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Connection

the magazine

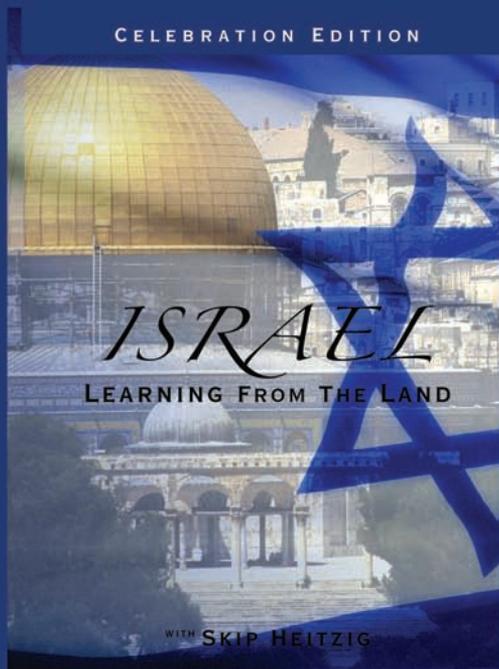


DESTINATION:
ISRAEL

SPECIAL EPICENTER EDITION
ISSUE 16 | JULY-SEPTEMBER 2012

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Israel is the focal point of God's relationship with man, both in the past and in the end times to come. I've been privileged to be involved in several conferences on Israel and the Middle East called Epicenter, and we are hosting another one here at Calvary of Albuquerque on September 14-16, 2012. That's why we're devoting this entire issue of *Connection—the magazine* to Israel.

Our featured article is "Why Israel Matters" by Joel Rosenberg, my co-host at the conference, and a *New York Times* best-selling author. In this article, he stresses the critical importance of continuing in prayer for Israel and the Middle East situation. Dr. Norman Geisler, a featured speaker at the conference, contributes "The Importance of Premillennialism," in which he shows why this doctrine underlies all the salvation fundamentals of our faith. Dr. Michael Rydelnik, another conference speaker, explains from Scripture that God gave the land to Abraham and his descendants—forever—in "Whose Land?" My wife Lenya gives us "A Taste of Honey," a gastronomical tour of the land of the Bible. And I detail "Why Christians Love Israel."

I hope you'll enjoy this special edition of *Connection—the magazine*. Make plans to join us for the conference!

In His strong love,

Skip Heitzig

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“Father, I know I am a sinner. I repent of my sin, and turn away from it. I turn to Jesus. I believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again, saving all who believe in Him. Fill me with Your Spirit and come into my life. Transform me. Make me into a new creation. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.”

If you prayed this prayer, please contact Calvary of Albuquerque: 505.344.0880
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A Publication of



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ISRAEL

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WHY
WE
LOVE
ISRAEL

By Skip Heitzig

→A passage in the *Midrash*, the Jewish commentary on the Scriptures, declares, “The Land of Israel sits at the center of the world; Jerusalem is in the center of the Land of Israel; the Temple is in the center of Jerusalem.” Christians understand this outlook. Some of Israel’s staunchest supporters are Christians—especially evangelical believers in the West.

Why do Christians love Israel? Because we love Israel’s God. We love Israel because it has been the conduit for our Scripture. We love Israel because it brought us our Savior. We love Israel because we believe God keeps every promise made to and through His people. Paul reminds us that “the people of Israel [were] chosen to be God’s special children. God revealed His glory to them.

KNOWING THAT GOD HAS BEEN FAITHFUL TO FULFILL SCRIPTURE IN THE PAST REMINDS US THAT HE WILL FULFILL ALL OF HIS PROPHECIES IN THE FUTURE.



He made covenants with them and gave His law to them. They have the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises” (Romans 9:4-5 NLT). Through Israel we have received God’s promises. And Israel shows us how He has fulfilled His promises.

