

THE FALL AND RISE



OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The cover image for this booklet features the national flag of the State of Israel. Against seemingly impossible difficulties, the Jewish people returned to their ancestral homeland—becoming a nation on May 14, 1948. As this booklet shows, great trials still lie ahead for this persecuted people, but God’s deliverance and an unending future of peace are also prophesied.

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the “Church of the Eternal God” in the United States of America, in collaboration with the “Church of God, a Christian Fellowship” in Canada and the “Global Church of God” in the United Kingdom. Printed in the USA 2017. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the New King James version ((c)1988 Thomas-Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Authors: Dave Harris and Norbert Link

Editorial Review Team: Norbert Link, Dave Harris, Rene Messier, Brian Gale, Michael Link, Phyllis Bourque, Margaret Adair, Johanna Link and Dawn Thompson

Graphic Design: Shelly Bruno; Cover image: BigStockPhoto.com

Contents

Foreword.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1 A Brief History of Judah.....	5
Judah—the Man.....	5
Prophecies About Judah’s Descendants.....	6
Separation Between Israel and Judah.....	7
Christ Was a Jew.....	7
Chapter 2 Judaism and the Oracles of God.....	9
Jewish Traditions.....	10
Chapter 3 Prophecies Concerning the Modern State of Israel.....	11
Fulfillment of Prophecies.....	11
The Modern Nation of Judah.....	12
The State of Israel Versus the UK and the USA.....	13
Chapter 4 The City of Jerusalem in History and in Prophecy.....	15
Jerusalem’s History.....	15
Jerusalem Under David and Solomon.....	16
Jerusalem Destroyed and Rebuilt.....	17
Jerusalem at the Time of Christ.....	17
The Signs of Our Time.....	18
Christ’s Return.....	20
Heaven Not the Reward of the Saints.....	21
Jerusalem Future Center of World Government.....	22
Chapter 5 The Throne of David—Today!.....	25
Judah to Rule Over Israel.....	25
The Role of Jeremiah.....	26
Transfer of the Throne of David.....	27
England.....	28
Chapter 6 A Temple in Jerusalem Prior to Christ’s Return.....	29
The Temple Mount.....	29
Preparations for a Third Temple.....	30
Prophecies About a Third Temple.....	31
Holy Place and Inner Rooms.....	32
The Abomination of Desolation.....	32
Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees.....	33
The Man of Sin.....	35
The False Prophet and His Religious System.....	35
The Man of Sin in the Temple of God.....	36
A Literal Temple in the Book of Revelation.....	37

Further Biblical Evidence in Psalms and Ezekiel.....	39
Chapter 7 Who Will Build the Temple of Ezekiel?.....	41
Ezekiel Describes a Future Temple	41
Patterns Under Moses and David.....	42
The Second Temple	43
Location of the First and Second Temples	44
Temple Enlarged Through Herod.....	45
Destruction of the Second Temple.....	47
The Dome of the Rock	47
Daily Sacrifices	47
Desecration of the Third Temple	48
Temple in Jerusalem at the Time of Christ's Future Rule.....	49
Zechariah Announces the Third Temple	50
The Third Temple in the Book of Haggai	52
Purging of the Temple in the Millennium.....	53
Chapter 8 Does the Bible Require the Birth of a "Red Heifer" Prior to the Coming of the Messiah?.....	55
No Biblical Requirement	55
History of the Red Heifer Ritual.....	55
Jewish Traditions Regarding Red Heifer and Water of Purification	56
Red Heifer Rituals Superseded	57
Chapter 9 Why Did the Jews Reject Jesus?	59
Some Jews Believed in Christ	60
Most Jews Did Not Believe	60
Why the Rejection?	61
Jewish Persecution.....	62
Jesus Proves His Identity.....	63
Today's Rejection of Christ.....	64
Chapter 10 "His Blood Be On Us and On Our Children"	65
Visiting the Sins of the Fathers Upon the Children?	65
Automatic Consequences for Children?	66
Terrible Misunderstanding.....	67
Some Commentaries Reject False Interpretation	67
How It Could Also Be Understood	68
Chapter 11 God's Anger Against, and Mercy for, Judah.....	71
Defeat in War and Captivity Prophesied for Judah	71
Why Is God Angry With Modern Judah?	71
Dual Prophecies.....	72
Modern Assyria Will Not Help	73
Psalm 83 for Us Today	74
Modern Esau.....	75
Modern Judah Will Become a Blessing	76

Chapter 12 Spiritual Jews	77
Physical Circumcision	78
Salvation Not Based on Physical Lineage	79
Spiritual Circumcision.....	79
Conclusion	81

Foreword

Uncountable history books have been written about the Jewish people, most notably in regard to their oppression. It seems that very few ethnic groups have been maligned, persecuted and murdered to such an extent, often by professing Christians. Yet, the Judeo-Christian religion acknowledges that Christianity has its roots in the Old Testament of the Bible (actually preserved by the Jewish people). We even read in the Holy Scriptures that true Christians must become spiritual Jews. What does this mean? Will there ever come a time when anti-Semitism belongs to the past?

There is certainly great confusion about who the Jews are. Most people believe, erroneously, that “the house of Israel” of the Old Testament is identical with the Jews, or the “house of Judah.” What is the true history of the Jewish people, and perhaps more importantly, what is their prophesied future?

Will the present-day State of Israel soon be occupied and terrorized by Western powers—huge armies under a political and religious leadership? What is meant by the proverbial phrase “abomination of desolation” and who is the “man of sin” who will sit in the temple of God, claiming to be God?

In this booklet, we will address these questions, and more, as we discuss the largely misunderstood history and future of the Jews, the city of Jerusalem and the State of Israel. We will make the case that the ancient throne of David still exists today, and we will show where it can be found. We will prove from Scripture whether the Jews will yet build a third temple—in light of Ezekiel’s millennial temple—before Christ returns, and we will clear up the misunderstandings regarding the famous “red heifer” ritual.

We will also answer the important question as to why the Jewish people, as a whole, have rejected and still do reject the Messiah—Jesus Christ—and what was, and is the consequence, if any, of the famous saying by the Jews to Pilate: “His blood be on us and our children.”

We will explain God's present anger with the Jewish people and His pronouncements of their horrible future—their national fall—in a devastating World War, but also their tremendous rise and ultimate worldwide positive influence in the soon-coming Millennium, a time when God will ultimately bestow honor, mercy and grace upon them.

Introduction

It is important to note that the modern “Israelites” are NOT the Jewish people. As will be explained in detail in this booklet, the Jewish people comprise just ONE tribe of the original TWELVE tribes of Israel. The present-day Jewish people are the descendants of the tribe of Judah. They, together with the tribe of Benjamin and parts of the tribe of Levi, formed the original *house of Judah* (1 Kings 12:21, 31), which is altogether different from the *house of Israel*. The people of the present-day Jewish nation—known by the name of Israel, with its capital in Jerusalem—are actually descendants of the *house of Judah*, NOT the *house of Israel*.

The ten tribes of the house of Israel were lost from public view by the time of Jesus. Jesus referred to them as the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6). Today, most people have no idea where these “lost” tribes of the house of Israel are located. Interestingly enough, the modern nations of the United States and the British Commonwealth—mainly Great Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand—have been identified as being the major tribes of the house of Israel. As the *Jewish Encyclopedia* points out: “If the ten tribes... have not disappeared, obviously they must exist under a different name.”

Under both King David and King Solomon, the house of Israel and the house of Judah—all the twelve tribes—were united as one nation. It is critical to understand, however, that under King Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, the nation of Israel became divided following the death of Solomon.

Two separate nations developed, known as the “house of Israel,” with Samaria as its capital, and the “house of Judah,” with Jerusalem as its capital. We read in 1 Kings 12:19–20 (*Authorized Version*): “So Israel [being reigned by King Rehoboam, son of King Solomon] rebelled against the house of David unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam [a prominent officer] was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him

king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.”

The two houses or kingdoms did not unite again throughout their history. They remained as two separate kingdoms—the “house of Israel,” consisting of the ten northern tribes, and the “house of Judah,” consisting of the southern tribe of Judah (the priestly tribe of Levi followed Judah, as noted in 2 Chronicles 11:13–14). We read in 2 Kings 16:5–8 about a war between Israel and Judah, or the Jews. Later, the ten tribes, led by the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, became “lost” from public view.

Many people believe that the Jews are identical with the modern house of Israel, but this is not true. Christ spoke of the “LOST” sheep or tribes of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6; 15:24). James referred to all of Israel and Judah as the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1; compare Revelation 7:4–8). We read that in the FUTURE, a unification of the houses of Israel and Judah will occur—under Christ’s rule—when they come out of a (still future) captivity and return to the Promised Land (Jeremiah 30:3; 33:7).

In due time, the ancient house of Israel went into captivity (721–718 B.C.) by the hand of the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:5–6, 23). The house of Judah did not go into captivity until more than one hundred years later, by the hand of the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:1–10). Eventually, the house of Judah returned to the Promised Land, and many descendants of the house of Judah can still be found today in the present State of Israel. The house of Israel never returned.

At the time of Paul, the house of Judah politically consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as well as part of Levi.

We read in Acts 21:39 where “Paul said, I am a man which am a JEW of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia.” However, in Romans 11:1, Paul explained: “I also am an ISRAELITE, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” Notice that Paul called himself a Jew and an “Israelite”—a descendant of ancient Israel or Jacob. All Jews are Israelites [excluding of course “proselytes” or “Gentiles,” who became religious “Jews” by choice], but most of the Israelites are not Jews. We will further explain what is meant by this statement because it is important to understand this distinction.

Chapter 1

A Brief History of Judah

The term “Jew” is found in both the Old and New Testaments, and primarily refers to the descendants of only ONE of Jacob’s sons. Jacob had twelve sons by four wives (Genesis 35:22–26), and these are the ones who became the nation of Israel, with each son becoming a distinct tribe, and eventually, individual nations. However, in keeping with the subject of this booklet, we will focus on the lineage, the history and the future of the Jews through Jacob’s son Judah.

Genesis 29, verse 35, records the birth of the fourth son of Jacob by his wife Leah. His given name was Judah, which means, “praise.”

Judah—the Man

Out of all of Jacob’s sons, it appears that Joseph was favored by his father, but was disliked by his brothers to such an extent that they contemplated killing him (compare Genesis 37:18–20). First, his brother Reuben, and then Judah, intervened to save Joseph’s life. We find Judah’s “financially lucrative” suggestion for rescuing Joseph in Genesis 37:26–28:

“So Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us *sell him* to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.’ And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.”

In due time, when Joseph’s brothers stood before him, accused of theft, it was Judah who offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin:

“For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead

of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?" (Genesis 44:32–34).

Another recorded incident regarding Judah involved his daughter-in-law (compare Genesis 38). This occurred following the death of two of the sons of Judah, both of whom were successively married to Tamar, but the sons were evil, so God killed them. Tamar disguised herself as a harlot and Judah lay with her, not knowing that she was his daughter-in-law. Judah's subsequent hypocritical and repentant conduct is described in verses 24–26 of Genesis 38.

Twins, Perez and Zerah, were born to Judah by Tamar. Shelah was Judah's son by his wife, Shua, but it is from the lineage of Perez that David was born (Ruth 4:18–22), and from David's lineage, Jesus Christ was born (Luke 3:23–38).

Prophecies About Judah's Descendants

On his deathbed, Jacob blessed his twelve sons, and specifically spoke of their circumstances "...in the last days" (Genesis 49:1). Here is what he said about Judah:

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh [the Messiah] comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk" (Genesis 49:8–12).

The "scepter"—signifying kingship—was given to the tribe of Judah. The Bible establishes this fact in the unfolding history of the Jews. David [of the tribe of Judah] understood this:

"However the LORD God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever, for He has chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, He was pleased with me to make me king over all Israel" (1 Chronicles 28:4).

In Psalm 78:67–71, we find this further acknowledgement:

“Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has established forever. He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance.”

Separation Between Israel and Judah

A momentous event occurred when Judah and Israel became SEPARATE nations. The reason for this separation was because of Solomon’s disobedience—especially his idolatry—as we read in 1 Kings 11:11–13:

“Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.’”

From this point forward, ten tribes of Israel and the tribe of Judah were separate, and have remained so throughout history. At times, violent wars were fought between the kings of Israel and Judah. Ultimately, Israel was taken into national captivity by the Assyrians (about 722 B.C.). That record is found in 2 Kings, chapter 17.

Likewise, Judah rebelled against God, so they also were sent into national captivity, to Babylon (just before 600 B.C. and culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple of God in 587 B.C.).

After a seventy-year period, the Jews were allowed to return. They rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and the temple of God. Judah once again became a nation in their homeland. This set the stage for the prophesied appearance of the Messiah, which would occur several hundred years later.

Christ Was a Jew

When Jesus was born, Judah was a nation under Rome’s dominion.

Jesus preached to the Jews of that time, but He was rejected by all but a very few of that generation. They did not believe that He was the Messiah:

“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11; compare Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 13:54–58; Acts 3:11–15).

