

“Israel: Prophecies Fulfilled”
Selected Scripture

8/16-17/08

6 pm; 9 & 10:45 am

Series, *“Israel: People of Prophecy”*

PREAMBLE

Next Sunday evening, 4 pm to 6 pm we will be receiving a broadcast of a conference that took place in Jerusalem, **Epicenter 2008**.

It is hosted by Joel Rosenberg and will feature:

Bible prophecy from respected evangelical leaders,

Briefings from top Middle East experts,

Information about the dramatic spiritual revolution underway in the Muslim world.

In addition, it will feature exclusive interviews with Israeli, Palestinian and Russian leaders; and explores previously classified CIA and White House documents.

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INTRODUCTION

As most of you know, I spent two weeks in Israel earlier this summer. The first part was a conference, filled with excellent teaching on the nation of Israel; past, present and future.

The second part was touring key biblical sites. It was amazing to be at places where Jesus actually was ...

from the Sea of Galilee (PIX),

to the synagogue in Capernaum (PIX), (where Jesus preached and healed Peter’s mother-in-law

to the southern steps of the temple mount in Jerusalem.

It was gripping to ...

see and enter a tomb (TWO PIX) that was just like the one in which Jesus’ body was placed,

and to see the two sites that are considered the real possibilities of where Jesus was crucified.

We walked in

the pool of Siloam (PIX), where Jesus sent a blind man to wash his eyes and regain his sight.

We saw the caves where the Dead Sea scrolls (PIX) were discovered, and

went into Bethlehem, where we saw the fields where the shepherds heard from the angels that the Messiah had been born and a possible site of the birth of Jesus.

One thing about going to Israel ... from that time forward you have first-hand mental pictures and experiences to affirm what you read in the Bible.

Over the next two weeks, we're going to look at Israel and Prophecy. Because the people of Israel, and the land of Israel, are built upon Prophecy. Prophecy with a capital "P," as Peter Tsukahira puts it. That is, when God says in His Word that He is going to do something, and it happens on Earth.

We're going to begin today with "*Prophecies Fulfilled*" and next week, "*God's Continuing Plan for Israel.*"

Israel began when ...

I. God Promised to Make a Nation ... From One Man

OPEN Genesis 12:1

It all started with Abraham. God foretold the future to him; biblical prophecy, in Genesis 12. And He brought it to pass.

READ Genesis 12:1-7

In these promises to Abram, God foretells the future. And step by step, He fulfills His prophecy:

A. He Gave the nation a father

To become a nation, you need at least one child to carry on after you have died. The key problem in that regard was that Sarai was barren and Abram was nearing 100 years old. But, according to His Word, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son, Isaac. He was the son through whom God promised to build Abraham's nation.

B. He gave the nation a name

Isaac had two sons, twins, Jacob and Esau. God chose Jacob, whom He renamed “Israel,” to be the one through whom He would fulfill His promise to Abraham.

C. He gave the nation a large population

Jacob had 12 sons. God sent them to Egypt for 400 years, where they multiplied into the millions. At the end of 400 years, God led them out of Egypt through Moses, to take possession of the land God promised to Abraham.

D. He gave the nation laws to live by

Enroute, God gave them the 10 Commandments, additional laws that would govern their new nation, and He taught them how to worship Him.

E. He gave the nation land

Under Joshua’s leadership, Israel took the land, and God’s prophetic promise to Abraham came to pass.

God prophesied a chosen nation, and He made it.

The second thing we need to understand about prophecy ...

II. God Always Keeps His Word ... When We Like it and When We Don’t

Israel’s history became a recounting of two major themes:

1) When they walked with God in obedience and love,

2) When they went their own way.

Sadly, they went their own way far more often than they followed.

In fact, they became so absolutely rebellious, so thorough in their rejection of God and His ways, that God fulfilled another prophecy He had made: if they wouldn’t follow Him, He would remove them from their land:

Deuteronomy 28:36a “**The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers.**

37 You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you.”

Deuteronomy 28:63b **“You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.”**

Deuteronomy 28:64a, 65-67 **“Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other ...**

65 Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.

66 You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.

67 In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!" - because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see.”

Remember, this is not for stumbling, making a mistake – this is for outright, conscious, persistent, unrepented-of rejection of God, His law, and His worship.

Israel did not take this prophecy seriously. They rebelled against God for hundreds of years.

So, the first time God took His people from the land, He set a sentence of 70 years. They would be removed from their land and taken as captives to Babylon for 70 years. (This was during the time of Daniel.)

At the end of that time, they returned to Israel in several waves. The people of the first two waves rebuilt God’s temple, and the city of Jerusalem.

Then, with Israel back in their land, the Lord fulfilled the most important prophecy ... the promise to send a Messiah, His anointed leader.

Isaiah 7:14 **“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.”**

This Messiah would be **“God with us.”** God with the nation Israel.

And this prophecy was fulfilled:

Matthew 1:22-23 **“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:**

23 ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ - which means, ‘God with us.’”

Jesus was born of a virgin, He came to show Israel how to know God and follow Him; He came to reveal the truth about God. But the religious leaders and most of the Jewish

people rejected Him. The religious leaders orchestrated and participated in their Messiah's betrayal, sentencing, and death.

About 40 years after Jesus was rejected by Israel, God scattered His people a second time.

In the year 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, executing thousands of Jews, and re-naming the country "Palestine," in memory of one of Israel's greatest and oldest enemies, the Philistines.