In the Bible, via the prophets, God made prediction after prediction. The odds may seem stacked against their fulfillment. But God has continually defied the odds by keeping His promises. Knowing that God has been faithful to fulfill Scripture in the past reminds us that He will fulfill all of His prophecies in the future.

ISRAEL'S PERMANENCE

One of God’s promises is that Israel is an everlasting possession for the Jewish people—the land is theirs in perpetuity. God guaranteed the land’s permanence. He spoke clearly to Abraham, “I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8). Though they had been in captivity, about 50,000 Jews returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity when Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubba-

bel returned to rebuild Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah predicted a second return to the land: “It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left” (Isaiah 11:11) This occurred in 1948 when Israel re-established its statehood.

The 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica* proclaimed, “The possibility that we can ever again recover the correct pronunciation of ancient Hebrew is as remote as the possibility that a Jewish empire will ever again be established in the Middle East.” A mere 37 years later the people of Israel revived the Hebrew language and re-established their ancient homeland, contrary to the pundits’ predictions.

ISRAEL'S PHYSICAL RESTORATION

The Bible predicted that the people of Israel would be taken into captivity and then restored. Jeremiah wrote: “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).

There were three successive deportations of Israelis from Jerusalem and

Judea to Babylon. The first took place in 605 B.C. when the prophet Daniel was taken into captivity alongside his countrymen. The second occurred in 597 B.C. That second deportation included the prophet Ezekiel, who was probably only 25 years old when he was taken away to Babylon. In 586 B.C. the temple was burned and the city was destroyed with fire.

Ezekiel, a priest and prophet to Israel, wrote to explain to the captive Jews in Babylon how they would be restored to their land: “Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come” (Ezekiel 36:8). God promised fruitfulness to sustain the increased population returning from exile.

As Ezekiel predicted, the land is fruitful. Israel is the fourth largest grower of citrus in the world, and the third largest exporter of flowers. When I first visited Israel, I worked on a *kibbutz*, or farm. There I saw the devotion of the people to grow and to spread farms around the land. In 1948, 400,000 acres were cultivated in Israel. Today, over a million acres are cultivated.

ISRAEL'S POPULATION

Israel's physical restoration was to be followed with a bountiful population. The prophet predicted, “I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt” (Ezekiel 36:10). God guaranteed that many people would inhabit the land.

Following the Babylonian captivity, 50,000 Jews returned to the land. Millennia later, on May 14, 1948, a mere 80,000 people occupied the land—less than half of them Jewish. Today, Israel's population stands at 7,881,000 people, according to figures released by the Central Bureau of Statistics; 5,931,000 of the population (75.3%) are Jewish.

Astonishingly, these nearly eight million inhabitants are surrounded by 300 million unsympathetic neighbors. Doesn't it seem like the odds are again

stacked against them? But the odds are in Israel's favor when you view the Middle East situation as seven million plus God against 300 million.

ISRAEL'S PROMINENCE

Ezekiel predicted that the nation of Israel would have world prominence. He put it like this: “I will not allow those foreign nations to sneer at you, and you will no longer be shamed by them or cause your nation to fall” (Ezekiel 36:15 NLT). In other words, “You won't be victims anymore, you will be victors.” They have been victorious in war. And they have gained global prestige. One-tenth of one percent of world population (the Jews) have managed to secure one third of all of the Nobel Peace Prizes ever given. And one-third of the awards in music, science, and art have been bestowed upon the Jews. The world has watched God not only bring the people back to the land. They have seen the land become fruitful, and its inhabitants increase in prestige.

ISRAEL'S BLESSING

Israel's restoration at the time of the captivity seemed absolutely impossible. Ezekiel saw Israel as a valley of dry bones (see Ezekiel 37:1-2). They were as good as dead. Their nation was no longer alive—they weren't even in their own land. It would have taken a miracle for them to be restored, much less receive a blessing. Life was gone, death had come, the nation was like bleached bones out in a barren valley. Only a miracle could restore them.

