

THE IMPORTANCE OF ISRAEL TO BOTH CHRISTIAN AND JEW

(Witness item designed and used by Tom and Ruth Maillard of Florida)

Four thousand years ago God began a great project which ultimately will touch the life of every man, woman and child who has ever lived. When God began this work, He expressed His ultimate goal to Abraham, “the father of the faithful.” That Goal as God expressed it was: “In thee [Abraham] shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:8)

These were not idle words, uttered by a well-intentioned but ineffective God. So important was this promise that God affirmed it by an oath—“BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN...” (Gen. 22:16) The Apostle Paul declared that this promise to Abraham IS the gospel, the good news that God has in store for mankind—“ALL the families of the earth.” (Gal. 3:8) God’s oath-bound promise to Abraham is the key to understanding history and prophecy. It is the central theme of the Bible, and when we understand it, we can understand—THE IMPORTANCE OF ISRAEL.

Israel is important because God chose them. We have all heard the question, “What are God’s chosen people chosen for?” The answer is found in God’s promise to Abraham: Israel is chosen to be a channel of God’s blessing to the world. As God expressed His purpose to Abraham, it was, “... all the families of the Earth shall be blessed.” Abraham and his “seed” or descendants—Israel—were selected by God to be the channel of blessing. That is, God’s blessings will flow through Israel to the rest of the world. “In [or through] thee [Abraham] and in [or through] thy seed [Israel] I will bless all the families of the earth.” How will God use Israel to accomplish this goal? First let us look at history to see the steps God has already taken toward the goal promised to Abraham.

HISTORY OF ISRAEL

God reiterated His promise to Isaac, Abraham’s son, and then to Jacob, his grandson. He then confirmed the promise to Jacob’s twelve sons, fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel’s history, written in the Bible, is full of incidents in which God alternately blessed Israel to demonstrate their chosen status, and punished them when they forgot His laws and the goals of moral and religious world leadership. Israel was commanded to remain separate from the world in every way. The punishments dealt out by God, though very severe, had the effect of developing a class of people who steadfastly hoped for the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham.

The most severe punishment of all, the dispersion or Diaspora, began about 70 A.D. and has continued until modern times. The Bible predicted this dispersion of Jews through all

nations, and it also predicted that in our day God would regather them back to Jerusalem. See Jer. 16:12-15; Ezek. 36:24.

Never before has a nation been dead for nearly two thousand years and then been reborn in accordance with prophecies written over 2500 years before. Yet our generation has witnessed this astounding fact, and we recognize that only God could accomplish such an unusual work. But we should expect this—because it is just another step in the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham—a promise that cannot fail.

The yearly prayer of Jews, “next year in Jerusalem,” has been fulfilled, and before long the next step toward the accomplishment of God’s promise to Abraham will take place.

DIDN’T ISRAEL LOSE GOD’S FAVOR?

As mentioned above, Israel is important because God chose them. Many people have the idea that Israel lost its “chosen” status when they as a nation did not accept Jesus as Messiah. But God foreknew this long before it happened and did not allow this failure to accept one of God’s blessings to debar them from another blessing He had reserved for them. Israel lost something they really did not even anticipate—an opportunity to become heavenly or spiritual sons of Abraham. Israel did not see the depth of meaning in God’s promise to Abraham when He said, “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven AND as the sand on the seashore.” (Gen. 22:17) This promise gives us a glimpse of the fact, elsewhere clearly stated, that there are two parts of Abraham’s offspring, the channel of God’s blessings. The heavenly or spiritual part (alluded to metaphorically in God’s promise as the “stars of heaven”) will be the faithful Christians whom God has been selecting for the last 2,000 years. But the earthly part, (“sand of the seashore”) will be the regathered nation of Israel.