The survivors scattered, and for 1,900 years what God had warned of in Deuteronomy 28 *came to pass*: the Jewish people spread all over the known world ... and wherever they went, they faced persecution, mocking and hardship. They were derided for being different, hated for their successes, despised for their religion, even being persecuted by Christians for being "Christ-killers."

Prior to WW II Jews who had fled by ship from persecution in Europe were refused entry by country after country, including the United States.

The ultimate persecution came through Adolph Hitler and the Nazi regime. 6 million Jews were intentionally and systematically executed. We're familiar with this being called "the holocaust." The word "holocaust" is the combination of two Greek words meaning "*completely burnt*."

Let me be perfectly clear on this point: I do not believe that God ordered the holocaust. That was Hitler's work and the work of the devil.

II. God Always Keeps His Word... When We Like it and When We Don't

III. God Always Keeps His Covenants ... Even When His People Don't

After the defeat of the Nazis and the discovery of the holocaust, in 1948 the United Nations passed a resolution to create a homeland for the Jews in Palestine.

So, on May 8, 1948, in response to the declaration of the United Nations, the Jewish people declared themselves the nation of Israel on part of their original God-given land.

This was an amazing, completely unanticipated event. It even surprised most Biblical scholars.

It was more than mere history. It was more than the nations' sympathy for a needy people.

It was the fulfillment of prophecy; the declarations of God's prophets, that God would bring His people back to the land He had given them.

*The Words of God through the prophet **Isaiah** were fulfilled:*

“I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them, up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the Earth.” (Isaiah 43:5-6)

*The Words of God through the prophet **Jeremiah** were fulfilled:*

Jeremiah 31:8a, 10 **“See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the Earth.**

10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: “He Who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over His flock like a shepherd.”

“If you travel directly **north** from Jerusalem, you will eventually come to the Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have immigrated to Israel in recent years from the Ukraine.

“Traveling further north you will reach Russia. The city of Moscow is almost directly north of Jerusalem. The former Soviet Union is literally the ‘north country’ in relation to Israel.

In the last 20 years more than one million Russian-speaking Jews have immigrated to Israel. This massive migration is the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. We are witnessing today what God foretold through His prophet.”

*God’s Words through the prophet **Ezekiel** were fulfilled:*

Ezekiel 36:22-24 **“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.**

23 I will show the holiness of My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show Myself holy through you before their eyes.

24 For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.”

“In these verses God says that He will do something with Israel so that all the nations will acknowledge Him. He emphatically states that it is not for Israel’s sake that He will act. In other words, it is not because of divine favoritism or because of Israel’s goodness that God will do these things. God says it is not because Israel is so deserving or righteous but for **‘My holy name’s sake.’**

“Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, three million Jewish people have returned from every continent on the planet.

God is acting on behalf of the non-Jewish nations so that they will all recognize Who He is! According to Ezekiel, Israel is again God’s instrument, His means to show His glory and His character to the entire world.

Israel’s existence as a nation today is a testimony to God’s faithfulness and His covenant-keeping character.

So, after 1,900 years of being scattered amongst the nations, Jews from more than 145 countries have returned to the Land of their forefathers.

God keeps His Word! Always!! He is the covenant-keeping God and will fulfill His Word regardless of how long it takes.

So, just as God will not grow tired of Christians and just decide to break His covenant with us, so also, *remember*: God has not broken His covenant with the Jewish people.

And here is what God will do as and when His people return to the land of Israel:

Ezekiel 36:25-28 “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.

28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God.”

This is happening in Israel today!

And after their complete return, He will cleanse the people and put a new heart and spirit within them.

In fulfillment of the Scriptures, God is cleansing and transforming hearts in Israel today. The re-emergence of Messianic Jews in Israel, the preaching of the Gospel in modern Hebrew, and the formation of believing congregations are evidence of this prophetic fulfillment.

III. God Always Keeps His Covenants ... Even When His People Don’t

One last point, one last picture...

IV. No Roadblocks Can Stop God From Fulfilling His Promises

I love the symbolism of this picture of the Eastern Gate.

It was filled in with blocks by the Muslim leader Suleiman in 1530 A.D. He filled it with blocks because of the Jewish tradition (possibly based on Ezekiel chapters 10 and 43) that the Messiah would come through the Eastern Gate one day.

In addition, he made a graveyard for Muslims in front of the gate because of his knowledge that Jews won't touch dead bodies or they will be defiled. So, he thought this also would keep out the Jewish Messiah.

Could a blocked gate or a graveyard stop Jesus? Hardly!

And nothing can stop God from fulfilling His prophetic Word! No leader, no government, no nation.

Like Israel, God has given us promises and warnings. He tells us that one day we will give an account to Him for what we did in our relationship with Him; how we invested what He entrusted to us (spiritual gifts, abilities, finances, responsibilities, etc.). And He will give us rewards that will last for all eternity. We will rich or we will be poor for eternity. We will be accepted by Him, we will experience the joys of Heaven and His presence, but we will also live with whatever our rewards are or are not for eternity. (Matthew 24:42-25:1-46; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

He has told us so that we can be prepared. And God will always fulfill His Word!

This is why we need to read the Scriptures and become a part of a small group that is reading and discussing God's Word ... so we can know God's plan and the rich resources He has given us to live for Him.

“Father in Heaven, thank You for revealing how faithful You are to what You have said! I give my whole life to You. As I read Your Word, please open my eyes to Your will for my life, so that I can invest it where You desire. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”