Many Old Testament prophecies reveal that the Messiah would come from King David’s lineage. Note this example in Jeremiah 23:5–6:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is identified as a Jew, and this is confirmed by what is written in the Book of Hebrews, “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah...” (7:14).

Paul presents more proof of the lineage of Jesus Christ in Romans 1:1–4:

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

As the promised “Messiah,” Jesus has been appointed ruler over all things:

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11).

At this time, the Jewish people reject Jesus Christ as being the hoped-for Messiah. However, Jesus has promised to return to the earth, and at that time, the Jews will accept Him, as will be explained in this booklet.

Jesus made a remarkable statement about Jews when He told a Samaritan woman, “...SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS” (John 4:22).

Yes, the Messiah—God’s Son—was a Jew.

Chapter 2

Judaism and the Oracles of God

Even though salvation is of the Jews, we must understand a very important distinction, and a warning.

In Romans 3:2, we are told that the “oracles of God” were committed to the “circumcision” or the Jews. At the same time, we are told that “their unbelief” did not make “the faithfulness of God” without effect (verse 3). The Greek word for “oracles” is “*logion*.” It is also used in Acts 7:38; Hebrews 5:12; and 1 Peter 4:11. In all these passages, the oracles or “sayings” must originate from God. If something is being said or written which is contrary to God’s Word, it does not constitute the “oracles of God.”

When referring to the oracles that God committed to the Jews, or the “circumcision,” the *Nelson Study Bible* states: “The oracles of God refer to the entire Old Testament, the laws and the covenants that had been given by God Himself to the nation of Israel. This phrase [in Romans 3:2] reaffirms the belief of the apostles in the inspiration of the Old Testament. The Bible is God’s Word for us.”

These “oracles of God” included the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the knowledge of the Sacred Calendar, the seven-day week, and the knowledge of which day is the Sabbath—the seventh day of the week.

The preservation of the Old Testament by the Jews (as well as the knowledge of the Sabbath and the Hebrew Calendar) is not the same, however, as Jewish practice.

The Jewish scribes were meticulous in writing down and making copies of these Words of Truth given to them, thus passing these Words on so that we have them today. It was an advantage to the Jews in that God gave them His Words, along with the responsibility of preservation of His Words. Having the written Word of God, however, placed another grave responsibility on their shoulders. They were to

observe these Words and to keep them. They were to walk in them! Unfortunately, only a few did so.

Jewish Traditions

The Jews today do many things that are not in conformity with Scripture. In fact, even at the time of Christ, the Jews were DIVIDED among themselves as to how to apply Scripture. While the Pharisees accepted both the written and the “oral” law—a collection of Jewish traditions—the Sadducees only accepted the written law, but they did not understand that correctly either, as Christ pointed out to them on several occasions. Christianity is not the same as Judaism.

Jesus instructed His own disciples about the problems inherent within Judaism at that time. Note this quote in Matthew 16:12: “Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Paul also warned of possible wrong influences from Judaism in Titus 1:14: “...not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.”

We must take our direction from God’s Holy Word—the Bible—not from human traditions. If there is a conflict between the two, we must follow God! Christ warns us clearly not to follow human traditions that are contrary to the Word of God. He told the Jews of His time: ““This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the traditions of men... All too well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:6–9).

Modern Judaism includes many man-made traditions and rituals that are contrary to the Word of God. We are to follow the “oracles” of God, not those human inventions.

Chapter 3

Prophecies Concerning the Modern State of Israel

The modern State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948. This event was the culmination of a vote in 1947 by the newly formed United Nations. The Israeli nation was born in spite of international opposition and the bitter resentment of Israel's Arab neighbors.

The Bible reveals an earlier occurrence in history, which finds parallels when some captive Jews were allowed to return from Babylon to rebuild the temple and the Jewish nation. In this case, God very specifically told the Jewish people that He would make it possible for them to return:

“For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10).

Fulfillment of Prophecies

Daniel the prophet came to understand this prophecy, as he stated in Daniel 9:1–2:

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

The fulfillment of God's promise is recorded in the Book of Ezra (Ezra 1:1–4).

God prepared for these events! The Book of Isaiah contains an astounding prophecy which actually names Cyrus and commissions him to perform God's Will regarding Judah's return from captivity and the re-establishment of the Jewish nation (compare Isaiah 44:28; 45:1–5, 13). Isaiah prophesied over 150 years before the time of Cyrus!

Now why was it important to God that the Jewish remnant should return to the land of Israel following the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple of God? The answer centers on the first appearance of the Messiah.

Jesus Christ was born of a human mother of the tribe of Judah (Luke 3:23–38; Hebrews 7:14). Many Old Testament prophecies point to Jesus, and they are very specific about Him coming to His own people of Judah to begin His redemptive work:

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:10–11; compare Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:16–30; Acts 3:12–18).

Even though the entire world rejected Him, special emphasis is also being given here to the Jewish people—“His own”—who did not, and still do not, accept Him.

The rejection of Jesus Christ by the rulers of Judah proved to be devastating to the nation, just as it was in the time of Jeremiah’s warnings to the people of God’s impending judgment! Note what Jesus prophesied for the city of Jerusalem because of their refusal to repent:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’” (Matthew 23:37–39).

The Modern Nation of Judah

It is in these verses that Jesus provides a key to begin unlocking the answer as to whether or not a modern nation of Judah would once again be established. Jesus metaphorically addresses the city of “Jerusalem” as representative of the seat of government for the nation of Israel, specifically, the ruling tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; 1 Chronicles 28:4). By what He said then, we can understand that Jerusalem *WILL* exist at the time of Jesus’ return to earth.

History gives us a record of the destruction of the temple that occurred in 70 AD. Subsequently, the entire Jewish nation was driven out of the land of Israel, and *the Jews became a scattered, remnant people,*

grouped together by ethnicity and religion in countries all around the world. However, the prophecies of Jesus must and will be fulfilled!

In Genesis 49, Jacob presented to his twelve sons the prophecies concerning their circumstances “in the last days,” which prophecies included the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:1; verses 2–28). In Revelation 7, twelve of the tribes of Israel are sealed for special protection from God during the horrific events leading to the return of Jesus Christ. Among those sealed is the tribe of Judah (verse 5). By these references, we can establish the continued existence of the tribe of Judah. Regardless of the mindless hatred against Jews, they have existed and will continue to exist. In fact, during the future reign of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth, Jews will be among the most highly cherished and respected people (Zechariah 2:12; 8:23).

Now let us examine some more remarkable prophecies about the existence of a Jewish nation, with the capital of Jerusalem, in our time:

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it” (Zechariah 12:2–3).

At no other time in history have “all nations of the earth” gathered against Jerusalem as is now happening! We also find in Psalm 83 that Gentile nations will conspire to destroy the State of Israel. (This will be further explained in this booklet, and it is also discussed in our free booklet, *Germany in Prophecy*, on page 16.) Jerusalem, ruled by the Jewish people, has become the object of world attention, and it is obvious that prophecy will be fulfilled.

The State of Israel Versus the UK and the USA

Another critical prophecy that is finding fulfillment is the deteriorating relationship between the State of Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States—three key nations among the modern descendants of the sons of Jacob:

“Manasseh (USA) shall devour Ephraim (UK), and Ephraim Manasseh; Together they shall be against Judah (State of Israel). For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand is stretched out still” (Isaiah 9:21).

The strategic ties between these sons of Jacob are further described in a prophecy in Zechariah 11:14 in which the “brotherhood” between Israel and Judah is broken.

These, along with many other prophecies in the Bible, attest to the existence of a modern nation of Jewish people—now called Israel—with Jerusalem as its capital city.

Finally, there remains an ominous fact for the people of the State of Israel and for Jerusalem—destruction and captivity will come! Consider this end-time prophecy, something that has not yet happened, and the scale described is nothing short of global war:

“Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The CITY shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the CITY shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the CITY” (Zechariah 14:1–2).

The Bible speaks in many places of Jesus Christ returning to this earth, and He will return to the city of Jerusalem—to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11). And although great trials are ahead before this occurs, the Holy Land will then find peace—for the Jews and for all the house of Israel (Zechariah 1:17).

Consider, also, how God’s peace will then be available to EVERYONE:

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).”

The modern State of Israel with its capital of Jerusalem is fulfilling and will continue to fulfill prophecies leading to the return of Jesus Christ, and *THEN*, the Jewish people will recognize Him for Who He is—*their* only Savior and the Savior of the World!

Chapter 4

The City of Jerusalem in History and in Prophecy

The Bible speaks of Jerusalem as the future capital of the world, yet today, the world does not even want to acknowledge the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel.

Jerusalem stands as one of the most contested cities on earth. It is divided politically, economically and culturally. The religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity all claim holy sites within the city—especially, the Old City, which is in East Jerusalem.

The Arab-Israeli conflict that dominates today's world news is growing more and more volatile as Palestinians and Israelis vie for control of Jerusalem. The prophetic importance of what is happening right now in Jerusalem must not be underestimated!

Jerusalem's History

First, though, a review of Jerusalem's historical and foundational relevance to Christianity is necessary.

A little over four hundred years after the Flood, Abraham was told by God to move to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1–7)—the area in which modern-day Jerusalem now exists.

In the Bible, we are first introduced to Jerusalem when it was called by another name, Salem. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, met with Abraham (Genesis 14:18–20). This king of Salem is identified in the Book of Hebrews as none other than Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7).

A later reference to Salem is found in Psalm 76:

“...In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion” (Psalm 76:1–2).

Next, we find a very specific place mentioned that can be shown to be a part of the city of Jerusalem. God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice “in the land of Moriah” on a specific mountain (Genesis 22:2)—called by Abraham “the Mount of the LORD” (Genesis 22:14).

Note how this location emerges as the same place in which Solomon was instructed to build the temple of God:

“Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2 Chronicles 3:1).

When Israel entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, Jerusalem remained under Gentile control:

“But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day” (Judges 1:21).

Jerusalem Under David and Solomon

It was not until the time of King David—hundreds of years after Israel possessed Canaan—that Jerusalem was captured and then became the capital of Israel:

“And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, ‘You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,’ thinking, ‘David cannot come in here.’ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). Now David said on that day, ‘Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David’s soul), he shall be chief and captain.’ Therefore they say, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.’ Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward” (2 Samuel 5:6–9).

It is important to note that God rejected Shiloh, which was in Ephraim, and He chose Jerusalem and Judah for Himself:

“And he [Solomon] said: ‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who has fulfilled with His hands what He spoke with His mouth to my father David, saying, “Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there, nor did I choose any man to be a ruler over My people Israel. Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there; and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel”’” (2 Chronicles 6:4–6; compare Psalm 78:60, 67–69).

Jerusalem Destroyed and Rebuilt

The Bible relates that God punished Jerusalem and Judah because of their flagrant sins against Him (compare 2 Chronicles 36:15–21), but He did not utterly reject and abandon His city. Jerusalem and the temple of God built by Solomon were destroyed, but God provided for the restoration of Jerusalem, even before it was devastated by the Babylonian empire. Note this remarkable prophecy given about a future ruler some one-hundred-fifty years before his birth and long before Jerusalem's fall:

"Who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' And to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'"" (Isaiah 44:28).

Even in their captivity, God caused the prophet Jeremiah to write to the Jewish captives in Babylon to assure them that they would return to Jerusalem and the land of Judah (compare Jeremiah 29:1–11).

In both the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we have a record of the remnant of the house of Judah who returned to the land of Israel and rebuilt the temple of God and the city of Jerusalem, including its defensive walls. The Gentile rulers of that time who were neighboring Judah stood in opposition and tried to stop the Jews. They failed, for the Jews re-established the city of Jerusalem, the temple of God and other cities in the land of Judah.

Jerusalem at the Time of Christ

It was approximately 500 years later that Jerusalem became the focus of the life and work of Jesus Christ, as well as His death. The New Testament of the Bible records detailed accounts of those events, but let us also consider the dramatic prophecies Jesus gave in Luke 19:41–44, concerning Jerusalem:

"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"

Historically, that did occur! In 70 A.D., the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed the magnificent temple of God. Judah, as a nation, ceased to exist.

Of note, also, is that Jesus established the Church of God in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. (compare Acts 2). Following His resurrection, Jesus specifically instructed His disciples "...that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name in all nations, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM'" (Luke 24:47).

The Signs of Our Time

Consider the fact that for almost nineteen hundred years following this prophecy by Jesus Christ, the Jews were without a country. However, against seemingly impossible obstacles, the Jewish people formally re-established their homeland in Palestine on May 14, 1948, calling it, "the State of Israel." At that time, Jerusalem remained a divided city, partially controlled by the Jordanians (East Jerusalem and the Old City) and the Israelis (West Jerusalem).

As a result of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 (called the "Six-Day War"), the State of Israel gained full control of Jerusalem, and on June 28 they declared Jerusalem unified and announced free access to holy sites of all religions. Ironically, while the State of Israel designates Jerusalem as its capital, no other major nation in the world recognizes this claim! The Palestinians continue to demand an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and there is growing international support for their cause.

