the time that national Israel—not even in existence when Jesus taught this—would be restored and ready to accept Him as their Messiah.

This time-line is even more clear in the teaching of Jesus in **Luke 21**, a parallel passage to **Matthew 23-24** where Jesus is again teaching His disciples how to view the Temple, Jerusalem and the Sovereignty of the Lord. He tells them in very clear terms that they are not to worship the Temple since it will be removed by God as a judgment upon the land for the ways they have failed to follow God and the way they have mistreated the messengers of God. He also tells them to not put so much of their faith in salvation in the city of Jerusalem because forces will surround and blockade Jerusalem and it will become the most dangerous place to be in all of Judea. So, stay away because some of the punishment that will come to the Temple will also come to the city of Jerusalem. We know that was true, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 while Nero was the Emperor, resulted in the deaths of over 1 million Jewish people in the city of Jerusalem alone and the population of the city was only 550 thousand at that time. But people had flocked to the city for salvation because they had been told over and over that Jerusalem would always stand against every enemy because the Temple of God was in that city. Ironically, when the city was destroyed again in 130 AD, even though the Temple was still in ruins and unbuilt, the same thing happened, more Jewish people were killed in the city of Jerusalem than lived there. This was when Hadrian defeated and dispersed the Jews throughout the world.

Then Jesus tells all that while life is still on this earth and long before any special Kingdom, Israel will be restored, Jerusalem will be restored and the oppressive and repressive leadership of the Gentiles will end. Let's look together at **Luke 21:24** “They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” This is a phrase only found in the Gospel of Luke and it identifies the fact that Israel will be under Gentile domination and control from that time forward until God again restores Israel as a nation. It will be a time when Gentile nations will threaten, control, or dominate Jerusalem. It has resulted in the Gospel being preached to all the Gentile nations, **Matthew 24:14**; **Mark 13:10**; and seems to have included spiritual opportunities that will come to a close because it is something that has a conclusion and an ending. At that time, Jerusalem will again be under the control of the Israelites and they will move the nation forward together.

I want us to take a look at those Gentile trampling's on the city of Jerusalem because they seem to be a part of the reasoning for Augustine and others to suggest that the Church has taken the place of Israel. Anytime we see Israel we need to substitute church in the New Testament; when we see Jerusalem, we should only think of eternal Jerusalem or the heavenly city, not the city of Jerusalem in the middle east; and any reference to the Temple should immediately be changed to the Church because the Temple was rendered obsolete by the death of Christ and the Church has taken the place.

We are fairly familiar with the Israelite and late Jewish Jerusalem. Our Old Testament is full of references to that city. But what about the Gentile Jerusalem? History records the gritty details of occupation, expulsion, domination, crusades and new religious symbols in place of the Israelite symbols, and finally a world-wide persecution of the Jews by even Christians as they were labeled as “the killers of Jesus” and “the rejected by God.” The line-up of Gentile occupation of Israel reads like a “Who's Who” of cruel and tyrannical nations: Rome; the Byzantines; Muslims; the Turks; the British; and the Jordanians.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

But just as Jesus taught and prophesied, the city suffered under a long period of Gentile control until June 7, 1967 when, for the first time in 1,897 years, the Israelites regained sovereignty over the city. It was on that day that Rabbi Shlomo Goren went to the Western Wall and cried out: "I proclaim to you the beginning of the Messianic Age."

All the Christian world did not see the restoration of Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy and clung to the old, bigoted idea of replacement, that somehow the Church had replaced Israel in all the plans of God, but their lack of belief did not change the results, it did happen. The Israelites were back in the land of Israel; they took back the city of Jerusalem; their army was a 'firepot among pieces of wood' as Zechariah had said; Jerusalem became the focal point of politics; and all the nations of the world would come against Jerusalem. That has frequently included the United States as our nation has repeatedly tried to force Israel to trade land for peace. Take a moment and notice how well that has worked in the Gaza Strip. When the Arab neighbors of Israel have expressed the goal of driving Israel into the sea and eliminating the nation, any land trade is just raw meat to a shark.

The restoration of Israel was a common thought with the disciples of Jesus, because they had been taught all of their life that the age and time of Messiah would mean the restoration of Israel. Prophecy got translated into wishful thinking.

In the **First Chapter of the Book of Acts**, Jesus has gathered all the disciples with Him and He specifically sent them back into the city to wait for the Holy Spirit. They could not resist, in **Acts 1:6-8** so "*then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?"*" Jesus responds without criticism and certainly implies that He will restore the nation of Israel, just not now for the mission for that time was to start the Church and be the witnesses of Christ throughout the world.

The **Book of Acts** continually references the restoration of Israel. Peter preaches to those who have not accepted Jesus as their Messiah after he and John have healed the blind man at the Gate Beautiful and says to those who have gathered:

*"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."* **Acts 3:17-21** Peter clearly explains that Jesus had re-entered heaven, **Acts 1:10-11**, until the time came for fulfilling all that had been foretold by the prophets, and this MUST include the promised restoration of Israel as a people to their land at the end of times.

A study of the New Testament usage of the word "Israel" (70 times) shows that in every case it refers to the people or land of Israel and never to the church. So, throughout the age or dispensation of the church, the Church and Israel exist side by side with distinct callings. Since the land of Israel and the people of Israel are inseparable in God's promises and dealings, and because people in association with a land imply a national entity or state, the New Testament again and again the New Testament implies over and over that an Israelite/Jewish nation has an ongoing place in the plan of God.

This Israelite nation-state will find its fulfillment in a millennial Kingdom, over which the Messiah, the Son of David reigns from Jerusalem, is never denied in the New Testament and even in the Birth story of Jesus in Luke and it is stated that will be one of the two-fold purposes of the birth of Christ. Let me read it to you, "*Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call*



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

*him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." Luke 1:32-33.* And again, at the dedication of Jesus in the Temple, Simeon takes the baby boy in his arms and says: *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." Luke 2:32*

It is clear that Jesus came to not only be the representative of the Godhead here on earth, live a perfect life, and become the one and only blood sacrifice for the sins of all people everywhere; He also came to inherit the kingdom of his father David and to rule over Israel and the world—has that happened---hardly, but it will and when it does it will be with the restored Israel as the base of His rule. Christ did not rebuke His disciples when they asked about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel as He was to ascend, nor did He say that the new spiritual Israel would be the Church and take the place of a literal, national Israel; but what He did say was, it was not God's will to reveal to them when the Israelite kingdom would be established.