As the Apostle makes clear, the fact that the majority of the Jewish nation lost a spiritual privilege 2000 years ago does not debar them from the earthly promises which still belong to them. (See Romans chapter 11). Christian people have gotten into the habit of applying all the prophetic scriptures about Israel to themselves—but this mistake should be avoided. The important thing to realize is this: God plans to bless everyone who has ever lived. And He intends to use two classes: the faithful Christians as heavenly, agents of blessing, and the regathered nation of Israel as earthly agents of blessing. United, they will bring life to the remainder of the human race.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

At the present time Israel occupies a very precarious position. Her enemies are numerous and her friends are deserting her. Will Israel be destroyed in some future war? First let us note that the Bible predicted the present situation: “All thy [Israel’s] lovers have

forgotten thee...” (Jer. 30:14) “I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered against it.” (Zech. 12:3) These prophecies are being fulfilled before our eyes.

Take note of two facts: (1) Israel will be attacked (Jer. 30:14, 15; Zech. 12:3; Ezek. 38:16); (2) The attacking people will be destroyed—Israel will be saved. (Jer. 30:7, 11, 16; Zech. 12:3, 9; Ezek. 39:21-29) As a result of God’s supervision of this predicted battle, both Israel and the rest of the world will learn that they are strong, not because of their own might, but because God has placed His care over them. (Ezek. 39:22; Zech. 12:8-10)

On the other hand, the rest of the world (“the heathen” of prophecy) will learn that God has chosen Israel as His people (Ezek. 39:21; 36:36) and Jerusalem as the capital of His government. (Isaiah 2:3)

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

When will God fulfill His promise to Abraham? How will Israel be used as a channel of blessing? What blessings can we expect to come through Israel? Let us briefly attempt to answer these questions from the Bible: When will the Abrahamic promise be fulfilled? The scriptures mentioned above describe the order of events culminating in God’s manifesting His new government—the Kingdom of Messiah—to the world. Matthew 24:32-34 identifies the statehood of Israel (“leaves” on the “fig tree”) as the sign that the full establishment of Messiah’s Kingdom is drawing near. We would therefore understand that one “generation” from 1948, when Israel became a state, would witness the fulfillment of these prophecies.

How will Israel be used as a channel of God’s blessing? Isaiah 2:2, 3 tells us that God will establish an earthly government centered in Jerusalem which all people will notice and begin to obey. Zechariah 8:20-23 tells us that people will see evidences of God’s blessing in the new government and will look to the Jews as representatives of that government. Isaiah 1:26 and Luke 13:28 indicate that the faithful prophets and judges of the past will be resurrected and take a prominent position in the new government.

What blessings will come through that government? The following is a scriptural summary of the wonderful blessings God has in store for the human race. These are the blessings God promised through Abraham—and Israel will have a prominent part in bestowing them.

A DESCRIPTION OF MESSIAH’S KINGDOM (Paraphrased from the scriptures in the right-hand column.)

It will have an enforced rule of righteousness and justice. It will have the spirit of wisdom, understanding and love. It will change the stony selfish hearts of men into loving hearts of flesh. Satan and the powers of evil will be restrained. And thus the desire of all nations will come. Wars will cease. None will be permitted to hurt or destroy. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain. In fact, the dead will be brought to life. Blind eyes will be opened and deaf ears unstopped. The lame man will leap and dumb tongues will sing. Vitality and beauty of youth will return. The earth will be full of glory (no more pollution) and yield its increase (no famines). There will be economic security (no more poor). Even the animals will be tamed for man's pleasure. The perfect life and dominion of man will be restored. The human family will worship God with one pure religion. And most important—heart harmony with God. He will be their God and they will be His people. This kingdom will endure—“of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.”

Isaiah 9:7; 28:17
Psalm 72:1-8
Isaiah 32:1-4
Isaiah 11:2; 29:24
Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26
Isaiah 2:11, 12; 14:12
Isaiah 29:20
Haggai 2:7
Micah 4:3; Isa. 2:4
Psalm 46:9; Isa. 11:9
Revelation 21:4
Isaiah 25:8
Acts 24:15
Isaiah 35:5; 29:18
Isaiah 35:6
Isaiah 65:20
Job 33:25
Isaiah 60:13; 30:23
Psalm 67:6
Micah 4:4
Isaiah 65:21-24
Isaiah 11:7, 8; 65:25.
Isaiah 32:15-18
Isaiah 33:24
Zephaniah 3:9
Isaiah 40:5
Jeremiah 31:33
Revelation 21:3
Psalm 145:13
Isaiah 45:18
Isaiah 9:7