In the Book of Luke, Jesus is quoted concerning the signs of the times and the end of the age. His answers include events that are prophesied to take place at Jerusalem but have not yet been fulfilled—events that we should certainly anticipate:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away

captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20–24).

When Jerusalem is under the control of nations other than the State of Israel, two “witnesses” will prophesy with great power from God. However, they will be killed in Jerusalem once their work is finished:

“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 11:8–10).

Only in the last few decades has it become possible for people all over the earth to be aware of the death of two people in Jerusalem! With the advances in media technology, people can see live broadcasts from around the world. Cell phones are now possessed by over ninety percent of the world’s population, and gifts can indeed be sent using a cell phone.

Carefully bear in mind what Jesus specifically said—to Christians:

“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

Also:

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is” (Mark 13:28–33).

Events in Jerusalem grip the attention of the world. In the meantime, many of the neighboring countries of the State of Israel continue to openly call for Israel’s outright destruction. What is happening right now in Jerusalem is the fulfillment of prophecy!

Christ's Return

When Jesus Christ comes to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, He will return to an area from which He also ascended to Heaven—the Mount of Olives. It was specifically at Bethany, which is on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, that Jesus Christ left His disciples (Luke 24:50–51).

More details of this event are provided in Acts 1:9–12:

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.”

Consider also what is prophesied in the Old Testament about Jesus Christ’s future return:

“And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south... Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with [Him]” (Zechariah 14:4–5).

In the New Testament Christ’s return is similarly described:

“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1).

Mount Zion is closely identified with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This verse in Revelation 14 seems to indicate a time immediately following that of Zechariah 14, as quoted above. Some have suggested that Revelation 14 describes saints in heaven. However, Revelation 14 only states that the Lamb and 144,000 of those “who were redeemed from the earth” stand on Mount Zion (verse 1), and that they are “without fault before the throne of God” (verse 5). Although “Mount Zion” can refer to a spiritual mountain in heaven (compare Hebrews 12:22), it can also refer, of course, to the physical mountain here on earth. The saints might be standing, on Mount Zion, before God’s

transportable throne, which was on earth before (compare Ezekiel 1). Or, verse 5 might just express the thought that they are without fault “in the sight of” God. The Greek word for “before,” i.e., “enopion,” literally means, “in the sight of” or “in the face of.” (Compare, Luke 1:15; 16:15; Acts 4:19). Even today, we appear daily “before” God’s throne in heaven, through prayer.

Then, in Ezekiel’s vision of the future temple of God, Jesus Christ is described as having entered the temple:

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever...’” (Ezekiel 43:1–7).

Important considerations confront us! These verses that have been referenced show that Jesus Christ, the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14; 19:16), will return to the Mount of Olives and to Jerusalem. He will have the saints—the then immortal Christians who will be part of the first resurrection, the “firstfruits”—with Him (Revelation 14:4; 17:14; compare 1 Thessalonians 4:14–17)!

Heaven Not the Reward of the Saints

Deceived, self-appointed ministers teach that the reward of Christians is to go to Heaven “to be with the Lord.” The idea that some will be “raptured” and protected in Heaven while those left behind suffer miserable retribution is widely believed by many. Yet, depending on which denomination or group one might consult, there is little consistency on the details of what Christians are to experience, especially when their doctrines are measured against the Word of God!

Jesus said that His servants would be with Him, but His promise was for a future time—in the Kingdom of God. On this point it is critical that we understand that no Christian is NOW with Jesus Christ!

Note what Jesus told the people who heard His preaching:

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come’” (John 7:33–34).

And what He told His own disciples:

“‘Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you... Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, where are You going?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward’” (John 13:33, 36).

“‘In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also’” (John 14:2–3).

Jerusalem Future Center of World Government

As we have already established, Jesus will return to the earth, and Jerusalem will then become the center of world government:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:2–4).

“‘Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ says the LORD. ‘Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And the LORD will take possession of Judah

as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem'" (Zechariah 2:10–12).

The Kingdom of God will replace all governments on the earth (Daniel 2:44). In this context, consider that Jesus promised the apostles who had followed Him that they would rule the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28–29; Mark 10:29–30; Luke 22:28–30). Rulership—with Jesus—is the promise given to Christians:

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6; also, Revelation 5:10).

How, then, is the city of Jerusalem important to Christians?

First, Jerusalem is a KEY for watching prophesy in our generation. All-important, crucial events in Jerusalem will be among those indicating the imminent RETURN of Jesus Christ.

Second, Jerusalem will be WHERE Jesus Christ establishes God's government in His millennial rule. Christians will be WITH Him.

Third, Jerusalem—created anew by God—will exist FOREVER as a spiritual city. Christians, as born-again sons and daughters of God, will be with God the Father and Jesus Christ—ETERNALLY!

Chapter 5

The Throne of David—Today!

God promised David that one of his descendants would always sit on his throne to rule over Israel (Jeremiah 33:17); therefore, David's occupied throne must exist somewhere on earth today. Where can it be found?

To determine where it is located, let us consider the following facts:

(1) We are told that the scepter, a symbol of kingship (compare the margin in the *New King James Bible*), was given to Judah:

Genesis 49:10: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah... Until Shiloh [the Messiah, Jesus Christ] comes."

Judah to Rule Over Israel

(2) We are told that David's "seed," or descendants, would rule, or have dominion, over Israel. This could be fulfilled in ANY of the tribes of "Israel"—the name given to Jacob by God (compare Genesis 32:28; 35:10). We are specifically told that God would establish the throne of David's kingdom forever over Israel:

2 Samuel 7:12–13: "...I will set up your [David's] seed after you, who will come from your body... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

2 Chronicles 13:5: "...the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons..."

Psalms 89:4: "Your seed [David's seed] I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations."

(3) When Christ returns, He will take over and sit on an existing throne of David, here on earth (compare Luke 1:32).

(4) Until the last King of Judah—Zedekiah—the descendants of David ruled as kings over the house of Judah. The house of Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah, Levi and part of Benjamin—they are the "Jews" and are called "Jews" in the Bible.

(5) The Babylonians killed all the sons of Zedekiah, and placed Zedekiah into captivity. There has not arisen since then a descendant of David to rule as king over the house of Judah—the Jews. Today, the State of Israel is not ruled by a king. Where, then, is the throne of David today? In which country do we find a descendant of David ruling as king?

The Role of Jeremiah

(6) The prophet Jeremiah lived during the time the Babylonians enslaved the house of Judah, and when the last king of the house of Judah—King Zedekiah—was captured. God gave Jeremiah the commission to uproot the throne of David, but also to plant it:

Jeremiah 1:10: “I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.”

(7) God gave Jeremiah a prophecy regarding the kingship or throne of David, which was to be transferred from the nation or house of Judah to the house of Israel. [The house of Israel, the “Northern Kingdom,” consisted of descendants from the other sons of Israel or Jacob, including Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The house of Israel had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians more than 100 years prior to Jeremiah. They never returned to the Promised Land and have become known as the “Lost Ten Tribes.”]:

Jeremiah 33:17, 21, 26: “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel... he shall [always] have a son to reign on his throne... [David’s] descendants [will be] rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Jeremiah was to be instrumental in uprooting the throne over the house of Judah, and to plant it over the house of Israel. Prior to this, it was said that David’s descendants were to rule over Israel [or Jacob; that is, ANY of the descendants of Jacob]. That INCLUDED the house of Judah, of course. But from the time of Jeremiah’s prophecy, David’s descendants were to rule over the HOUSE of Israel—which EXCLUDED the house of Judah.

Jeremiah “uprooted” the throne of David over the house of Judah by bringing the last remaining descendants of King Zedekiah—his DAUGHTERS [compare Jeremiah 43:6]—to IRELAND [where some

of the “lost tribes” of the house of Israel had settled. For proof that the people of England, Scotland and Ireland are, in fact, descendants of the ancient house of Israel, please read our free booklet, *The Fall and Rise of Britain and America*.]

According to historical records of Ireland, one daughter, Tea, married the Irish king, who was a descendant of Judah, but not of David. In this way, through the son of the king and of the daughter of Zedekiah, Jeremiah “planted” the throne of David and the scepter of Judah over a tribe of the house of ISRAEL—in Ireland. Historical records confirm that subsequent kings of Ireland KNEW that they were descendants of King David through one of Zedekiah’s daughters. While the Irish king was not of the house of David, the daughter of Zedekiah was, and through their marriage and their offspring, the house of David continued to rule over a tribe of the house of Israel.

Zedekiah’s other daughter, Scota, married into a noble family and gave the name Scotland to the land where they settled.

Transfer of the Throne of David

(8) The throne of David was to be transferred three times before Christ would return to occupy it.

Ezekiel 21:27: “Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it [the crown, compare verse 26] overthrown!” The *Authorized Version* renders it even clearer: “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it...”

The crown or throne of David was first overthrown in Judah and transferred to or planted in Ireland.

(9) The throne or rule of David’s descendants was later overthrown in Ireland and transferred to Scotland [where some of the tribes of the house of Israel had settled]. It was transferred to the royal house of the descendants of David in Scotland—to the offspring of Scota, the other daughter of Zedekiah.

(10) Thirdly, it was overthrown in Scotland and transferred to England where the Stewart line of David had settled around 1600, in the person of James I. Also, descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh—the sons of Joseph—had settled there. The subsequent royal rulers in England all descended from King David, and so the throne of David is today in England. Queen Elizabeth sits on that throne, and it is expected that Prince Charles or his firstborn son William will sit on it soon.

England

We are told that the Kingdom of Great Britain was formed on May 1, 1707, with the merger of the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland, which had been in personal union under the House of Stuart since 1603. In 1801 Great Britain merged with the Kingdom of Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Most of Ireland left the union in 1922, and its name was amended to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1927.

Nowhere else could the existing throne of David be today but in England. It is not in the State of Israel [which is part of the house of Judah], and neither is it vacant. Jesus Christ will occupy it when He returns (compare Luke 1:32; Isaiah 9:6–7); He has not occupied it so far. And it is a throne here on earth—not somewhere in heaven. Yes, Christ—from the house of Judah—will come back to this EARTH, and He will then SIT on the throne of His father David here on earth! Jesus will once again establish rule over Israel, in Jerusalem (compare Zechariah 1:17; 2:12)! Remember, it was prophesied that the scepter would not depart from Judah.

Chapter 6

A Temple in Jerusalem Prior to Christ's Return

So far in this booklet, we have alluded to the building of the third temple in Jerusalem, but will the Jews actually build a temple *prior to Christ's return*?

Some historical and contemporary background will shed light on the ongoing desire of the Jews to once again establish a temple in Jerusalem, which would include *daily animal sacrifices* in accordance with Old Testament guidelines. This is revealed to commence soon in Jerusalem, before they are suppressed again by an invading power (compare Daniel 12:11).

The Temple Mount

Jerusalem itself has become a focal point of international concern, and the Temple Mount is considered the most contested religious site on earth. For centuries, various factions have challenged control of this area. Up until the Six-Day War in 1967, Jews did not even have access to the area called the Temple Mount.

Considered to be the site of Solomon's temple, as well as that of the second temple, the area is now occupied by the Dome of the Rock (built in 691 A.D.) and the Al Aqsa Mosque (built in 720 A.D.), both of which are considered sacred to Muslims.

As never before, there is rising sentiment advocating the building of another temple in Jerusalem, both from Jews and Christians, whose views are generally considered extremist by most of the political leadership in Israel. Nonetheless, the movement is gaining support.

The complexities that surround this small parcel of land are staggering!

Although Jerusalem is under Israel's political control, Muslims hold religious sovereignty over the Temple Mount. However, many religious Jews feel that Jews must be allowed to worship on the Temple Mount.

At the present time, the chief Rabbinate of Israel forbids access to the Temple Mount by Jews, because the area once occupied by the Holy of Holies is believed to be there (although the exact location is unknown). No one, according to their reasoning, should therefore enter this area, hearkening back to the biblical prohibitions established by God about anyone other than the High Priest being allowed access to this area—and that only once a year (compare Leviticus 16:1–2, 34; Exodus 30:10).

Preparations for a Third Temple

Today, there are numerous and varied individuals and organizations who are taking steps to bring about a new temple in Jerusalem. While this cannot be deemed a unified effort because of the conflicting views underlying these endeavors, the net effect is giving rise to a movement with the common goal to reestablish a temple, inclusive of animal sacrifices and formal temple worship. The genealogy of the Levites has been preserved, and there are lists of living Levites who would be qualified to perform the sacrifices and to serve in that capacity at the temple.

Education about temple service has already been established in Israel. This includes rabbinic schools dedicated to researching and developing the necessary training for service in the temple. The thought among those engaged in this endeavor is that they must be prepared for what they consider to be a certainty—the rebuilding of the temple! In addition, contributions and gold have been received from national and international sponsors for the building of the temple, and replicas of certain furnishings and utensils for the temple have already been prepared in accordance with the descriptions of the Old Testament Tabernacle in the wilderness and Solomon’s temple. The replicas of those vessels and vestments include, among many other items, the golden lampstand, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, the Ark of the Covenant, and the crown and ephod for the High Priest.