Jesus also implied there was more to come and more to reveal when He taught all disciples to pray:

*"Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* When He taught us to pray, Thy Kingdom come—He taught us to realize that will only happen when His will is completely followed on earth just like it is in heaven. Christ knew that His first time on earth would not be His last interaction with Israel, but that He would oversee them and lead them for the entire Millennial Kingdom.

The Church is the manifestation of the Kingdom of God today, just as the land of Israel was the manifestation of the Kingdom through much of the Old Testament. Keep in mind there were many faithful patriarchs and matriarchs before the nation of Israel was formed and according to **Hebrews 11**, many of them will share in the same reward that the Church receives. The kingdom is present and yet still coming. We should seek it and yet realize that God has an elaborate plan for Israel in the last days and it is unfolding right before our eyes.

It was Daniel who wrote: *"But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. (This is a reference to the final Anti-Christ who has been defined by actions in the passage.) . . . Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."*  
**Daniel 7:26-27**



### #9 - How Does the Restoration of Israel Reflect on the Church?

Let's look at an area that might surprise you, that has a lot to do with the Restoration of Israel as a nation in the end times of the last days; but it does. How does the Restoration of Israel reflect on the church and what is the church to do?

We started this part of the study last time when we saw that Gabriel's announcement to Mary of having a baby boy was also involved in the restoration of Israel and the role Christ would play in leading the house of Jacob into the Millennial Kingdom. We also saw that Jesus and the Apostles taught that Israel would be restored and would have a very vital role in the end times.

Let's look Biblically at what does the New Testament say about Israel and the Church. The primary teaching about Israel and its relationship to the church is found in Paul's epistle to the **Romans, Chapter 11**. This chapter alone obliterates any notion that Israel has lost its relevance to God. We are going to study this chapter in depth in two weeks, but tonight I want us to just highlight what Paul is saying about the connection between Israel and the Church.

Paul starts this chapter as a Jew addressing the Gentile Christians in Rome. He is clear that Israel has not been rejected by God. As he says in his use of Elijah, God always has a remnant, even if they are not visible to everyone. Paul then talks about a hardening of the Israelite. Paul addresses the salvation that was extended to the Gentiles. This was in part because the Israelites did not accept Jesus as their Savior and Messiah but instead a majority of them rejected Christ. And although this was a great blessing to the Gentiles; when Israel is restored, the combination will be an even bigger blessing.

Paul then speaks very frankly to the Gentile audience and tells them about an olive tree. The olive tree is being cultivated by God and it refers to the Kingdom of God. The various branches of the tree represent all the people who are a part of those various branches in this olive tree. At this point, Paul is primarily focusing on the Israelites and the Gentiles.

Paul tells us some very interesting things:

1. The branches that represent Israel are called the '*natural branches*' because they derive their nourishment and growth from the very original foundation—the original covenant between God and Abraham. Some of these were broken by God because of disobedience but not all of them.
2. The branches of the Gentiles are called, '*wild branches*' because unlike the natural branches of Israel that grew out of the root of the tree, the original branches on the olive tree, these were just grafted onto the natural tree by God.

This is the basis for two very strong thoughts for Gentiles.

1. They should not be arrogant, because God has given them everything they have as gifts from Him and He can just as easily take those things away.
2. Israel will be restored to be representatives of God with the Gentiles, **Romans 11:24**. The grafting of the natural branches back on the olive tree will go better than the grafting of the wild branches.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

This has not been taken to heart by the Gentile world; Gentile Christians have been arrogant and conceited toward the Israelites many times in history and it has caused much suffering among Israelite people and caused terrible alienation between the natural branches and the grafted branches.

Paul then tells us how the Church, almost all Gentiles, should view the Israelites. He says that some Israelites are enemies of the Gentiles, because of the different beliefs and agendas; but then he writes in **Romans 11:28-32** that the Israelites are beloved because God called them to Him and God never revokes a calling. Israel has always been and still is relevant to God. He did not turn His back on them and ignore them and their needs.

In fact, Paul writes if you just want to focus on not following all the things that God wants you to do, then both the Israelites and the Gentiles Christians have fallen short and have sinned. Stubborn pride has often kept the Israelites and Gentile Christians from exploring their same heritage, belief in the same God, and the desire to find out what connects them to each other and not what separates them.

After explaining all of this, the great plan of God to redeem sinners, both Israelites/Jews and Gentile Christians, Paul breaks into great praise of God and the end of the chapter is in reality a doxology of praise to God. He especially praises God for the unfathomable depth and extend of His wisdom, His supremacy, His sufficiency, and His glory.

If this is the key New Testament teaching about how the Church/Gentiles are to view the Israelites-Jews, what in the world went wrong. I think a lot of the problem is the misconceptions about the Israelites among the Church (Gentile Christians). I want to share some of those with you tonight: But before I do, let's review some very obvious truths:

### **Every Christian Should Know that the Bible Is a Book Written Entirely by Jews**

Please listen to the reasoning for Dr. Luke, that the content of the Bible revolves around the nation Israel their relationship with God, and their beliefs about God or Judaism.

### **Christians should also know that God chose Israel to be His representative upon the earth and to ultimately give birth to His son, Jesus Christ the Savior, also an Israelite.**

Even knowing that much, there seems to be some confusion among Christians with regard to the Israelites/Jews. Christians have raised these issues:

1. Does the nation of Israel still have any special relevance to God, or does He deal with them just like He would deal with any other 'unbelieving group?'
2. Didn't the Church replace Israel as God's representatives here on the earth when a majority of the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah?
3. Isn't the Church totally separate entity from Israel?
4. Aren't there places in the Bible where we may replace 'Israel' with the Church? Just change the Scripture?
5. Should Christians fault Israel and Israelites for their failures, especially their conspiracy in the killing of Jesus Christ?
6. Don't Jews need to convert from Judaism to Christianity? Is it really ok for them to just accept Jesus as their Messiah and continue to observe all the Jewish laws?