God asked the prophet, “Can these bones live?” (Ezekiel 37:3). And Ezekiel gave the appropriate answer, “O Lord GOD, You know” (Ezekiel 37:3). The question, “Can these bones live?” could have been asked in 1947 before the Jewish nation was declared valid. That question could have been asked on May 15, 1948 when, one day after the nation was in the land, they were attacked by five surrounding nations. That question could have been asked

ONE TENTH OF ONE PERCENT OF WORLD POPULATION (THE JEWS) HAVE MANAGED TO SECURE ONE-THIRD OF ALL OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZES EVER GIVEN.



in 1967, when the Israeli army was outnumbered fifty to one, as soldiers from Egypt, Syria, and Jordan attacked the nation of Israel. “Can these bones live?” Every time God has let these bones live. He has blessed them as a people.

Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones’ restoration to life was not instantaneous, it was a process. The bones gradually came together. Eventually sinews were attached. And then skin came on. So it is with Israel. In 70 A.D., the Romans attacked the land and the people of Israel were dispersed around the world for a long time. In 1898, Theodor Herzl called for the Jewish people around the world to return to the land and restore the desert to a fruitful paradise. Then, on May 14, 1948 at 4:32 in the afternoon, David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, declared the land to be the Jewish state. After two thousand years, the nation was re-born. The dry bones became a recognizable nation.

Yes, Christians, we love Israel. We love Israel for the promises made and for the promises kept. We love Israel

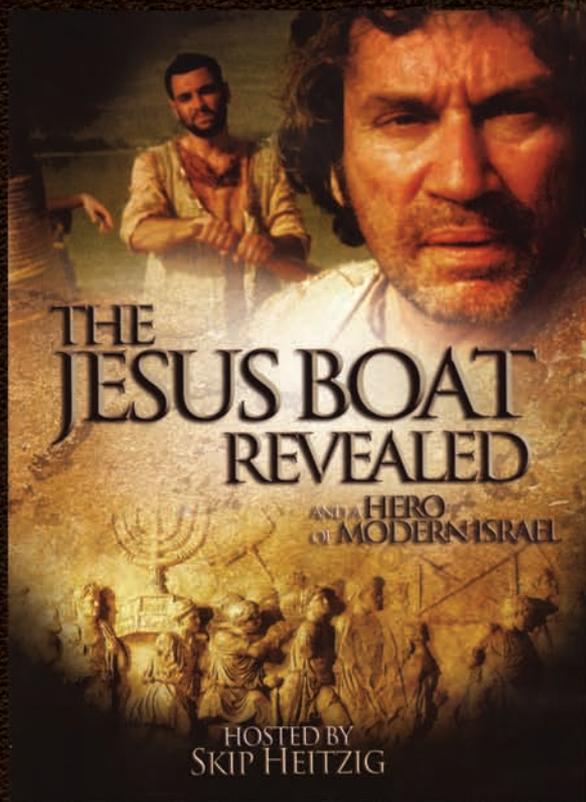
for the sake of Israel’s God. And despite unsettling news reports and unrest in the world, there’s confidence in standing behind Israel.

A little boy was riding a train, seemingly all alone. The passengers watched him as they rode through a great storm. There was loud thundering, lightning, and wind. But the little boy was whistling, singing, and carefree. Finally, an anxious adult said, “Excuse me, how can you be so calm?” The boy replied, “My daddy is the engineer of this train!” He knew his father could handle whatever came.

God, our Father, is our engineer. He engineered the Bible, which contains promise after promise, and He engineered the history of Israel, His chosen people. Rest in the knowledge that all of His promises will be fulfilled in His time.

Skip Heitzig is the author of numerous books and is the senior pastor of Calvary of Albuquerque. You can follow him on Twitter @skipheitzig

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WHY ISRAEL MATTERS

By Joel Rosenberg

→The existence of the modern State of Israel is living proof—solid, irrefutable, dramatic proof—that Bible prophecy is true and we are living in what the Bible calls the "last days" before the return of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, liberal theologians, and now even a significant number of “evangelical Christians” are denying the biblical importance of modern Israel and are teaching that God has rejected the Jewish people and replaced Israel with the Church. Scripture teaches us that false teachers will grow in number and influence in the last days, but it also commands us to keep teaching the Word of God and equipping believers to hold fast the “Word of truth.”