Great fervor among evangelical Christians for a new temple has added support, if not confusion, to the prospect of what might be in store for the Temple Mount! Numerous Christian publications, sermons and personal contacts promote the idea that another temple is prophesied in both the Old and New Testament. This fervent

attention adds weight to the international support that Israel enjoys, and, even more, it fuels the idea that the Israelis will soon begin to build on the Temple Mount!

While only rudimentary evidence of the former structures remains on the Temple Mount, the Bible contains detailed documentation of the plans for both the historic temples and that of a future temple that will exist in the Millennium. The Tabernacle in the Wilderness is described in great detail; Solomon's work in building the temple of God in Jerusalem provides extensive descriptions; and, the very intriguing "building plans" presented, beginning in Ezekiel 40, have inspired some to believe that they can effectively reconstruct the temple prior to Christ's return.

For reasons that may well transcend the troubles of the moment confronting the tiny nation of Israel, world attention will focus on Jerusalem!

When Christ returns (compare Zechariah 14:4), He will go to a very specific place once He is on this earth (compare Ezekiel 43:1–7). Then will be the ultimate fulfillment of Malachi 3:1:

"And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple." Although this passage speaks primarily of Christ's spiritual temple—His true Church (compare 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16)—it might also refer to an existing literal temple in Jerusalem.

Prophecies About a Third Temple

Numerous prophecies indicate that a new temple of God will arise in Jerusalem, a task which the Jews will complete, just as they have done in the past.

Note the physical setting and the prophetic timeframe described by Jesus:

"Therefore when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation,

such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:15–22).

Holy Place and Inner Rooms

Jesus continued to warn His disciples in verse 26:

"Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the INNER ROOMS!" do not believe it."

"INNER ROOMS," along with what Jesus said about "the abomination of desolation... standing in the HOLY PLACE," gives strong evidence that a temple of God will exist in the city of Jerusalem at the time leading up to Christ's return, and that the "inner rooms" might refer to the section of the Tabernacle—and later the temple—called the "Holiest of All" (Hebrews 9:3)!

To repeat: The "holy place" can only refer to an area within the temple of God as existing in the city of Jerusalem. "Inner rooms" might refer to the inner sanctuary in the temple of God, which is behind the veil and which is also called "the Most Holy Place" (Ezekiel 41:4). This has not yet been fulfilled!

Also, a prophecy in Matthew 24:16 addresses those "in Judea."

Yet, the Temple Mount, situated in the Old City and administered by Jordan, is off limits for Jewish worship to this day! Nonetheless, the Bible gives clear evidence that Jews will once again gain control of this area and that a temple of God will be built!

The Abomination of Desolation

When Christ spoke in Matthew 24 about the future "'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (verse 15; compare, too, Mark 13:14, adding, "where it ought not"), He said: "'But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near'" (Luke 21:20).

From these passages, we see that the abomination of desolation refers to foreign armies that will desolate Jerusalem.

But is this ALL that the term, "abomination of desolation" refers to?

The prophet Daniel spoke about the "abomination of desolation" on three occasions—Daniel 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11. (An additional

similar reference can be found in Daniel 8:13). The way those passages are worded, they seem to refer to more than just armies. Daniel 11:31 states that a king of the North shall muster forces, “and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and PLACE THERE the abomination of desolation.” Daniel 12:11 speaks about “the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is SET UP...”

These end-time prophecies predict that a future “king of the North” will invade Jerusalem and take away daily sacrifices, indicating that the Jews will, in the future, begin again the daily sacrifices in Jerusalem. It is true that the Jews don’t need to have a temple in order to bring daily sacrifices (compare Ezra 3:6), but this does not mean that the Jews will NOT build a temple and bring daily sacrifices there.

Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees

Returning to the prophecy in Daniel 11:31, most commentaries agree that this particular passage refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, at least as a forerunner for another end-time fulfillment. As *The Nelson Study Bible* points out, “Antiochus polluted the altar by offering a sow upon it. He declared the daily sacrifices and other Mosaic ceremonies illegal and committed an abomination of desolation by erecting an image of Zeus in the holy place (9:27; 12:11). Jesus said a similar thing would happen just prior to His return (see Matt. 24:15).”

We should take note of the fact that at the time when the first “abomination of desolation” was set up, Antiochus overran Jerusalem with armies; did away with the daily sacrifices that were brought TO THE TEMPLE; and erected an image of Zeus (or Jupiter) in the “holy place”—the TEMPLE.

Please note the following comments published on June 24, 2004, by the *Arutz Sheva National News*:

“After their conquest and occupation of Judea, the Syrian Greek Hellenists (c. 168 BCE) attempted to ‘break’ the Jews. They set up an idol and began offering pigs to their pagan deity in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. When they began to spread their heresy among the Jews, they started in a small town called Modi’in. They set up an altar in the town square and instigated some weak Jew to offer a pig up as a sacrifice in plain public view. Public acceptance was meant to imply

that the Jews were repudiating the Torah and their covenant with the [God] of their fathers. But in a clear example of the ‘Law of Unintended Consequences’, it sparked a national revolt instead, when a priest by the name of Matityahu took a sword, stabbed the turncoat Jew and the Syrian Greek officials, and declared, ‘Whoever is zealous for the Torah and is steadfast in the Covenant, let him follow me.’ The revolt spread, and ultimately was successful, leading to a liberation of the Judean homeland from occupation. The Jews cleaned-up the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and re-lit the menorah. And Hanukah is celebrated until this day, throughout the Jewish world as a holiday of the liberation of the Jews and Judaism from pagan culture.”

As referred to by Jesus, Daniel speaks of someone who will be “on the wing of abominations... who makes desolate,” and he refers to the “abomination of desolation” in the visions given to him by God (compare Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11). As mentioned, the temple of God constructed by Zerubbabel suffered a prefiguring of this prophecy when Antiochus IV Epiphanes ruled over the Jews in the second century B.C.

Let us review additional information about Antiochus Epiphanes and the revolt against his actions from the *Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible*; Herbert Lockyer, Sr., Editor; Antiochus, page 69:

“Antiochus IV (175–164 B.C.), surnamed Epiphanes (God manifest) but called by his enemies Epimanes (madman). Antiochus IV was one of the cruelest rulers of all time. Like his father, Antiochus III the Great, he was enterprising and ambitious; however, he had a tendency to cruelty that bordered on madness. His primary aim—to unify his empire by spreading Greek civilization and culture—brought him into direct conflict with the Jews. This conflict broke into open rebellion in 167 B.C. Accounts of these conflicts are found in the apocryphal Book of 2 Maccabees.

“The revolt began with Antiochus’ edict that sought to unite all the peoples of his kingdom in religion, law, and custom. The Jews were the only people who would not adhere to this edict. Antiochus issued regulations against observing the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and keeping all food laws. These regulations were followed by the ‘Abomination of Desolation’ (Dan. 11:31)—the erection of the altar of the Greek god Zeus over the altar of the burnt offering in the Temple.

Jews were forced to participate in heathen festivities and were put to death if they were caught with the Book of the Law in their possession.

“As the revolt, led by Judas Maccabeus, gained momentum, the people of Israel united to overthrow Seleucid domination of their land. The Syrians were routed and the Temple was cleansed on the 25th of Chislev, 165 B.C. This cleansing is now observed by the Jews as the Feast of Lights (Hanukkah), around December 25. According to ancient writers, Antiochus IV withdrew into the East following his defeat. He died in Persia a madman...”

Since the original abomination spoken of by the prophet Daniel involved the existence of the temple, it is reasonable to conclude that the final abomination of desolation will likewise involve an existing temple.

The Man of Sin

Another Scripture that points to the existence of a future temple in Jerusalem, just prior to Christ’s return, can be found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4. Paul writes:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [of Christ’s return] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

This “man of sin,” who is also called “the lawless one” in verses 8 and 9, is identified in the Book of Revelation as “the false prophet” (compare, for example, Revelation 16:13; 19:20; see also Revelation 13:13–14). This religious figure will deceive people through “great signs” (Revelation 13:13; 19:20). We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 that the coming of the lawless one is “according to the working of Satan, with all power, SIGNS and lying wonders.” This false prophet will receive his powers to perform great signs from Satan and his demons (compare Revelation 16:13–14).

The False Prophet and His Religious System

The Book of Revelation, written well after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., gives us more detail about “the man of sin” or the “false prophet,” as well as the religious system that he will represent and lead:

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an *image to the beast* who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that *the image of the beast should both speak* and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666” (Revelation 13:11–18).

(Please read our free booklets, *The Mystery of the Book of Revelation* and *The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire*, for further information on the beast, the false prophet, the speaking image, and the name and number of the beast.)

The fate of this individual is to be thrown alive into a burning lake of fire (compare Revelation 19:20; 20:10). This serves to confirm that the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2 is uniquely singled out for the horrific actions he will commit, including his pretense of being “God” and of daring to *enter into the inner rooms* of the temple of God!

The Man of Sin in the Temple of God

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote the following about the man of sin, in the *Plain Truth* of June 1967:

“This European power, resurrecting for a VERY short while the Roman Empire, will take over the city of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2.) They will take the Temple, and plant the palace of their headquarters there. With this coming military leader, pictured in Revelation 17 as the symbolic ‘beast,’ will be a supreme religious leader, called ‘the False Prophet,’ [Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10] and the ‘man of sin.’ So will

you turn next to II Thessalonians 2:3–4: ‘Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day’ — the Day of the Lord, verse 2 — ‘shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and THAT MAN OF SIN be revealed, the SON OF PERDITION; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’ So there will have to be the Temple there!”

The Ryrie Study Bible comments:

“... the Antichrist [this is an incorrect designation; rather, the passage speaks about the false prophet] will desecrate the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem by placing himself there to be worshipped... This will be the climax of man’s great sin of self-deification, in open defiance of God.”

The Nelson Study Bible adds:

“The man of sin will proclaim himself to be divine and will sit in the temple of God, acting as if he were a god... The man of sin will probably stand in a physical temple in Jerusalem, and declare himself to be a god [better: “God”, see below], the ultimate fulfillment of the ‘abomination of desolation’ spoken of by Daniel (Dan. 7:23; 9:26, 27; 11:31, 36, 37; 12:11) and Jesus (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). These prophecies may have been partially fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar to Zeus in the temple of Jerusalem in 167 B.C. (175–164 B.C.), or when Titus destroyed the temple in A.D. 70. Others have interpreted Paul’s reference to the temple of God as a reference to the church.”

However, we read that the returning Christ will consume the man of sin “with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Therefore, this man of sin will exist at the time of Christ’s return. He will proclaim himself to be God, not just “a god.” It is highly unlikely that Paul was talking about the Church as the temple of God in this context. There is no biblical evidence that the false prophet will be sitting in God’s true Church, proclaiming himself to be God. However, Christ warned His Church in Matthew 24:11 that “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”

A Literal Temple in the Book of Revelation

One argument that has been advanced for the idea that the “man

of sin" is or will be a religious leader within the true Church of God is that he allegedly has to fall away from the truth he once knew. This is, however, not in accordance with Scripture. Note that 2 Thessalonians 2:3 does not say the end-time "man of sin" must fall away from the truth he once understood. Rather, the passage only states that Christ will not return "unless the falling away comes first, AND the man of sin is revealed." It does not say that that man of sin once knew the truth and that he will fall away from the truth.

Just before the two witnesses, identified in Revelation 11, begin their prophesying for a period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, mention of an existing temple of God is made:

We read in Revelation 11:1–2 that an angel of God tells John: "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months [or 3-1/2 years]." Some rightly point out that the term "temple" or "temple of God" in the New Testament can refer to God's Church [compare Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17]. They claim that the reference in Revelation 11:1–2 speaks exclusively to the Church. Although the Church might be included here, the more obvious and intended meaning is a reference to a literal temple in Jerusalem. After all, the Gentiles will tread the *holy city* underfoot for three-and-a-half years, and the court which is outside the temple will be given to those Gentiles. It is difficult to see how all of these references could exclusively refer to the Church. Especially the reference to the *holy city* includes more than just a temple.

The Nelson Study Bible comments: "John is given a reed like a measuring rod, much like that used by Ezekiel (see Ezek. 40:3, 5) in his vision of the measuring of the temple (see Ezek. 40–48)... This is the temple of the tribulation period that will eventually be desecrated (see 13:14, 15; Dan. 9:27; Luke 21:24; 2 Thess. 2:4)... Luke 21:24 prophesies that the Gentiles will tread the holy city underfoot until 'the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' Apparently the period of forty-two months is the conclusion of 'the times of the Gentiles.' 'Gentile' here may also be translated 'nations' (v. 9; 10:11)."

Further Biblical Evidence in Psalms and Ezekiel

An additional passage that suggests the Jews will build an end-time temple in Jerusalem, just prior to Christ's return, is Psalm 79:1–7. This is an end-time psalm, as verse 6 shows. God is asked to pour out His wrath on the nations—a reference to God's pouring out of the end-time plagues of His wrath, as described in Revelation 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19. In this context, Psalm 79:1 says: "O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled. They have laid Jerusalem in heaps."