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

7. What is the current condition of Israel today since the nation has many who are not believers in Jehovah, they have a wide assortment of people groups, and they do not all follow the Jewish law—are they still the nation of Israel that is in the Bible?

Before we answer those questions to show Biblically how we should relate to the restoration of Israel.

### **Let's be Reminded About How Israel Came About:**

Genesis tells us that humanity had fallen into unrepentant sins of the worst kind, rebellion against God. Rather than destroy all of mankind, which God had every right to do, He mercifully determined that He would provide a way for humanity to be redeemed. His plan required that His own Son, Jesus Christ, would come into the world as a sinless human and become an offering to atone for the sins of humanity.

To complete this plan, God chose a righteous man who would father a nation from which the promised Savior would be born. Before He could be born, this nation would have to be seen as separate from all other nations as a nation that belonged to God. They would be called to be God's representatives on earth, and to live out a history that would uniquely show that they were God's instruments, whether they were willing or not!! God chose the nation Israel which He began with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—later renamed Israel—and the twelve sons of Jacob. God did not choose Israel because they were great, but because they were small: *"The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other people, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath, he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments."*

### **Deuteronomy 7:7-9**

When God chose Israel, He made everlasting covenants with them and blessed or cursed them in accordance with those covenants. He gave them a law that would keep them Godly. He gave them a land on which they could prosper. He gave an order of priests to point the way to the priestly role of His Son. He gave them a royal line through which the coming Messiah, His son, would fulfill His role as king upon the earth. He gave them prophets who foretold the coming of this Messiah, who would be priest, king, and prophet.

All these prophecies were fulfilled just as they had been foretold in the life of Jesus Christ. Some prophecies fulfilled: born at the right place, right time, from the right genealogy, and all the other details connected with his birth. Born into a poor family, in a small town, He still became the most influential person in the history of the world. He died in the prophesied manner, completing his priestly role and promised that he will return to also completely fulfill his kingly role.

### **Now let's review how the Church came about:**

Jesus began his earthly ministry by choosing twelve disciples. He taught them about himself, and His purpose in coming. He generally referred to Himself as the 'Son of Man' to emphasize His fulfillment of prophecy and His coming as the king of heaven, **Daniel 7:13-14**. Jesus was the first one who talked about the church and the forming of the church in **Matthew 16:13-19**.

Let's look at that Scripture: *"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. 'But what about you?' he asked, 'Who do you say that I am?'" Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are*

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

*Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

Since this is the first time that the word church is used by Jesus, we might ask what the word means: the word is a Greek word, ‘ecclesia’ and it literally means, ‘out from and in to’. People called out from the world and to God, the outcome being the Church, the body of Christ, whom God calls out from the world and into His eternal kingdom. So, the word church, chosen by Christ, means a ‘calling out from and in to.’ Christ is the one doing the calling and that this calling gain entry into the kingdom of God. So, the church represents those called by Christ to come out of the world and into the kingdom of God.

The coming of Christ divided the nation Israel into two groups:

1. A larger group that ultimately rejected Jesus as the promised Christ and Savior.
2. A smaller group that recognized Jesus, as the promised Christ and Savior.

The larger group of Israelites followed after the religious leadership who rejected Jesus. Since Jesus was the true Christ and promised Savior, their rejection of him constituted a leaving of true Judaism. Being the larger group, they retained the Jewish title, heritage, and the association with Judaism. The smaller group of Israelites followed after Jesus and his disciples/apostles, and they were the church. They never stopped considering themselves to be Jewish. They did not deny anything about their Jewish faith, but were demonstrating their faith by believing their Jewish prophets. They saw that following Christ—what we call Christianity—and true Judaism were the same thing. Some who rejected Christ at first later accepted Him and chief among them was Paul the apostle. We have historically called this the ‘conversion of Paul’. Paul never used those words but instead in **Romans 2:28-29** said: *“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people but from God.”* Even more profound is what Paul calls those Jews who did not accept Jesus- he called them Jews who stumbled: *“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel who pursued the law as a way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.”* **Romans 11:31-33**

There have always been Israelites who believed in Jesus as the Christ. Today, their numbers are growing and they sometimes refer to themselves as Messianic Jews or Completed Jews. They truly understand that following Jesus as Christ does not mean they must deny their religious and ethnic heritage as Jews.

With that background about how Israel and the church came into existence, it is good for us to relook at these questions.

1. **Has Israel been replaced by the Church?** Christ is the cornerstone of the Church so that is the way God evaluates things. So, it is not a matter of the church replacing Israel as God’s representatives on earth. The church is the uninterrupted continuation of following God and that calling is not limited to just one group but is carried out with Jews and Gentiles that believe in Christ.
2. **Is the Church a separate entity apart from Israel?** Both Israel and the church shared the calling and purpose to be led by God; but God deals with each as individuals. Israel is referred to as the nation of Israel, 69 out of 70 times in the NT, with one exception found in **Romans 9:6-8**: *“It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his*

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

*descendants are, they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring."* **Romans 9:6-8** Where Paul speaks of those chosen by God to be the deliverers of God's promise to the world, children of flesh Israel; and those chosen by God to take the word to all the Gentile nations, children of promise Israel.

3. **Did the Church replace Israel?** No, as we see the Jewish writers of the bible were clear about their use of Israel. It is absurd to think that Paul's use of the term 'children of Israel' to make a point how Israel and the church were to operate—would justify substituting 'the church' anywhere else that Paul or any other NT writer refer to Israel. Since the Bible is a book written by Israelites concerning the nation Israel, it only makes sense to know that when the Bible uses the word Israel, it means Israel.

4. **Should Christians fault Israel for their failures**, especially the death of Christ? Two Facts:

- a. Did the Jewish leaders conspire to have Jesus crucified?
- b. Has most of Israel since then rejected Jesus their Messiah?