That’s why I’ve asked some of the world’s leading theologians to join me in teaching on the biblical theology of Israel at the 2012 Epicenter Conference that will be held in September at Calvary of Albuquerque. This conference will be unique in that it is specifically designed to help pastors, seminary professors and students, and lay people develop a solid theological understanding of God’s love and plan for Israel and her neighbors. Participants will gain an accurate overview of Israel’s past, present and prophetic future, from Genesis to Revelation, including an in-depth understanding of the present spiritual climate in the epicenter for Israelis and Palestinians. Attendees will leave the conference with the tools necessary to effectively communicate these truths to current and future generations of Christians.

Some of the most fascinating prophecies that we’ll explore are found in Ezekiel 36 and 37, and concern Israel’s rebirth in the last days. In these chapters, God improbably promises to bring the broken nation of Israel back into the land. “Can these dry bones live?” He provocatively asks Israel’s prophets. Then he imparts a vision of the nation’s resurrection to Ezekiel. This promise sustained God’s chosen people through thousands of years of exile and persecution. For centuries, the promise must have seemed elusive. Yet, it began to unfold in the twentieth century and we continue to witness its fulfillment in the twenty-first.

Not everyone has eyes to see God’s hand moving through history though. Wars and rumors of war, anti-Semitism, replacement theology and other dis-



PRAY THAT THE LORD WOULD STRENGTHEN THE STRATEGIC FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL.

tractions have led many to abandon the people of the epicenter. But I believe true and faithful followers of Jesus Christ should bless both Israel and her neighbors with unconditional love and unwavering support. With war threats mounting, we should be even more committed to going to Israel, praying for and with her people, caring for the poor and needy in the region, and strengthening the Church as the only hope for peace and reconciliation there. The more solid our understanding of the biblical theology of Israel and her neighbors is, the more faithful we will be in loving her people, come what may.

Now, more than ever, we must pray for the Lord's grace and mercy on the Jewish people, that they would be safe from harm and would turn to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for strength and hope. We must also pray for her neighbors, especially the Palestinians, that God would be gracious to them, that they would also turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they and the Israelis would find a way to live together in peace and security despite

their many differences.

America has been deeply blessed because we have blessed Israel according to Genesis 12:1-3. We don't want to see that blessing removed, especially now when our nation is increasingly at risk of economic and spiritual implosion. Now, therefore, is the time to pray that the Lord would strengthen the strategic friendship between the United States and Israel. Few Americans really understand how close the U.S. government came to refusing to support the rebirth of Israel in 1948. Few realize that most of President Truman's advisors were dead set against the Jewish state, and that even many American Jews didn't support Israel's rebirth. But God had a purpose and a plan. His plan came to pass and, amazingly, the United States played a significant role in those prophetic developments.

Along these lines, I am particularly encouraged by the interest that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is taking in the Bible and its relevance to Israel's present and future. In January 2010, he announced at the Auschwitz



death camp that Ezekiel 37 has come true in our lifetime. In March 2012, he met with President Obama in the Oval Office, gave him a decorated copy of an Esther scroll, and discussed the significance of the story with him. It was Esther's prayer and fasting that moved God to intervene to save the Jewish people from a Persian tyrant in ages past. What encourages me about Netanyahu's gift is that it demonstrates his growing interest in the Bible and his willingness to include the Scriptures in discussions with world leaders about the most pressing issues of our time.

Then, in May 2012, while leaders from the United States, China, Russia, France, Britain and Germany were meeting with the Iranians about their nuclear program, Mr. Netanyahu and some of his advisors met in Jerusalem with Jewish scholars to kick off a long-planned home Bible study. The meeting was scheduled to last an hour, but lasted two, and focused on the Book of Ruth.