Another Scripture that seems to make reference to a future physical temple in Jerusalem, can be found in Psalm 122:1: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD.' Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem!" David wrote this psalm before there ever was a temple—the house of the LORD—in Jerusalem.

Other prophetic references to a future temple in Jerusalem could perhaps be found in Ezekiel 8:5, 16, as well as in Ezekiel 9:1–7. All of these Scriptures are prophecies for the end-time, and they seem to refer to a physical temple and the abominations that will be practiced in it.

Finally, we find detailed descriptions of a future physical temple in Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel, beginning in chapter 40. We know from those Scriptures that a literal temple will be in Jerusalem after Christ's return. Ezekiel 40–46 does not tell us, however, when this future temple will be built. Is it possible that these chapters in Ezekiel describe the very same temple that the Jews will begin to build just prior to Christ's return?

We will discuss this question in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Who Will Build the Temple of Ezekiel?

In the Book of Ezekiel, a millennial temple is described. The question is whether this temple will exist prior to the Millennium, and if so, whether it will be built by the modern Jewish State of Israel. In spite of the current seemingly overwhelming obstacles, a temple dedicated to God is destined to once again arise in Jerusalem!

Ezekiel Describes a Future Temple

The setting for the Book of Ezekiel is of particular interest.

Ezekiel, a member of the priestly family of Buzi (Ezekiel 1:3), was taken to Babylon from Judah in 597 B.C. It was in this period of captivity that Ezekiel received visions from God. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 586 B.C., and some of Ezekiel's prophetic messages addressed these events; however, the greater part of his prophecies were for future fulfillment!

The fact that God was sending Ezekiel "to the children of Israel" (Ezekiel 2:3), and that God had made him "a watchman for the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 33:7), points to a period that far transcends his own lifetime.

The house of Israel, as the tribes exclusive of Judah, Levi and parts of Benjamin were known, had been removed from their land long before Ezekiel lived. We find in 2 Kings, chapter 17, the record of this occurrence, culminating in approximately 721 B.C.

Yet, Ezekiel's messages from God were to be proclaimed to Israel and to Judah in spite of the fact that both nations were, at that time, devastated and scattered as captives among other empires.

Couched in the oftentimes enigmatic context of prophecy, the visions Ezekiel witnessed have very specific application for our time, especially those found beginning in Ezekiel 40.

While much of the last eight chapters of Ezekiel very clearly depict

the beginning period following Jesus Christ's return and the establishment of His rule in Jerusalem, great detail is rendered concerning the temple He will enter. In fact, there is what amounts to an architectural plan one could use to actually build this structure.

Note these specific instructions given to Ezekiel:

"And the man said to me, 'Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see'" (Ezekiel 40:4).

Also:

"Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances, and perform them'" (Ezekiel 43:10–11).

Patterns Under Moses and David

Before the Tabernacle was constructed by the Israelites, Moses was given very exact details by God concerning how it was to be done:

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying... 'And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it'" (Exodus 25:1, 8–9; compare verse 40; Numbers 8:4; also note Hebrews 8:5).

Before the temple was constructed, God revealed the plans to King David, who, in turn, gave them to his son, Solomon:

"Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it.' Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of

the LORD... 'All this,' said David, 'the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.' And David said to his son Solomon, 'Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD'" (1 Chronicles 28:10–13, 19–20).

Even before this magnificent temple of God was destroyed by the Babylonian Kingdom, God revealed through the prophet Isaiah that His House would stand again in Jerusalem, and He did perform this, even calling by name the yet unborn Gentile king who would implement this:

"... Who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' And to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'" (Isaiah 44:28).

The Second Temple

In the beginning of the Book of Ezra, we find the fulfillment of this prophecy:

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem'" (Ezra 1:1–4).

God had also caused Jeremiah to write to the captives in Babylon to assure them that their nation would be restored:

"For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place'" (Jeremiah 29:10).

Location of the First and Second Temples

In both the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we have a record of the remnant of the house of Judah who returned to the land of Israel and rebuilt the temple of God and the city of Jerusalem, including its defensive walls. The Gentile rulers neighboring Judah stood in opposition and tried to stop the Jews. Among their many opposing actions, they complained in a letter sent to King Darius, but the king's answer was in support of the rebuilding:

“Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God **ON ITS SITE**” (Ezra 6:7).

While the temple of God was rebuilt on the original location as that of Solomon's construction, it did not compare in size and grandeur:

“But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off” (Ezra 3:12–13).

God, through the prophet Haggai, responded to those who were so disappointed with the temple then being constructed:

“In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: ‘Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: “Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,” says the LORD; “and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,” says the LORD, “and work; for I am with you,” says the LORD of hosts’” (Haggai 2:1–4)

Now the place for the building of Solomon's temple had been clearly manifested by God. This happened when David numbered Israel. However, David's foolish action in numbering the people was a great sin before God:

“So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand

men of Israel fell. And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the LORD looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, 'It is enough; now restrain your hand.' And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (1 Chronicles 21:14–15).

This account also states that David was instructed to "...go and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (verse 18).

God accepted David's offerings, and in the events of this occurrence, the location for the temple of God was revealed to David:

"Then David said, "This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel'" (1 Chronicles 22:1).

Solomon followed his father's instruction and built the temple of God where God had revealed that it should be placed:

"Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chronicles 3:1).

As we have seen, Mount Moriah is also linked to Abraham, for it was to this area of what would become part of the city of Jerusalem that Abraham brought his son Isaac to offer in sacrifice.

We also pointed out that Jerusalem is associated with Melchizedek in an earlier account involving Abram's rescue of Lot. (Regarding the identity of Melchizedek, please refer to our free booklets, *God Is a Family* and *Jesus Christ—a Great Mystery*.)

We must understand from the foregoing accounts that the place where God's temple will be built in the future (Psalm 76:2) has historical precedence! Even more importantly, the Word of God shows that He very specifically chose the site that would be His dwelling place, and prophecy indisputably establishes that this will not change!

Temple Enlarged Through Herod

Before going into the prophecies about a future temple being built in Jerusalem, let us examine the temple of God that was enlarged through Herod.

"In the 18th year of his reign (20–19 B.C.) Herod obtained the reluctant consent of his subjects to his ambitious scheme for [enlarging

and beautifying] the temple [and] its courts. The former was finished in eighteen months by a thousand priests trained for this special purpose, the courts in eight years, but the complete reconstruction occupied more than eighty years, lasting almost till the final breach with Rome, which culminated in the destruction of the sacred edifice by the soldiers of Titus in A.D. 70" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, The Temple of Herod, page 607).

"The Jerusalem temple is the focus of many NT events. The birth of John the Baptist was announced there (Luke 1:11–20). The offering by Joseph and Mary [after] the circumcision of the baby Jesus was brought there. Simeon and Anna greeted Jesus there (2:22–38). Jesus came there as a boy of 12 (2:42–51) and later taught there during His ministry..." (*Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Herod's Temple, page 1567).

A point to be made about the temple of God that existed during the lifetime of Jesus Christ is that Jesus recognized this structure as God's or the Father's House. We have two examples of Jesus forcefully defending the temple, one in the beginning of His ministry and another shortly before His death:

"Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with [better: *both*] the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:13–16).

"So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a "den of thieves"' (Mark 11:15–17).

Because of the terrible sins of the nation of Judah, Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed (Luke 19:41–44).

Destruction of the Second Temple

In addition, Jesus revealed that the temple of God would suffer the same fate in the first century:

“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down’” (Mark 13:1–2).

That destruction came upon the city of Jerusalem, along with its temple, in 70 A.D. Judah, as a nation, ceased to exist at that time. Throughout the centuries several attempts have been made to re-establish the temple in Jerusalem, but all have failed!

The Dome of the Rock

The Dome of the Rock, completed about 691 A.D., is considered to be one of Islam’s most important shrines. Along with the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock now occupies the place that is biblically known as Mount Moriah—the very same location of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and the place where the temples built by Solomon and Zerubbabel, as well as the additions done by Herod, once existed.

Now surrounded by the Jewish State of Israel, the Dome of the Rock is also the place where the future temple of God prophesied by Ezekiel is appointed to stand!

When focusing on the prophecies in the Book of Daniel, we read that Daniel was told to “shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end...” (12:4); and, that “the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (12:9). Then, in verse 11 of Daniel 12, we find this extraordinary statement:

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Daily Sacrifices

This prophecy is speaking of a situation that will occur in the final generation, the one to be living just before the return of Jesus Christ! It addresses the forceful cessation of daily sacrifices, something that

could only rightfully be happening at the site of the temple of God. It is true that in the past, the Jews sacrificed at the temple site before the temple was actually built, but they did so after the foundation of the temple had been laid, and in anticipation of the final completion of the structure. This prophecy also reveals that a yet future idolatrous act of sacrilege will take place—the very thing we have already cited from what Jesus warned and the apostles Paul and John wrote.

Desecration of the Third Temple

Jeremiah also addresses the desecration of the temple of God.

In chapters 50 and 51 of the Book of Jeremiah, God's judgment on Babylon is proclaimed. While parts of this prophecy pertain to Babylon during the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, there is duality in applying and understanding what is written.

Focusing on the future fulfillment of this prophecy, carefully consider the following:

“‘In those days and in that time,’ says the LORD, ‘The children of Israel shall come, They and the children of Judah together; With continual weeping they shall come, And seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, With their faces toward it, saying, “Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD In a perpetual covenant That will not be forgotten”’” (Jeremiah 50:4–5).

This is an event that has never happened, but it will in the future, as many other Scriptures support!

Note, also:

“‘The voice of those who flee and escape from the land of Babylon Declares in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, The vengeance of His temple’” (Jeremiah 50:28; compare 51:11, 24).

“You who have escaped the sword, Get away! Do not stand still! Remember the LORD afar off, And let Jerusalem come to your mind. We are ashamed because we have heard reproach. Shame has covered our faces, For strangers have come into the sanctuaries (better, Holy places) of the LORD’S house” (Jeremiah 51:50–51).

Again, what Jesus indicated would happen regarding the defilement of the temple of God finds mention in prophesied events at the close of the age!

There is great significance to the temple of God that has yet to arise

in Jerusalem; prophecies from both the Old and New Testaments make mention of it! And while this temple will again become part of Jewish life, it will also be profaned when it is seized and occupied by the final resurrection of the Roman Empire—Babylon the Great!

Temple in Jerusalem at the Time of Christ's Future Rule

Jerusalem is designated to be the royal city of Jesus Christ's future reign on the earth! Ezekiel's presentation of the temple he saw has its setting in the future, in the city of Jerusalem: "In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city" (Ezekiel 40:2).

Another prophecy that speaks of Jesus Christ establishing Jerusalem as the place of His future rule is found in Zechariah 1:12–17:

"Then the Angel of the LORD answered and said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?' And the LORD answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words. So the angel who spoke with me said to me, 'Proclaim, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Jerusalem And for Zion with great zeal. I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, And they helped—but with evil intent.' "Therefore thus says the LORD: 'I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,' says the LORD of hosts, 'And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.'" 'Again proclaim, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The LORD will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem.'""

The LORD's return to Jerusalem is described further in Zechariah 2:10–12:

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,' says the LORD. 'Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.'"

Zechariah Announces the Third Temple

The time settings throughout the chapters of Zechariah reveal events occurring immediately before, during and following the return of Jesus Christ. Joshua and Zerubbabel led the rebuilding of the temple of God following the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity after the “seventy years.” However, these two men also serve as prophetic types—representative of individuals who will live and accomplish God’s Will in the future.

In chapter 3 of Zechariah, “Joshua” is cleansed and restored, and note that this has to do with his priestly role in the “house” or temple of God:

“Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: “If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My house, And likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk Among these who stand here. Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, You and your companions who sit before you, For they are a wondrous sign; For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH”” (Zechariah 3:6–8).

As we point out in our free booklet, *The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for Today*, pages 31 through 37, the references to the temple of God in the context of Joshua refer primarily to the spiritual temple—the Church of God (compare 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 and many additional references, proving that God’s Church is called the temple or the House of God). However, they may also refer to the building of a physical temple just prior to Christ’s return.

In Zechariah 4:6–9, “Zerubbabel” is promised that he will both start and finish the building of the temple:

“So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” Says the LORD of hosts. “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” ‘ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: “The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.”

However, let us also consider what is said about the “BRANCH” in regard to the temple in Zechariah 6:12–13:

“Then speak to him, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: “Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD; Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both [margin: both offices].””

The One called the “BRANCH” is the Messiah—the One who will return to occupy the temple of God (as we will see in Ezekiel). From other references in this booklet, we noted that God gave the plans for the Tabernacle’s construction and of the temple built by Solomon, that served to also guide those in Zerubbabel’s time. The future temple will be built according to the plans given in Ezekiel’s description, along with what is recorded about the previous houses of God.