Yes, to both questions, and it seems that many Gentile Christians like to point these faults out. Some thus look upon Israel with contempt, and even teach that God has permanently rejected Israel as His representatives. But nowhere are Gentile Christians given permission to rebuke Israel for this. On the contrary, Paul warned them to not be arrogant toward Israel, **Romans 11:18** or conceited, **Romans 11:20-21**. Isn't its arrogance to view Israel with disdain and make claims on God's behalf concerning His permanent rejection of Israel? Isn't it conceited to be prideful enough to believe that they or their Gentile ancestors would have been wiser and acted more righteously than Israel did? And even if they were wiser, what then would the result be? That Jesus would never have been killed? Then what becomes of God's plan for the redemption of sinners, which depends entirely on Christ being killed as a sacrificial lamb for our sins? God used Israel to bring us the Savior and the Bible—the Word of God—and they did.

5. **Do Israelites need to 'convert' from Judaism to Christianity?**

Yes, they need to accept the saving faith of Jesus Christ as the promised Savior or Messiah. But Christianity is a true continuation of Judaism. Jesus and his 12 apostles were Jews, so was Paul, and so was everyone else in the early church. Not one of these Jews saw following Christ as a conversion from Judaism, but rather as simply the recognition that Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah. In fact, in the early church, the question was not about whether a Jew had to convert to Christianity—the question was about whether a Gentile had to convert to Judaism in order to be a Christian, **Acts 15:1-29**

Isaiah foretold that many among Israel would stumble and fall, **Isaiah 8:14-15**. Ever since Jesus appeared 2020 years ago, Jewish religious leaders have been misled, and they themselves misled other Jews. Christ reserved his harshest words for the religious leaders of his day, but not all Jew stumbled then or now.

6. **What is the current condition of Israel today?** Israel is still very much dominated by the apostate view which rejects Jesus Christ as the Savior. And yet, there are movements among Jews, even within the land of Israel, toward Christ. by all accounts, the numbers of Jewish Christians are

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

increasing. Progress in this area is very hard to measure since not all Jews who are open to Christ care to be counted, and we cannot look into the hearts of men. Some Jews who do acknowledge Jesus as Messiah do not wish to join the Gentile-dominated church for historical and cultural reasons—a potluck becomes a matter of conscience. Many Gentile Churches still harbor wrong ideas that are hurtful or offensive to Jewish people. Even the two great Christian holidays of the year: Christmas and Easter would cause most Christian Jews great anguish to be a part of each festival.

God has long had the ultimate purpose of restoring the Israelites in the later days, as Moses wrote over 3,500 years ago.

*“After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long-time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God and arousing his anger, I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the lord will drive you. There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell. But if from there you seek the Lord, your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. For the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors which He confirmed to them by oath.” **Deuteronomy 4:25-31***

That is what has happened—regardless of the false rulings and the efforts of the church to speak on God’s behalf about the Israelites.

### #10 - How Do Conservative Rabbis Interpret the Restoration of Israel?

As we continue to examine the question, “Why Would God Restore Israel? We will take a different approach and look at some of the thoughts from Orthodox and Conservative Jewish Rabbis and what they have written. I hope that it gives you deeper understanding as you realize that they were looking for a restored Israel but many of them a different one than they got.

For decades, certain Orthodox rabbis have maintained that the Messiah would come when three signs were in evidence at the same time:

1. **First Sign - There Must be Speeding Chariots in the Streets of Jerusalem**, fulfilling **Nahum 2:4**: *“The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways; they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.”* This interesting verse once prompted Sir Isaac Newton to predict that men would someday travel as fast as forty miles per hour! Voltaire, an enemy of Christianity in that era, scorned Newton’s statement, saying, “See what a fool Christianity makes an otherwise brilliant man, such as Sir Isaac Newton! Doesn’t he know that if a man traveled forty miles an hour, he would suffocate and his heart would stop?”

But Newton was conservatively correct. And today, in Jerusalem as in other major cities, speeding chariots (automobiles) jostle one against another in the streets. At night they seem like torches and they run like lightning.

2. **Second Sign - The Rabbis said, Would Be the Protection of Jerusalem by Men Flying as Birds.** “As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it” **Isaiah 31:5** No wonder Israelis are convinced they must retain air superiority in the Middle East. Already the accomplishments of their top-notch pilots are almost legendary. Jets over Jerusalem have more significance than in any other place on earth. And the sky over that city is seldom silent.
3. **Third Sign - Requirement of the Rabbis was the Blossoming of the Desert.** “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” **Isaiah 35:1**

The Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world, has already come but his return is signaled by numerous signs, including those proclaimed by the waiting rabbis.

Jesus also spoke about areas of technological and scientific advances.

One other additional modern sign is what Jesus said in the **Gospel of Luke**: *“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.”* **Luke 21:25** For all who have watched humans walking, driving and planting a flag on the moon, this prophecy needs no explanation. Had someone predicted this at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, he might have been placed under psychiatric treatment. But it has happened in our generation.

Christ also spoke of startling calamities in space. After discussing signs in the sun, moon, and stars, He said, *“Men’s hearts (shall be) failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken”* **Luke 21:26**

Although he counts himself progressive and civilized, Man still employs the best minds on earth to search constantly for more deadly weapons. After the bombing of Hiroshima, Charles Lindbergh lamented:



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

“Hiroshima was as far from the intention of the pure scientist as the Inquisition was from the Sermon on the Mount.” Nevertheless, the drive for more potent killers continues and their area of operation has now reached the heavens, another indication that closing time is near.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in the study of future events is the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the nations of the end time. On the world stage, closing scenes are being enacted. Israel is back in her land. This is the keystone of all Bible prophecy concerning the end time. All other factors of the prophetic picture would be meaningless had not the Israelites returned to the land of their fathers.

One of the Jewish doctrines that has played a strong part in the beliefs for the restoration of Israel is the stand in Judaism calling themselves, “The chosen people.” ‘Chosenness’ is the belief that the Israelite people were singularly chosen to enter into a covenant with G-D. This idea has been a central one throughout the history of Israeli thought, and it has deep biblical concepts and has been developed in Talmudic, philosophic., mystical, and contemporary Judaism.