The Israeli media didn't really get why Netanyahu was starting a Bible study in his official residence, but they

were curious. "There was something at once heartening and slightly humorous about Netanyahu setting aside precious time in the late afternoon to talk about biblical figures Tamar and Yehuda, Naomi and Boaz, Ruth and David, while Iran loomed so large, and domestic issues beckoned so seriously," *The Jerusalem Post* reported. Mr. Netanyahu said that modern Israel's founder, David Ben-Gurion, and its sixth prime minister, Menachem Begin, both believed the Bible should be part of the heritage of the entire nation and they, too, held Bible studies while in office.

"The Bible is the foundation of our existence," said Mr. Netanyahu, following in Ben-Gurion and Begin's footsteps. "It unites the Jewish people, as it has throughout the generations. It also serves not only as a foundation but also as a map and compass. The Bible is always relevant vis-à-vis today's problems and challenges. It inspires, it is a source of life for our people and I think that it is important to expand Bible study and love of the Bible among all parts of the nation."

Now is the time to teach what the Bible says about Israel's past, present and future to Christians, Jews and whoever else will listen. In Jeremiah 31:2, God tells the people of Israel that He has loved them "with an everlasting love." The people of Israel matter because they matter to God. With Iran threatening to "wipe Israel off the map," and the nations distancing themselves from her, we matter to Israel. It is vital for Christians to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to find practical ways to bless Israel and her neighbors in the name of Jesus. Together, we can heed the words of Ezekiel 38:7 to "get ready" and "be prepared." Together, we can follow the call of Jesus in Matthew 25

more Jews and Arabs in the epicenter through our rented warehouse and twelve food distribution centers, assisting Holocaust survivors, the elderly, widows, orphans, and many others. We want to share God's love and encourage more embattled Christians there by supporting Bible training conferences and other ministries.

The next Epicenter Conference will be in Albuquerque this September. It will be an exciting time of studying what the Bible says about Israel, how we should think about the theological and political debates that rage around her, and how we can respond with God's perspective in mind. Next summer, I'll lead a Prayer & Vision Tour to Israel and



TRUE AND FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST SHOULD BLESS BOTH ISRAEL AND HER NEIGHBORS.

to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoners, care for the suffering, and sow the seeds of God's Word. Together we can "pray for peace and prepare for war." Together, too, we can bring the Word of God to the people of the epicenter.

My wife Lynn and I established The Joshua Fund with the objective of "bringing good news to the poor... binding up the brokenhearted...and proclaiming liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners" as the Lord commanded the Hebrew prophet in Isaiah 61:1-3. Our team has many goals for 2012 and beyond. We want to bless

host another conference in Jerusalem. Imagine how fruitful that trip will be for those who have had their hearts and minds prepared in Albuquerque. I hope to see you there. We need you on the team "for such a time as this." ←

Joel Rosenberg is a Middle East expert and best-selling author with over a million books in print. His book *Epicenter* spent months on the *New York Times* best-seller list.

ISRAEL: “HAVING POWER WITH GOD” OR “GOD’S FIGHTER”

- ① “Jacob, the name conferred by the angel of Jehovah upon Jacob at Peniel (Genesis 32:28); ‘for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.’”¹
- ② “The Israelites, i.e., the whole people of Israel, the twelve tribes.”¹
- ③ The united kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon.
- ④ The name used by the ten tribes of the northern kingdom after the split into northern and southern kingdoms.
- ⑤ “The name ‘Israel’...referred to Jacob’s descendants’ spiritual, covenantal, and religious heritage” and “spoke of the ethnic and national Hebrews’ and Jews’ unique relationship with God.”²

1. The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary

2. Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology



A TASTE OF HONEY

By Lenya Heitzig



→I love Israel. Whenever I have the privilege of visiting, I'm reminded of previous trips to the Holy Land, and I look forward to once again experiencing my favorite sights, sounds, and activities. There's the Mount of Olives above the Old City where Jesus delivered His prophetic message. At the lower slope of the mountain, early Christian pilgrims located the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed before His crucifixion. This is holy ground, and I love walking where Jesus may have walked.