In our aforementioned publication, *The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for Today*, we state on page 42:

“Even though the vision is talking about the construction of a physical temple at the time of Zerubbabel, it also applies to the end time. As explained above, one application must be seen in the reference to the spiritual temple—the Church. But it is also possible that another physical temple will be built prior to Christ’s return—and that a modern ‘Zerubbabel’ will be used in some way for the accomplishment of that task.”

In this context, we find an additional striking proclamation in Zechariah 6:15:

“Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

Also in Zechariah 8:9:

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Let your hands be strong, You who have been hearing in these days These words by the mouth of the prophets, Who spoke in the day the foundation was laid For the house of the LORD of hosts, That the temple might be built.””

Again quoting from our booklet, *The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for Today*, we explain on pages 62 through 63 that the building of the temple could refer to the spiritual temple of the Church or the physical

temple in the Millennium. However, we continue to state on page 64:

“It is also possible that the reference to a future temple, which will be built by the BRANCH, could relate to a physical temple still to be built in Jerusalem—just prior to the return of Christ. We know from Scripture that the Jews will bring sacrifices to Jerusalem. If there is a physical temple, then these sacrifices would be brought to that temple, until they are—temporarily—abolished by a European power.

“As we discussed in our free booklet, *‘Is That in the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation?’*, ... strong biblical evidence exists for the rebuilding of a temple in the modern Jewish nation of Israel.

“It would also be possible that it is THAT temple which will survive the partial end-time destruction of the city of Jerusalem, which is described as the millennial temple in the [Book] of Ezekiel.”

The Third Temple in the Book of Haggai

In the Book of Haggai, a prophecy is given that still has to find its fulfillment, and it may be in a physical temple of God, which must yet materialize:

“For thus says the LORD of hosts: “Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the LORD of hosts. “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the LORD of hosts. “The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,” says the LORD of hosts. “And in this place I will give peace,” says the LORD of hosts”” (Haggai 2:6–9).

In what way will “the glory of this latter temple... be greater than the former”? It will be because the glorified LORD—Jesus Christ—will come to this temple:

“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the LORD, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,’ Says the LORD of hosts. ‘But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire And like launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An

offering in righteousness'" (Malachi 3:1–3).

As we have understood for a long time, the above-quoted references in the books of Haggai and Malachi refer foremost to Christ's Second Coming to His spiritual temple—the Church. However, purifying the sons of Levi will go hand-in-hand with a ceremonial cleansing of the altar in the temple of God, which is prophesied to take place AFTER Jesus Christ has returned to the earth (compare Ezekiel 43:18–27)! In fact, in the vision given to Ezekiel, it is the LORD who delegates the purging of the temple and who rebukes those who have defiled His House:

"And He said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever'" (Ezekiel 43:7–9).

Purging of the Temple in the Millennium

Now carefully note what the LORD says about what has been allowed to take place in the temple of God:

"Now say to the rebellious, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD God: "O house of Israel, let us have no more of all your abominations. When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it—My house—and when you offered My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but you have set others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you." Thus says the LORD God: "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who is among the children of Israel'"'" (Ezekiel 44:6–9).

This recounting of the detestable shame that will have happened to the temple finds its parallel in the prophecies of Jesus from Matthew

24 and that of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2, as we have already shown. The purging of the temple at the time of the Millennium proves that prior desecration (including the occupation of the temple by the man of sin) must have occurred in an existing physical temple, prior to Christ's Second Coming. These Scriptures, along with the many others we have cited, point to the fact that a temple of God will be built *BEFORE* and *NOT AFTER* Christ's appearance!

There is no clear implication that the modern Church of God will have direct involvement in this endeavor. However, every indication—both by precedence and by the reality of having a restored Jewish nation in the State of Israel—is that the Jews and the Levites with them will find a way to once again erect the temple of God, the very one that is so meticulously revealed in the Book of Ezekiel!

Considering the precarious situation of the State of Israel, we can understand that there will be violent resistance to any effort to build a temple to God, especially on the biblically revealed area now known as the Temple Mount, and occupied by the Dome of the Rock along with the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Exactly how circumstances may play out, we do not precisely know! What we do know, and believe, is that this will unquestionably take place, and that through the providence of God!

Chapter 8

Does the Bible Require the Birth of a “Red Heifer” Prior to the Coming of the Messiah?

Since the Jews will begin offering sacrifices in Jerusalem in the near future, will they first require the birth of a “red heifer” to purify the area?

No Biblical Requirement

There is nothing in the Bible demanding that a red heifer be born prior to the return of Jesus Christ. It is true, however, that some Jews and Christians have attached an end-time application to the Old Testament ritual of the killing of a red heifer for purposes of purification. As will be explained herein, this ritual is no longer in force. But some Jews and Christians believe that the ritual must be applied today as a prerequisite for the commencement of sacrifices and the building of a third temple, and they do expect a red heifer to be born soon. (In fact, when conducting a Yahoo search on the Internet, one receives over one million results for “red heifer.”)

History of the Red Heifer Ritual

To obtain a better understanding as to the rationale behind this expectation, let us first review the rituals pertaining to the red heifer, as described in Numbers 19.

The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* informs us that “The Red Heifer... was a sacrificial cow whose ashes were used for the ritual purification of people who came into contact with a corpse. According to Numbers 19:2: ‘Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came [a] yoke’... The heifer is then slain (Numbers 19:3) and burned outside of the camp (Numbers 19:3–6)... the remaining ashes are placed in a vessel containing pure water (Numbers 19:9).

“In order to purify a person who has become ritually contaminated by

contact with a corpse, water from the vessel is sprinkled on him, using a bunch of hyssop, on the third and seventh day of the decontamination process (Numbers 19:18–19)... The kohen [Levitical priest] who performs the ritual must... bathe himself and his clothes in water. He shall be deemed impure until evening."

Based on this description alone, it is indeed difficult to see at first how the ancient "red heifer" ritual could have anything to do with the coming of the Messiah or even a purification ceremony pertaining to a third temple. However, we should take note of the fact that the ritual was applied in conjunction with the Tabernacle in the wilderness—the predecessor of the temple (compare Numbers 19:4, 13).

Jewish Traditions Regarding Red Heifer and Water of Purification

Based on their "interpretations," the "oral law" and other traditional "additions" to the Law of God, Judaism has established all kinds of requirements in relationship to the "red heifer" and the "water of purification."

The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* explains:

"... the presence of two black hairs [or two white hairs, see below] invalidates a Red Heifer [as the Jews understand the requirement that the red heifer must be "without spot" as meaning, "without any other color but red," or "having no mixture of any other color but red"]... there are various other requirements, such as natural birth (Caesarian section renders a Heifer candidate invalid). The water must be 'living' or spring water... Rainwater... cannot be used in the Red Heifer ceremony. The Mishnah reports that in the days of the Temple in Jerusalem, water for the ritual came from the Spring of Shiloah...

"To ensure complete ritual purity of those involved, enormous care was taken to ensure that no-one involved in the Red Heifer ceremony could have had any contact with the dead... The Mishnah recounts that children were used to draw and carry the water for the ceremony, children born and reared in isolation for the specific purpose of ensuring that they never came into contact with a corpse...

"According to the Mishnah, the ceremony of the burning of the Red Heifer itself took place on the Mount of Olives. A pure priest slaughtered the Heifer, and totally sprinkled of its blood in the direction of the Temple seven times... In recent years, the site of the burning of

the Red Heifer on the Mount of Olives has been tentatively located by archaeologist Yonatan Adler...

"The existence of a red heifer that conforms with all of the rigid requirements [of Jewish tradition] is a biological anomaly. The animal must be entirely of one color, and there are a series of tests listed by the rabbis to ensure this, for instance, the hair of the cow must be absolutely straight (to ensure that the cow had not previously been yoked, as this is a disqualifier). According to Jewish tradition, only nine Red Heifers were actually slaughtered in the period extending from Moses to the destruction of the Second Temple...

"The absolute rarity of the animal, combined with the mystical ritual in which it is used, have given the Red Heifer special status in Jewish tradition... Because the state of ritual purity obtained through the ashes of a Red Heifer is a necessary prerequisite for participating in any Temple service, efforts have been made in modern times by Jews wanting to rebuild the Temple to locate a red heifer and recreate the ritual..."

Gershon Gorenberg writes the following in *"The End of Days,"* copyright 2001:

"... this sacrifice [of the red heifer] must be performed outside the Temple, yet the heifer's ash becomes the key to the sanctuary: It alone can cleanse a man or woman tainted by contact with human death... anyone who touches a corpse, or bone, or grave, anyone who even enters the room of a dead body, is rendered impure, and must not enter the Temple. Yet proximity to death is an unavoidable part of life... So to free a person from impurity... mix the heifer's cinder with water, and sprinkle the mixture on him... Two white hairs would disqualify [the heifer]... The last ashes of the last heifer ran out sometime after the Romans razed the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70. Every Jew became impure by reason of presumed contact with death..."

Red Heifer Rituals Superseded

We need to understand that the temporary ritual pertaining to the red heifer pointed at and foreshadowed the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which superseded the red heifer ceremony. Paul writes in Hebrews 9:9-10 that the Old Testament rituals and fleshly ordinances

were only imposed until the time of reformation. In this context, he says in Hebrews 9:11–14:

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come... Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and THE ASHES OF A HEIFER, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

Paul made it very clear that Christ came to “take away” sacrifice and offering (Hebrews 10:8–10), and that there is no longer a requirement of offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18). He wrote that the Old Covenant with its rituals has been made obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). Rather than being purified with water mixed with ashes from a red heifer, “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). Paul also explains in Galatians 3:24–25 that we are no longer under the tutor of the ritual law.

It is also interesting to note that the procedures for the inauguration of the millennial temple, which are outlined in Ezekiel 40, beginning with verse 18, do not mention a red heifer or water of purification.

In conclusion, the red heifer ritual is no longer biblically commanded, and the Bible does not demand the birth and sacrifice of a red heifer and its ashes as a requirement for the return of Christ. However, it is very likely that Jewish clerics may insist that the sacrifice of such a heifer for the purpose of producing the ashes for the water of purification of the Temple Mount, and the temple itself, will be essential for the reconstruction of the temple and the coming of the Messiah. We can therefore expect that the diligent search for a “pure” and “spotless” red heifer will continue; but this is NOT to say that Jews will abide by the interpretation of some clerics and that they will not begin with the construction of the temple and the offering of sacrifices before they “find” such a red heifer.

Chapter 9

Why Did the Jews Reject Jesus?

The house of Judah rejected Jesus Christ when He first came to them, a fact foretold and indeed fulfilled! Yet, it was from among His countrymen—Jewish men and women—that Jesus first found those who came to believe that He was “...the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mathew 16:16).

There was a sense of expectancy for the appearing of the Messiah in the time of Herod the king. Luke, chapter 2, and Matthew, chapter 2, both recount events that occurred in the land of Judea following the birth of Jesus, all pointing to prophecies about the Messiah. These things were known—they were spoken of by many people (compare Luke 2:17).

It was knowledge of the Messianic prophecies that drew the attention of those who did follow Christ:

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’” (John 1:45).

The apostle Paul identified himself as “...a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6). For a time Paul did not believe Jesus to have been anything more than a dangerous cult leader. Note what he says of himself:

“For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (Galatians 1:13–14).

However, when Jesus miraculously appeared to Paul, He commissioned him to proclaim the gospel:

“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, ‘Is this

not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?’ But Saul (Paul) increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:20–22).

Note how Paul proved what he taught:

“[F]or he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28).

Some Jews Believed in Christ

Some Jews believed what Paul taught, as noted in Acts 17:1–4:

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”

Most Jews Did Not Believe

Most Jews rejected what Paul taught:

“On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles’... But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region” (Acts 13:44–46, 50).

Later in his ministry, being a prisoner, Paul was taken to Rome. Nonetheless, he was still able to teach those who came to him. Among those were leaders of the Jews in Rome (Acts 28:17), and Paul spoke to them:

“So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his

lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved" (Acts 28:23–24).

Why the Rejection?

Paul explained why most of the Jews rejected Jesus, using the analogy of the veil that Moses had to place over his face, due to the glory of his countenance, following his presence before God:

"But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:14–16).

Paul made it clear that the rulers killed Jesus because they did not understand the wisdom of God, as written in 1 Corinthians 2:7–8:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Christ confirmed this fact, praying to God the Father to forgive His murderers, because "they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

On the other hand, it is true that the Pharisees had some knowledge about the person of Christ. Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, came to Christ by night and told Him: "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him" (John 3:2).

Still, most Pharisees rejected Him because they were envious and did not want to lose their positions in the community (Matthew 27:18; John 11:48). They even accused Him of casting out demons through the power of Satan, which caused Christ to give them a stern warning, since they knew better (Matthew 12:22–32).

The apostle Peter boldly preached to the Jews about Christ, showing again that the Jews were "ignorant" as to who Christ was:

"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the

presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses... Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (Acts 3:13–15, 17–18).

The people did not really understand who Christ was. Christ asked His disciples: "What do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The disciples answered: "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or some of the prophets." When Jesus asked them: "But who do you say that I am?", Peter answered: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ responded that this revelation had to come from God the Father; otherwise, he would not have understood this either (compare Matthew 16:13–17).