Most Jews hold that being the “Chosen People” means they have been placed on earth to fulfill a certain purpose. Traditional proof for this Jewish “chosenness” is found in the Torah, the Jewish Bible in the **Book of Deuteronomy 14**, where it says: *“For you are a holy people to Hashem our God, and God has chosen you to be his treasured people from all the nations that are on the face of the earth.”* In the **Book of Genesis, Chapter 17** it is written: *“and I God will establish My covenant between Me and you, the nation of Israel and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”*

In medieval Jewish philosophy the notion of the special status of the Jewish people found articulate and radical expression in Judah Halevi’s book Kuzari. According to Halevi, the entire Jewish people were endowed with a special religious faculty, first given to Adam and then bequeathed through a line of chosen representatives to all Israel. As a result of this inherited divine influence, the Jewish people were uniquely gifted to enter into communion with God and this special gift of Israel implied dependence on a special supernatural providence.

This traditional teaching of “chosenness” has often provoked antagonism from Gentiles of all stripes. When the Roman Church became the dominant Church of the world, the doctrine of Israel as the chosen People acquired an added edge against the background of the claim of the Roman Church to be the “true Israel” and therefore God’s chosen people. In times of persecution, the “chosenness” doctrine was a source of great strength for the Israelite people. Also, the fact for this “chosenness” was explained by the Talmudic teachers as the willingness of Israel to accept and obey the Torah as the reason for their election, and this helped maintain loyalty to tradition and to Halakhah in periods of stress and forced conversion to other religions.

In 1973, the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, Yakov Malik, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations, said, “the Zionists have come forward with the theory of the Chosen People, an absurd ideology. That is religious racism.” Because of these attacks, it is not surprising that some Jews have wanted to do away with the belief in Jewish “chosenness.” The most noted effort to do so was undertaken by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the small but influential Reconstructionist movement. Kaplan advocated dropping “chosenness” for two reasons:

1. To undercut accusations that the idea of Chosen People was the model for racist ideologies.
2. Because it went against modern thinking to see the Jews as a divinely chosen people.

But does “chosenness” really mean the Jews were divinely chosen? After all, how did the notion of one God become known to the world? Through the Israelites. And, according to Israelite sources, that is the meaning

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

of “chosenness” to make God known to the world. As Rabbi Louis Jacobs has written: “We are not discussing a dogma incapable of verification, but the recognition of sober historical facts. The world owes to Israel the idea of the one God of righteousness and holiness. This is how God became known to mankind.

Does Judaism believe that “chosenness” endows Jews with special rights in the way racism ideologies endow those born into the ‘right race’? Not at all. The most famous verse in the Bible on the subject

Says the opposite: “*You alone have I singled out of all the families on the earth. That is why I call you to account for all your iniquities.*” **Amos 3:2** “Chosenness” is so unconnected to any notion of race that Jews believe that the Messiah himself will descend from Ruth, a non-Jewish woman who converted to Judaism.

Why were the Israelites chosen? Because they are descendants of Abraham. And why were Abraham and his descendants given the task of making God known to the world? The Torah never tells us, but it does say in **Deuteronomy 7:7** that “*it is not because you are numerous that God chose you, indeed you are the smallest of people.*” Because of the small numbers of Israelites, any success they would have in making God known to the world would presumably reflect upon the power of the idea of God. Had the Israelites been a large nation with an outstanding army, their successes in making God known would have been attributed to the might and not to the truth of their ideas. After all, non-Muslims living in the Arab world were hardly impressed by the large numbers of people brought to Islam through the sword. The “chosen people” idea is so powerful that other religious groups have appropriated it. Both Catholicism and several Protestant Churches believe that God chose the Israelites, but then 2,000 years ago a new covenant was made with Christianity. During most of Christian history, and even among some adherents to the present day, Christian “chosenness meant that only Christians go to heaven while the nonchosen are either placed in limbo or are damned. So, the idea of “chosenness” for the Israelite nation has allowed some to decide that the restored Israel is not a fulfillment of prophecy, because the people of the land do not all follow the Torah; while other larger numbers of Orthodox Jews do believe that the idea of “chosenness” applies to the new nation of Israel and God put it together because the Jews are the ‘chosen people’. He just is not finished with the nation yet.

The arguments among Jewish orthodox groups still rages in the area of deciding if the restoration of Israel is really of God. It is so irritating to the rest of Israel that many Orthodox Jews are not well-liked in the land of Israel. I want to reference a recent article from the Jewish World paper, Haaretz and it is discussing the question: “If the Messiah Isn’t here yet, Does Israel belong to the Jews? It is debating the present status of Israel from an Orthodox position

The article begins with the statement that not all Orthodox Jews in Israel believe they have the Godly true Israel now. Is the ‘Old Testament Promised Land” really the land that Israel has now and if so, is it really the property of the Jews. It traces back to the idea that after

Babylon captured the nation of Judah; God allowed the Judeans to go back and rebuild their nation. They thought the same thing would happen after Rome destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but God did not intercede on the side of the Jews and the might of the Roman Empire came down on the Jewish population, and completely crushed the resistance. The disaster for the Jews was dreadful: thousands were killed, and the ones who did survive scattered far and wide. The leadership of the Jewish people immigrated to Babylonia and rebuilt a shadow government there. The Land of Israel was nearly completely depopulated of Jews. The Orthodox Jews decided that they could no longer be fixated on the coming of the Messiah and they adopted the doctrine of three oaths:

1. Israel was to wait patiently “for God” before returning to their land and rebuilding the kingdom, but it was not clear what they were waiting for.

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

2. This would be an act of God and not miracles or feats of humans.
3. God would reveal all that was needed.

This was the dominant thought of Orthodox Judaism through the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the Jews believed a Turkish man who called himself the Messiah was real, but when he converted to Islam the movement fizzled out.

Following this, Orthodox Judaism became weary of declaring the imminent coming of the Messianic Age and took to not thinking about it. Then came Zionism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a secular movement and religious Jews steered away from it for the most part. If anything, they opposed it vehemently, since it contradicted the doctrine of the three oaths. But the movement was gaining momentum and a small minority of religious Jews could not help but get caught up in the excitement. It was decided by a majority of Orthodox Jews that Zionists were doing things that were worse for the restoration of Israel and their actions would delay the coming of the Messiah because the Zionists violated the three oaths.