Jewish Persecution

Because of the healing of a man who had been lame from his birth, Peter and John were arrested and brought before Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 4:5–12:

"And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, 'By what power or by what name have you done this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the "stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'"

Stephen was brought before the council of the Jews for preaching about Jesus (Acts 6:15), and in his address to these leaders of the Jewish nation, he sharply rebuked their obstinate rejection of God:

“You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51–53).

What Stephen said so enraged the Jews that they murdered him (compare Acts 7:54–60). The Jewish leaders had also opposed what Jesus said, and they plotted His death, which was agreed to by the Jewish people (compare Acts 2:23, 36) and carried out by the Romans. The New Testament records the fact that Jesus was rejected by the house of Judah.

In responding to the Jews and their leaders in Jerusalem, Jesus challenged their lack of understanding, for He consistently revealed Himself by referring to prophecy:

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me... Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:39, 45–47).

Jesus Proves His Identity

Following His resurrection, Jesus proved His own identity by what was written in the Old Testament. Here is what Jesus said to His disciples: “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27); and, “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44).

In unsparing words, Jesus denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees—the religious leadership in Judea (compare Matthew 23). Even in His blistering rebuke, Jesus also pointed to a future time when “His own” (John 1:11) would not reject Him:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children

together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 23:37–39).

Indeed, the Jewish people who lived under the rule of the Roman Empire looked for a Savior for deliverance, and they applied the Messianic prophecies to their own circumstances instead of what was actually revealed in the Word of God. Also, the religious leaders in Judea were unwilling and unable to turn to God. They failed to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" at the preaching of John the Baptist (compare Matthew 3:7–10). With premeditated evil, they plotted the death of Jesus (compare Matthew 26:3–4) and rejected Him as their King (compare John 19:1–22).

Most of the Jewish people and their leaders rejected Christ because of a lack of understanding as to who He was. They were "willfully ignorant" (2 Peter 3:5, *Authorized Version*).

Today's Rejection of Christ

It is the same today. Most Jews, as well as most people around the world, do not really know God the Father and Jesus Christ, because the true knowledge as to who and what God is has been hidden from them (John 16:3). As a consequence, just as Christ was rejected and persecuted, so Christ's true disciples are rejected by the world and will have to endure persecution (Matthew 24:9; John 15:18–21).

Chapter 10

“His Blood Be On Us and On Our Children”

What is the significance of the saying of Jews at Jesus’ time that “His blood be on us and on our children” (Matthew 27:25)?

As will be explained in this chapter, many have taken this statement to justify anti-Semitic sentiments, or to explain horrible incidents, like the Holocaust, when millions of Jews were killed in gas chambers. But is it possible that a “curse” placed by parents on their children and future generations can automatically bring about such terrible results? Some turn for an explanation to the “curse” which God placed on parents and children who “hate” Him.

Visiting the Sins of the Fathers Upon the Children?

What does it mean that God will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him (compare Exodus 20:5)? This passage cannot contradict Scripture, such as Deuteronomy 24:16, where it states that children are not to be put to death for their fathers, but that a person “shall be put to death for his own sin.”

The explanation is that children will only be punished if they themselves are sinning. The *Companion Bible* comments on Ezekiel 18:4, 20 as follows: “Descendants were not punished for the sins of their ancestors unless they persevered in their ancestors’ sins.” The same thought is expressed in Exodus 20. Note that Exodus 20:5 speaks of those “who hate Me.” *Soncino* points out that the phrase, “of those that hate Me,” applies to the children, i.e. God will punish the children if they [the children] hate Him. *Soncino* comments, too, that the punishment will be brought upon the children, “when they retain the evil deeds of their fathers.”

The conduct of the parents may have a lot to do with whether their children or grandchildren love or hate God. The sins of the fathers

do affect future generations, and so does the penalty for sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, the penalty imposed on them affected ALL of mankind. Through their sin, they cut themselves—and man—off from God. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1–2), and since ALL have sinned, ALL have incurred the death penalty for sin (Romans 5:14). One might say that the sin of Adam and Eve affected, at the very least, the third and fourth generations, but since Cain sinned, his sin affected the next four generations, and so on. The effect of sin is cumulative. And finally, sin had become so all-encompassing that God decided to destroy the entire world in a flood.

Christ, in showing the evil influence of their parents and their own culpability in their continued hate of God, pointed out in Matthew 23:31–36, how the principle of Exodus 20:6 was fulfilled in the persons of the scribes and Pharisees at Christ's time.

The vicious cycle of sin, penalty, and death can be interrupted, however, when a person turns to God, repents, and obtains forgiveness. God is determined to call some in this day and age to have a special relationship with Him, and this includes the children of called-out parents. Whether they may realize it or not, parents have a tremendous influence on their children and grandchildren—in good and bad ways.

Automatic Consequences for Children?

In light of this concept, let us return to Matthew 27:25. In the context of this passage, Pilate washed his hands and stated that he was “innocent of the blood of this just Person,” Jesus Christ. In response, the crowd yelled, “His blood be on us and on our children,” demanding His death by crucifixion.

Many commentaries feel indeed that this saying had automatic consequences for their future generations.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary writes: “The Jews' curse upon themselves has been awfully answered in the sufferings of their nation.”

Barnes' Notes on the Bible says: “To this day... the curse has remained. They have been a nation scattered and peeled; persecuted almost everywhere, and a hissing and a byword among people. No single nation, probably, has suffered so much...”

Clarke's Commentary on the Bible says: “They were visited with the same kind of punishment; for the Romans crucified them in such

numbers when Jerusalem was taken, that there was found a deficiency of crosses for the condemned, and of places for the crosses. Their children or descendants have had the same curse entailed upon them, and continue to this day..."

The People's New Testament says: "His blood be on us. That is, let us have the responsibility and suffer the punishment. A fearful legacy, and awfully inherited. The history of the Jews from that day on has been the darkest recorded in human annals."

Terrible Misunderstanding

This will suffice. Even though the human mind might hastily conclude that the sufferings of the Jews are the direct result of a curse uttered by parents for them and future generations, such interpretation is not biblical. However, the consequences of this kind of interpretation have indeed been terrible. Adolf Hitler used this Scripture and the concept that the "Jews killed Christ" to exterminate millions of them during the Holocaust. Others, prior to Hitler, had used the same "justification" for their horrible and ungodly deeds toward the Jews. But what is forgotten is the fact that the Jews were persecuted long before the death of Christ. Recall that in the Book of Esther, all the Jews would have been killed if it had not been for Esther's intervention. Clearly, Satan was behind that attempt to exterminate the Jewish people to make prophecy "fail" by trying to prevent the birth of Jesus Christ, knowing that He would be a descendant of the house of Judah.

The Nelson Study Bible comments that "The destruction of Jerusalem was one of the results of this sin [the curse uttered by the parents]." For proof, the commentary points at Matthew 23:32–39. However, that passage describes the results of the sins of those who were involved—it does not inflict a curse on innocent children who do not participate in the evil lifestyle of their parents. In addition, we should realize that this was not a curse uttered by God, but a curse uttered by ignorant people. God is not bound by such a curse. To the contrary, we read that no one can curse or effectuate a curse on someone whom God does not curse (Numbers 23:8).

Some Commentaries Reject False Interpretation

Recognizing the injustice of categorically condemning all future

generations to a terrible curse uttered by some of their ancestors, some commentaries take a different point of view.

The New Bible Commentary: Revised states that the “saying has been wrongly used in later generations to persecute the Jews.”

The Broadman Bible Commentary agrees, saying: “Verse 25 has unfortunately been used in anti-Semitism, and such use is to be deplored. Jesus was crucified by Romans at Jewish initiative, but not all Jews then supported the crime, and Jews today are no more guilty than any other people. Jesus died on account of the sins of the world, not of the Jews alone.”

This is indeed true. Christ came to die for all men—Jews and Gentiles—and ALL of us are guilty of His death, because ALL of us have sinned, and the wages of sin is death! Christ came to free us from sin and the death penalty through the shedding of His precious blood, and to remove from us the curse of eternal death. (For more information, please read our free booklet, *Jesus Christ—a Great Mystery*.)

It is also a fact that this is Satan’s world, and that Satan is anxious to destroy all of mankind. Millions of people have died in wars, famines, disease epidemics and “natural” catastrophes, and millions of Christians were murdered during the time of the Inquisition. We suffer the consequences of our own misconduct, and we are only responsible for the misconduct of our parents if we adopt their life style and make it our own. To say that Jews were singled out by God and persecuted and killed throughout history because of a curse uttered by some Jews at the time of Christ’s death, is equally as wrong as to hold the current generation of Germans responsible for the crimes of some of their fathers and grandfathers against the Jews and others during Nazi Germany.

How It Could Also Be Understood

We should also focus on another possibility as to how to understand Matthew 27:25. Even though the Jews who uttered these terrible words were misled and meant them as a rejection of Christ to be applied to them and their children—apparently not realizing what they were saying—God might have inspired the recording of these statements to point out quite a different concept. For instance, we read that the high priest recommended the death of Jesus Christ, as “it is expedient

to us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:49–50). He meant that Jesus should die so that the Romans would not come in to destroy Judah, but God inspired this saying for quite a different reason. As John 11:51–52 explains: "Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad."

In that sense, some commentaries understand the saying in Matthew 27:25 in a similar way. The *One Volume Bible Commentary* by J.R. Dummelow refers to the Jews' saying also as "a blessing upon believers, on whom the blood of Jesus came for sanctification, and the remission of sin, compare John 11:50." Indeed, when the blood of Jesus covers our sins, this will have a positive influence on our children. When a parent is becoming converted and accepts the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins, his children become "holy" or "sanctified" (1 Corinthians 7:14); that is, they are being set aside for the holy purpose of realizing their potential of entering into a relationship with God. In that sense, the "curse" of the parents in Matthew 27:25 could perhaps be understood, in God's eyes, as the (unrealized) cry for a blessing for them and their children.

God will answer that cry. He will soon send Jesus Christ to this earth to offer all of mankind—Jews and Gentiles alike—the gift of eternal life and freedom from sin and the curse of eternal death. That is why we are to pray daily for the coming of God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:10).

Chapter 11

God's Anger Against, and Mercy for, Judah

The Bible tells us that in the near future, God will bring terrible punishment on the modern descendants of the ancient house of Judah, not because of the conduct of ancients, but because of their own conduct.

Defeat in War and Captivity Prophesied for Judah

In speaking of OUR day, God tells us that modern Jews WILL repent and accept the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, but only *AFTER* they have been held captive by foreign invaders. We read in Zechariah 8:7–17:

“(7) Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east And from the land of the west; (8) I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people, And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness... (10) For before these days... There was no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in; For I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor... (13)... just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing... (14) Just as I determined to punish you When your fathers provoked Me to wrath... And I would not relent, (15) So again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah... (16) These are the things you shall do; Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; (17) Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate...’”

Why Is God Angry With Modern Judah?

One aspect of God's anger today over sinful Judah is their willingness and eagerness to fight wars that are not approved of nor endorsed by God. But God says this will be changed and this will be accomplished

by Jesus Christ: "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim [Great Britain] And the horse [symbolic for war machines like tanks] from Jerusalem [the State of Israel]; The battle bow shall be cut off" (Zechariah 9:10).

An ungodly sexual lifestyle is also clearly one reason for God's punishment of Judah. God calls the leaders and the people of Judah "rulers of Sodom" and "people of Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1:10); and He refers to modern Jerusalem "spiritually" as "Sodom" (Revelation 11:8).

The State of Israel is viewed by many in the Middle East as the "capital" of homosexual conduct and other prohibited sexual activities, including the approval of same-sex marriages and transgenderism. Some cities of the State of Israel have actually become the center for such activities and parades in the Middle East.

Another reason for God's coming punishment is Sabbath-breaking. Even though the Jews have preserved the knowledge as to when to observe the Sabbath, only very few do so. Rather than being a positive example, they either disregard the Sabbath altogether, or they follow a radically restrictive and pharisaical interpretation, making a yoke and a burden of the Sabbath (exactly as was the case in Christ's day). In addition, they do not keep the annual Holy Days in the manner in which God has prescribed, having even changed the ordained times and seasons in some cases.

We should also remember that Judaism has rejected Jesus Christ by refusing to accept clear passages of the Old Testament, and as long as they do not embrace Christ as their personal Savior, they cannot have forgiveness for their sin and relief from their suffering. Our free booklet, *Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?*, explains in detail how the Jews have misinterpreted the clear statements in Isaiah 53 that prophesy Christ's First Coming.

God pronounces His punishment against the religious leaders of ancient and modern Judah in Zechariah 10:3: "My anger is kindled against the shepherds, And I will punish the goatherds [leaders]..." The context with verse 2 indicates that those religious leaders were engaged in (and that they approved of) idolatry, divination and the preaching of a false hope.

Dual Prophecies

God continues to explain in Zechariah that He allowed His people

to be defeated in war and become captives of war. This prophecy is most certainly dual in that it also refers to our time and age, as God points out that He will free them from their captivity and bring them back to the Promised Land. Notice in Zechariah 10:6–11:

“(6) I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph [the modern English-speaking nations of the USA and the British Commonwealth]. I will bring them back [out of captivity and slavery], Because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside... (9) I will sow them among the peoples, And they shall remember Me in far countries; they shall live together with their children, And they shall return. (10) I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt And gather them from Assyria [modern German-speaking peoples]... (11) Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, And the scepter of Egypt shall depart.”

When God intervenes, He will cleanse the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1). He will wipe out idolatry and cause the false prophets and their evil demonic spirits to depart from the land (verse 2). This shows the depth of depravity that will have overtaken the land prior to Christ’s return. That is WHY God made the following terrible pronouncement for our time and age in Zechariah 13:

“(8) And it shall come to pass in all the land, Says the LORD, That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: (9) I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested.”

Continuing in Zechariah 14:2: “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity.”

Modern Assyria Will Not Help

In our booklet, *Germany in Prophecy*, we state the following:

“The prophet Hosea... describes the futile undertaking of modern Israelites and Jews, at the time of godly punishment, to try to obtain protection and help from human powers, especially the modern Assyrians... We read God’s words in Hosea 5:9–14:

“Ephraim [modern Great Britain and possibly, by extension, the USA] shall be desolate in the day of rebuke; Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure. The princes of Judah [modern Jews] are

like those who remove a landmark; I will pour out My wrath on them like water. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, Because he willingly walked by human precept. Therefore I will be to Ephraim like a moth, And to the house of Judah like rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah saw his wound, Then Ephraim went to Assyria And [the *Menge Bible* says: "...and Judah..."] sent to King Jareb [Note that the "*Elberfelder Bibel*" explains that "Jareb" means, "fighter; or one who seeks quarrels"]; Yet he cannot cure you, Nor heal you of your wound. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue...

"As in the past, modern Assyria will also (in the near future) wage war against the Jews (the State of Israel in the Middle East), as clearly revealed in Isaiah 8:7–8: '... The king of Assyria... will pass through Judah, He will overflow and pass over, He will reach up to the neck; And the stretching out of his wings Will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.'

"Enslavement and mass deportation of peoples will be the result. Assyria, which will invade the territories of the modern Israelites and Jews, will bring some of the prisoners into its own country (as in the Second World War many of the imprisoned Poles and Yugoslavs were deported to Germany as forced laborers). Other Israelite and Jewish prisoners of war will be deported to various countries...

Psalm 83 for Us Today

"In Psalm 83:4–8 a remarkable prophecy is found about a multilateral agreement of many nations that will ally against Israel—apparently against the modern descendants of the house of Israel as well as the Jews. Note who is being mentioned here, by name:

"They have said, "Let us come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, That the name of Israel may be remembered no more." For they have consulted together with one consent; They form a confederacy [literally, "cut a covenant"] against You: The tents of Edom [Turkey] and the Ishmaelites [Saudi Arabia]; Moab [parts of Jordan, perhaps also Western Iraq] and the Hagrites [originally cattle breeding nomads in East Canaan]; Gebal [originally a city in Phoenicia, Ezekiel 27:9, perhaps today, Lebanon], Ammon [Jordan], and Amalek [perhaps modern description for PLO]; Philistia [modern Palestinians from

the Gaza Strip] with the inhabitants of Tyre [city of the Phoenicians, Joshua 19:29; 2 Samuel 24:7; today perhaps a label for Rome, Italy and the political Babylonian system]; Assyria also has joined with them; They have helped the children of Lot [Jordan].”

We continue to describe in our aforementioned booklet the future of Assyria and how God will deal with the king of Assyria, *AFTER* He has used him to punish the Jews.

But as we saw, modern Assyria [Germany] is not the only country that will behave with hostility toward the Jews.

Modern Esau

In our free booklet, *Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy*, we said this about Edom or Esau—modern Turkey:

“**Psalm 83:6** tells us about a future confederacy of nations against ‘Israel.’ This confederacy will consist of Edom (including **Amalek**, today’s PLO and other violent groups, one of Edom’s grandsons) and other Middle Eastern nations, as well as modern Assyria (Germany) and the revived Babylonian system (‘Tyre’). The goal of that confederacy is to cut off Israel, so that ‘the name of Israel may be remembered no more’ (verse 4). A reference to that conspiracy is alluded to in **Amos 1:6, 9** where we read that ‘Gaza’ and ‘Tyre’ will be punished because they ‘took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom’ and because ‘they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom.’

“The reference to the ‘captivity’ is to the enslavement of the modern descendants of the house of Judah and perhaps some from the modern house of Israel. In addition to bringing about slavery, we are specifically told in **Amos 1:11** (among many other places) that Esau will pursue his brother (Israel) with the sword and cast off all pity, keeping his wrath against Jacob forever.

“In fact, we read in **Obadiah 11–14** that Edom was as one of them who carried captive the forces of Israel, and who gazed on or gloated over the day of his brother’s calamity in the day of his captivity; that Edom rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; and that they entered the gate of God’s people in the day of their calamity and laid hands on their substance. We even read that Edom stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped and delivered those up who remained in the day of distress (verse 14), or,

as the *Menge Bible* puts it, at the time of the Great Tribulation.”

Modern Judah Will Become a Blessing

But then, so we are told, beginning in verse 3 of Zechariah 14, God will intervene and fight for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the modern people of Judah who have been brought into slavery and have become captives of war.

The LORD—Jesus Christ, the Messiah—tells us that He will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and that His house shall be built in it (Zechariah 1:16). He assures us that Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls; that is, it will be peaceful (2:4). When God dwells in Jerusalem, it shall be called the “City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain” (8:3). Then, “Old men and old women shall again sit In the streets of Jerusalem... The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets...” (8:4–5). The captives of Israel and Judah will be brought back to Jerusalem “from the land of the east and from the land of the west... And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people, And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness” (8:7–8).

As the modern nations of Israel and Judah will become a curse among the nations just prior to Christ’s return [remember, not because of any statements of the parents toward their descendants regarding the death of Christ, but because of their own sinful conduct], so they will become a blessing when Christ saves them (8:13). Christ is determined to do good to Jerusalem in the end (8:15). Then, “many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem And to pray before the LORD” (8:22). The Jews will be respected at that time, and rather than continuing to harbor anti-Semitic feelings, the Gentile nations will ask the Jewish people to show them the way to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (8:23).

When Christ returns to Jerusalem, He will “cut off the names of the idols from the land” and He will “cause the [false] prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land” (13:2). As you will recall, we also read that two-thirds of all the inhabitants of the land of Judah will die, and that the remaining one-third will be refined in fire—that is, they will repent during the “Great Tribulation” and the “Day of the Lord,” and become converted (13:8–9).

Chapter 12

Spiritual Jews

Today, the Jewish people are rejected or looked down on by far too many people. This may even include Christians, but we must realize that a true Christian *IS* a spiritual Jew. Paul states in Romans 2:28–29 that a Christian “is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter.”

What did Paul mean by this?

The underlying point of this statement centers on Paul’s explanation about true Christianity. Note these opening comments in the Book of Romans: “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called... saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:1–7).

In this introduction Paul establishes that *Jesus Christ was a Jew by birth*. This is confirmed in Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1; Micah 5:2; Luke 3:23–38; Hebrews 7:14; and Revelation 5:5. Furthermore, Jesus Himself revealed that “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

Continuing in the first chapter of Romans, Paul states:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

When it came to the promises of God, the issue of “Jewishness” was a source of great contention in the society of Paul’s day—and in the Church of God.

Physical Circumcision

The most obvious physical identification of male Jews was circumcision. Gentiles did not generally practice circumcision. However, the rite of circumcision in the first century A.D. had become ritualistic for Jews. This physical procedure was viewed as securing their relationship with God—a false confidence and an empty profession of religion.

Circumcision, as Paul explains concerning Abraham, was merely an outward sign:

“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised” (Romans 4:11–12).

The true intention of this “sign of circumcision” was revealed in the Old Testament:

“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer” (Deuteronomy 10:16; also: Jeremiah 4:4; Deuteronomy 30:6).

Paul carries forward this teaching in Romans 2:28–29, which reads in its entirety:

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

The pride of the religious leaders in Judaism had blinded them. When John the Baptist encountered Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him for baptism, he said:

“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (Matthew 3:8–9).

When Jesus taught the Jews who followed Him that they could learn the truth and become free, their response was one of arrogance:

“They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made

free?'" (John 8:33).

Jesus responded, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham'" (John 8:39).

Salvation Not Based on Physical Lineage

From these two examples we see that being in the physical lineage of righteous Abraham did not fulfill the inward requirements for repentance or for understanding the Truth of God on the part of the Jews. Furthermore, the hope of eternal salvation is not based on physical lineage. Note what is promised to those who live "in the Spirit"; that is, who are "inwardly" true Christians:

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26–29).

The New Testament makes reference to circumcision to show that this physical action was no longer necessary (compare Acts 15:1–29), but there was a strong demand by some Jewish Christians to require the Gentile converts to be circumcised. The Book of Galatians addresses this false teaching. While it is not wrong to circumcise newborn babies on the eighth day (understanding however that circumcision is not and never has been a physical health law), it would be wrong to circumcise if it is believed that it is a biblical requirement today, and that one can thereby obtain justification and salvation. Paul made it very clear that if we think and act that way, "Christ will profit [us] nothing" (Galatians 5:2) and we "have fallen from grace" (verse 4)—the need for God's help and forgiveness—while rejecting forgiveness of sin through Christ's Sacrifice (compare our comments to Galatians 5:2–4 in our free booklet, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*.)

Spiritual Circumcision

Let us note Paul's conclusion:

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God"

(Galatians 6:15–16; compare Romans 9:6).

Of this “Israel of God,” Paul further describes what being a Jew “inwardly” means:

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

True Christians are “inward Jews” because they are spiritually circumcised in their hearts, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God.

When Christ returns and opens the minds of the Jewish people to the truth, and when they respond, repent, believe in their Savior and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, then they—being physical Jews or Jews “outwardly” (Romans 2:28) and in accordance with the flesh—will also have become “Jews inwardly”—spiritual Jews.

Conclusion

God reveals to us in His Word both the history and the future of the Jewish people. The warning is very serious: Repent of your sins and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in Him as your personal Savior, or suffer the consequences! This message is not limited to the Jews; it is directed at ALL peoples—the entire world! While most will not heed the warning now, some might. Even “a great company” of the Jewish “priests” became obedient to the faith after Christ’s resurrection when they realized what had happened (Acts 6:7).

The Jewish people, the city of Jerusalem and the State of Israel will be the focus of many world events in the not-too-distant future. Ongoing developments show us that the prophesied “Great Tribulation” is not far away. If Christ were not to intervene, no human being would survive. However, for the elect’s sake, God the Father will send His only-begotten Son to this earth to shorten those days (Matthew 24:21–22). The nation of Judah will fall in the hands of their enemies, but it will rise again when Jesus proceeds to bring them out of captivity and open their minds to the Truth. Then most Jews will repent; we pray that at least some will repent before then.

We also pray that you, the reader, will recognize the seriousness of our time, and understand and heed God’s admonition, as recorded in Isaiah 62:6–7:

“I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

May God grant that this will happen very soon!

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?
Are You Already Born Again?
Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?
Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever
Do We Have an Immortal Soul?
Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?
Don't Keep Christmas
Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events
Germany in Prophecy—*The Mysterious Origin of German-Speaking Peoples and Their Prophetic Destiny*
God Is a Family
God's *Commanded* Holy Days
God's Law...or God's Grace?
Heavens and Earth...Before and After the First Man!
Hidden Secrets in the Bible
Human Suffering—Why...and How Much Longer?
Is God a Trinity?
Is That In the Bible?—Man's Holidays and God's Holy Days
Is That In the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation
Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!
Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy
Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Galatians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Philippians—*How to Understand It*
Punishment for Our Sins
Should YOU Fight in War?
Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us
Teach Us to Pray!
The Authority of the Bible
The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for *Today!*
The Fall and Rise of Britain and America
The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God
The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord
The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families
The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days
The *Meaning* of God's Spring Holy Days
The Mysteries of the Bible
The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness
The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire
The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?
Tithing—Today?
When and How Will Christ Return?

HOW THIS WORK IS FINANCED

Our activities and literature, including booklets, weekly updates, sermons on CD and video and audio broadcasts are provided free of charge. They are made possible by the tithes, offerings and contributions of Church members and others who have elected to support this Work.

While we do not solicit the general public for funds, contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada.

Donations should be sent to the following addresses:

United States

Church of the Eternal God
PO Box 270519
San Diego, CA 92198
www.eternalgod.org

Canada

Church of God, ACF
Box 1480
Summerland B.C. V0H 1Z0
www.churchofgodacf.ca

United Kingdom

Global Church of God
PO Box 44
Mablethorpe, LN12 9AN
www.globalchurchofgod.co.uk

Please also visit our additional website in German:

www.aufpostenstehen.de