Extreme Orthodox leadership even colluded with Arab nations in hopes of thwarting the Zionists, until 1936, when the Arab Revolt broke out and pushed them begrudgingly back to the side of the Zionists. The Holocaust ended the belief in the three oaths and the Orthodox Jews did all they could to help reestablish the land of Israel. The Orthodox Jews divided into two camps and these two ideas are still the prevalent thinking about the restoration of Israel today.

1. The larger group believe that the State of Israel is the harbinger of the messianic age and are called the National Orthodox. They argue that God gave us the land. A representative of this way of thinking is the Habayit Hayehudi party.
2. The smaller group of Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not believe that the present nation of Israel is really a gift of God but believe that it is a precursor of the Messianic Age when God himself will restore an Israel that is totally God-fearing and God-worshipping. (Preferably think just like the Ultra-Orthodox faith!)

They both believe (10% and 3% respectfully of the Jewish people) that it is God's will for the Land of Israel to be Jewish now. The article ends with this statement: "These two small groups are not uniform themselves when it comes to the questions of how close the messianic age is to fulfilment, or to what extent are Jews supposed to actively bring it about. Only the most extremist of them believe that the time is now and that the task of bringing this about is theirs.

Before we leave this subject, I want to share one more present-day reality when it comes to Orthodox and conservative Jewish thought.

### **Why do we not have a Palestinian State yet?**

David Borg, Executive Director of the Maccabee Task Force spoke at Prager University in Tel Aviv and answered this question. I quote: "If Israel just allowed the Palestinians to have a state of their own, there would be peace in the Middle East, right? That's what you hear from UN ambassadors, European diplomats, and most college professors. But what if I told you that Israel has already offered the Palestinians a state of their own—and not just once, but on five separate occasions? Let's review the record.

1. After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire following WW I, Britain took over control of most of the Middle East, including the area that constitutes modern Israel. Seventeen years later, in 1936, the Arabs rebelled against the British and against their Jewish neighbors. The British formed a task force, the Peel Commission, to study the cause of the rebellion. The commission concluded that the reason for the

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

violence was that two peoples, Jews and Arabs, wanted to govern the same land. The answer, the Peel Commission concluded, would be to create two independent states, one for the Jews, and one for the Arabs, a two-state solution. The British offered the Arabs 80% of the disputed territory; and the Jews the remaining 20 %. Yet, despite the tiny size of their proposed state, the Jews voted to accept this offer. But the Arabs rejected it and resumed their violent rebellion.

2. Ten years later, in 1947, The British asked the United Nations (UN) to find a new solution to the continuing tensions. Like the Peel Commission, the UN decided that the best way to resolve the conflict was to divide the land. On Nov. 7, 1947, the UN voted to create two states. Again, the Jews accepted the offer. And again, the Arabs rejected it, only this time, they did so by launching an all-out war. Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria joined the conflict. But they failed, Israel won the war, and got on with the business of building a new nation. Most of the land set aside by the UN for an Arab state, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, became occupied territory, occupied not by Israel, but by Jordan.
3. Twenty years later, in 1967, the Arabs, led this time by Egypt and joined by Syria and Jordan, once again sought to destroy the Jewish state. The 1967 conflict, known as the Six Day War, ended in a stunning victory for Israel. Jerusalem and the West Bank, as well as the area known as the Gaza Strip, fell into Israel's hands. The government split over what to do with the new territory. Half wanted to return the West Bank to Jordan and Gaza to Egypt in exchange for peace. The other half wanted to give it to the region's Arabs, who had been referring to themselves as Palestinians, in the hope that they would ultimately build their own state there. Neither initiative got very far. A few months later, the Arab League met in Sudan and issued its infamous "Three No's, No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel. Again, a two-state solution was dismissed by the Arabs.
4. In 2000 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak met at Camp David with Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat to conclude a new two-state plan. Barak, offered Arafat a Palestinian state in all of Gaza and 94% of the West Bank with East Jerusalem as its capital. But the Palestinian leader rejected the offer. In the words of US President Bill Clinton, Arafat was "Here 14 days and said 'no' to everything." The Palestinians instead launched a bloody wave of suicide bombings that killed over 1,000 Israelis and maimed thousands more—on buses, in wedding halls, and pizza parlors.
5. In 2008, Israel tried yet again. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert went even further than Ehud Barak had, expanding the peace offer to include additional land to sweeten the deal. Like his predecessor, the new Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, turned the deal down. In the time between the two offers, Israel unilaterally left Gaza, giving the Palestinians complete control there. Instead of developing this territory for the good of its citizens, the Palestinians turned Gaza into a terrorist base, and have fired thousands of rockets from there into Israel. Each time Israel has agreed to a Palestinian state, the Palestinians have rejected the offer, usually violently. So, if you are interested in peace in the Middle East, maybe the answer is not to pressure Israel to make yet another offer of a state to the Palestinians. Maybe the answer is to pressure the Palestinians to finally accept the existence of a Jewish state.

So, we see that the unrest in the Middle East has no easy solutions, the Orthodox Community of Jews within Israel and all around the world are not united on what a restored Israel means, but every Jewish group thinks Israelis should keep the nation of Israel.

### #11 - What is God's Final Plan for the Israel He Restored?

We have taken 11 meetings to look at the restoration of Israel from OT Prophecies; New Testament Prophecies; the Perspective of the Church; the Perspective of Rabbis through the ages. We will now look at what Paul says is the Final and Ultimate Plan for Israel. We will study the passage of **Romans 11** in depth to see what God has taught about restored Israel.

As we look at this passage it is clear that the expositors of the Scripture have come up with many different explanations. Because the Roman Church and many Reformation Protestant Churches have long-held the idea that the Church has replaced Israel as the chosen people of God. Their interpretation of the entire **Romans 11** chapter has been much more symbolic and less literal. Others have wrestled with how this passage could just speak to the Israelites and therefore have often included Israel and the Gentiles in this account. I want us to look at what the passage literally says, not what we need it to say to match our other concepts of theology.

The confusion in the minds of Bible interpreters concerns the meaning of **Romans 11:26** "all Israel will be saved", is obvious. Not only are their various thoughts that disagree, but the passage is a problem to many. An important clue to the interpretation of this verse 26 is found in the start of the chapter. The entire chapter of Romans eleven deals with the question: "Did God Reject His People?" **Romans 11:1** and it is answered in **Romans 11:2** "God did not reject his people whom he foreknew." Paul then lays out the argument that God has always had a remnant of Israel who believed both under the law and under grace. Those who did not become part of this Godly remnant were hardened in their hearts and did not accept the coming of Jesus as their Messiah and our Savior.

What has happened out of the fact that a majority of the Israelites did not accept Jesus as their Messiah? Paul says that it has allowed the Gospel to go to the Gentiles, **Romans 11:11** and that has made the Israelites jealous. Paul then goes on to say that if this failure by the Israelite nation to recognize Jesus turned into a blessing for the Gentiles how much more of a blessing there will be forever believer when the Israelites are included in those who accept Jesus. **Romans 11:12**.

These facts combine to serve as a warning to all Gentile Christians not to be judgmental and high-minded and also to serve as an encouragement to Israel that they have a future time of blessing. The contrast in the first 24 verses of this Chapter is not between the believer and the unbeliever; but between Gentiles as believers and Israel as a nation. In **Romans 11:25**, the issue is brought to a head with the revelation that Israel's present blindness and unbelief will be concluded at the same time the present Gentile opportunity is ended. Jesus in Luke said that the time of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. After those events happen, then the description of 'all Israel will be saved' is shared.

I want us to take this verse and see exactly what it means. I think we have to answer four questions.

#### **QUESTION 1 - What Is the Meaning of "All Israel?"**

It is true that the construction placed upon the word Israel practically determines the exegesis of the entire passage. The question's answer is found in at least three important considerations.

What is the word meaning of the word in this context? The study of the context, **Romans 11:1** shows that the word Israel is used in this passage in contrast to Gentile. Paul, **Romans 11:1** has identified himself as

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

an Israelite because of his connection with the tribe of Benjamin, an ethnic and national relation rather than a spiritual. The contrast is verified in **Romans 11:11** Here Paul uses the pronoun “they” to speak of the Jews as a contrast to the Gentiles. The entire chapter carefully preserves the distinction between the two groups—Israelites and Gentiles. Furthermore, the Gentiles are in most cases those who have believed in Christ and members of Christ and the Israelites are pictured as those who do not believe yet.

A very literal meaning what ‘All Israel’ is in this context is: the same as the rest of the bible—it is the nation descending from Abraham through Jacob/Israel. There is not a single reference in the New Testament to Israel which cannot be taken in its plain meaning. Not a single instance requires the term to include Gentiles. In a word, there is no justification based on usage in the New Testament to interpret the word Israel as ever including Gentiles.

Quite honestly, the controversy over who is included in the word “all” has a lot to do with other doctrinal concerns and not what is written in this passage. The premillennialist has no problem with this being about the Israelites contrasted with the Gentiles; but the amillennialist believe this is all encompassing and would include both Israelites and Gentiles. That is because they felt the rejection of a majority of Jews in accepting Jesus as their Messiah meant God replaced Israel with the Gentile Church. This Gentile privilege is the basis for their interpretation of this passage.

Now let’s take a moment and look at what the words “All of Israel:” might mean in the context of history. This has been referred to as a problem for those who want to interpret this passage literally. Obviously, all Israel is not saved. Israel in view in the prophecy must first of all be limited to living Israel, those living on earth at the time. It is not true that all Israelites of all generations are to be saved. Also, the Scriptures reveal that a large portion of Israel will be martyred during the time of trouble in the time of Tribulation before the second coming of Jesus Christ **Zechariah 13:8-9** We quickly see whatever the view is of the Millennial Kingdom, this passage must speak of a particular point of time when this is fulfilled about all of those living at the time.

But the most obvious answer to the question of the meaning of “All of Israel” is found in the context of the chapter. The ‘all’ is in antithesis to the “in part” of **Romans 11:25** and “the remnant” of **Romans 11:5**. During a present age “all Israel” alive at the time will be saved. Paul makes a strong point to say that the hardening or blindness is “in part”. When Christ returns, the situation will be changed. Instead of a remnant, instead of a small part, Israel as a whole will be saved. It will be a national deliverance. Charles Hodge says, “Israel, here must mean the Jewish people and all Israel, the whole nation. The Israelites, as a people are now rejected; as a people they will be restored. As their rejection, although national, did not include the rejection of every individual, so their restoration, although in like manner national, need not be assumed to include the salvation of every individual Jew. This is not speaking of all the true people of God as what “all Israel” means but it is the whole nation of Israel. Israel as a whole will be in a new covenant with God, **Romans 11:27**.

### QUESTION 2 - What Is This New Covenant?

**Jeremiah 31:31-37** tells of this New Covenant that is quoted two times in the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

*“This is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. I will put my Law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, “Know the Lord, because they will all know me,*



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

*from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah31:33-34*

The passage in Jeremiah then goes on to declare that Israel will endure as a nation under this new covenant as long as the ordinance of the sun, moon and stars endure. The passage concludes: *“This is what the Lord says: “Only if the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,” declares the Lord, Jeremiah 31:37*

This new covenant promised to the house of Israel is precisely what Paul spoke about in this passage of **Romans 11:26-27**: Israel is promised blessing as a group or nation; “all” are to be blessed; “all” are to know the Lord; “all” are to be forgiven. Certainly, this is not the picture of Israel in any period of its history until now it must be in the future. A literal fulfilment demands an interpretation of **Romans 11:26-27** that shows that it will come to pass. The fact that believers in this age enjoy a “New Covenant” of grace and blessing does not hinder the future fulfillment of this promise to Israel, which is in no wise being fulfilled now. This deliverance by Christ will include more than Israel for it will eliminate the threatened extermination of all who trust in Christ, **Matthew 24:15-22**.

### QUESTION 3 - When Will the Prophesied Deliverance Occur?

It has not come to pass yet because **Romans 11** clearly says that the present age, from the First Century to the Twenty First Century, is one of blessing to Gentiles and that this follows Israel’s fall and lack of accepting Jesus. During this age some in Israel come to Christ and are saved, but the nation as a whole goes on in hardness or blindness and in unbelief.

But **Romans 11:25-26** tells that this present situation is going to change when the fullness of Gentile blessing comes to its close. The end of Gentile blessing is the point in time when Israel’s blindness is lifted. When it is lifted, the way is opened for the work of the Deliverer, Jesus, who will bring spiritual restoration as well as physical. The order of events in this chapter are:

1. The Fall or Disbelief by Israel
2. Gentiles Receive the Fullness of Blessing.
3. The Blindness of Israel Is Lifted
4. Israel’s Deliverer Comes Out of Zion.
5. Israel Is Turned Away from Ungodliness and Her Covenants are Fulfilled.

The deliverance of “all Israel” is not a process but an event. The time of the event is clearly when the Deliverer comes out of Zion, an event following the return of Christ in His second coming. The prophesied deliverance is, a future event at one single moment. The great prophetic passages of the Old Testament upon which this prophecy is based do not have any harmony with the present situation in our world. It is evident that it is not true today that everyone knows the Lord, that it is no longer necessary to teach our neighbors. This is not true for Gentiles and it is certainly not true for Israel. The future revelation of Christ to Israel will fulfill these predictions and bring the prophesied time of blessing for God’s ancient people.

### QUESTION 4 - What Are the Simultaneous Events That Have to Happen?

The predictions of **Romans 11:25** following involve important considerations beyond the revelation of this passage. For instance, it includes:



## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

1. The Restoration of Israel as Nation
2. Israel's as the Continual Possessors of the land.
3. The Separation of The Purposes of God for the Church, Believers in the Coming Age, and the Israelites.
4. The Themes of Scripture Bearing on the Time of the Great Ingathering of Israel Will Be Fulfilled

The events of the age are in perfect harmony with the prophecies of **Romans 11**. If the statements of this great chapter of Paul, **Romans 11** are taken in their ordinary meaning without resource to allegorical or spiritual interpretation of the key words, the inevitable conclusions that we have here in broad outline God's program, present blessing for Gentiles, future restoration and blessing for Israel as a nation. We say with Paul in the sense we believe he wrote: "*Did God cast off his people? God forbid.*" **Romans 11:1**

### "Why Would God Restore Israel?"

The partial restoration of the nation Israel to their ancient land in the middle of the twentieth century should be recognized by all students of the Bible as a most remarkable event. It seems to be a sign that God is about to fulfill His Word concerning the glorious future of His chosen people. As we have seen in our previous studies, the return of Israel is the prelude and will be followed by the dark hour of Israelite suffering in the great tribulation. This will in turn be succeeded by the return of Christ, the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, and the exaltation of the people of Israel to a place of prominence and blessing. Scriptures we have looked at have brought out these major aspects of Israel's future program. God as always seems to be less concerned about Divine Justice as He is concerned with those who will accept Divine Forgiveness and Restoration.

One last thought as we conclude this study: Ever since I was a young man, I have heard about the rumors of peace for Israel. Last year we had the signing of the Abraham Accords, a peace treaty between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, neither of which were at war with Israel. Will it lead to Middle East peace in our time?

I want to give a little historic perspective to that question. Since its founding in 1948, Israel has been surrounded by hostile Arab nations on every side. Many of them have declared the extermination of Israel to be their highest priority. That level of animosity led to four major wars, in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. Time and time again, Israel has fought against a coalition of enemy nations with vastly superior numbers and resources. But in every war, Israel was victorious.

God promised to preserve and protect the Jewish people once they were resettled in their ancient homeland. He said Israel would be "*like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves*" **Zechariah 12:6**, meaning that they would exhibit great military prowess above their enemies. These prophecies are very true.

Ever since oil became the lifeblood of the world economy, successive American administrations have been caught in the middle of political morass in the Middle East. Recognizing that a cold peace beats a hot war, various Presidents and Secretaries of State have attempted to facilitate peace between Israel and its neighbors, usually by pressuring Israel to make concessions.

Egypt entered into a peace accord in 1979 in exchange for a return of the Sinai Peninsula. Jordan signed an accord in 1994 when Israel guaranteed Jordanian oversight of Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites. In 2005 the US pressured Israel into turning Gaza over to Palestinian leaders controlled by Hamas. But none made lasting

## WHY WOULD GOD RESTORE ISRAEL ?

peace, because Arab nations on every side have expressed outrage that a Jewish state exists right in their midst. To this day Palestinian leaders reject Israel and claim that there was never a Jewish presence in Palestine prior to 1948.

Now we know that underlying all of this hatred is a satanic hatred of the Jews. Hatred of the Jews remains very much alive in the “Arab Street” (the mob of citizens that underlies the official Arab governments.) Why would Yasser Arafat not accept two nations? First, he was consumed with hate and did not really want peace and also, he had stoked hatred in Palestinian hearts to the point he would have been destroyed if he made peace with the Jews.

Golda Meier once said, “Peace will come when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us.” Give this dynamic, it is no wonder that true Middle East peace has remained so elusive. And yet, it is the golden ring of American foreign policy. The Abraham accords were merely a trade and economic agreement between two very rich gulf countries and Israel. Lurking in the background of this diplomatic breakthrough is a growing threat on Israel’s northern border with Syria. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan has blended radical Islamist ideology with a cult of personality, turning his nation against Israel. And he has joined with Russia to establish a military presence in Syria.

Immediately, I know you who study prophecy recognize the significance of Russia allying with Turkey, Iran, Libya and eventually Sudan. The axis power described in **Ezekiel 38** will eventually launch the War of God and Magog and invade Israel for the purpose of seizing soil and plunder. **Ezekiel 38: 10-12**. Those with biblical discernment realize that true and lasting peace will not be achieved on the earth, in the Middle East or elsewhere, until the Prince of Peace reigns from Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Until then, real peace will remain elusive. The words of the prophet Jeremiah to ancient Jerusalem will still apply as politicians pronounce, “Peace, peace”, but there is no peace. **Jeremiah 6:14** Likewise, as lawlessness mounts in the world, peace will remain elusive for every person who turns away from God. Apart from Him you will never find peace. But there is a way to be at peace with God and on earth, **Luke 2:14**. Jesus offers this sure promise to all who put their trust in Him: “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” **Matthew 11:28-29**