Photos Taken By Skip Heitzig



Then there's the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the paralyzed man; Nazareth, the childhood home of Jesus; Cana, where He performed His first miracle at a wedding, and the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus walked across the water to the disciples' boat.

Seeing places spoken of in the Bible brings the Word to life in a whole new way. But as much as I love every one of these historical locations and sites, what I love the most about Israel is—the food!

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of

water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey (Deuteronomy 8:7-8).

In Numbers 13, Moses sent spies to explore the promised land of Canaan. He told them to bring back reports of the land and “bring some of the fruit of the land” (v. 20). The spies fulfilled their mission, returning with grapes, pomegranates, and figs.

The Israelites made no secret of their dissatisfaction with their desert diet. Loving food they way I do, I

can imagine how elated they were at the prospect of savoring these exotic foods. In actuality, the fruits brought back by the spies were just a few of what is referred to as the “Seven Species of Israel,” and are still enjoyed today:

→**WHEAT:** Bread was the staple of diet in biblical times. This grain was first known as emmer wheat or “the mother wheat,” because other wheat forms were derived from it. Flour made from wheat had the capability to rise when baking bread, making it the preferred grain.

→**BARLEY:** This grain was less expensive and known for being “good enough” during harder economic times. It was used in porridge, barley cakes, and even to feed cattle and other livestock.

→**GRAPES:** What could be simpler and more refreshing than plucking a sweet, plump grape from a cluster? When pressed into wine, the psalmist said it “makes glad the heart of man” (Psalm 104:15). The climate in Israel is similar to California, Italy, France, and Greece—countries known for superior wines.

→**OLIVES:** Around the area of Galilee, olives grow plentifully. The trees bloom in May and are harvested in late October. Olives have always been held in high esteem in Israel. The oil was used in Temple services and by kings for anointing purposes.

→**DATES:** In biblical times, dates grew in the Jordan valley. Date honey was made from boiling dates in water, straining the liquid and reducing it by cooking it over a fire. Eaten fresh, they are a sweet snack.

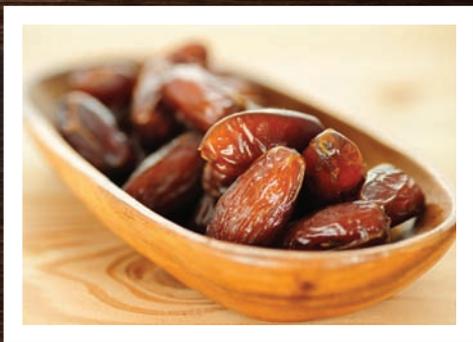
→**FIGS:** The fig tree took special prominence in the Bible when Jesus used it to teach the disciples how to discern the signs of the times (see Matthew



24:32-35). Today figs are still eaten fresh, used as a seasoning, pressed to make honey, or dried and covered in sugar as a wonderful snack.

→**POMEGRANATES:** In the beauty contest of fruits, pomegranates might take first prize. The image of the pomegranate has been used to adorn coins, architecture, and jewelry throughout the ages. As a food, they are made into juice or wine, or eaten fresh. They are also used for making dye.

While these grains and fruits comprise the Seven Species of Israel, the country is also blessed with a variety of other nutritious foods. There are nuts, such as walnuts and almonds; vegetables like cucumbers, leeks, onions, and garlic; legumes like lentils and beans; meats of all kinds that subsequently yield a variety of dairy products, and of course, fish.



FROM FIELD TO FEAST

Although blessed with a variety of crops, Jewish agricultural life was not easy. In our culture, we generally have little contact with farming and harvesting crops, but this was central to Jewish life. Therefore, their celebrations were tied to the joyous times of harvest that signaled a future of sustaining nourishment and livelihood. The three harvest seasons were celebrated with three feasts: The Feast of the Passover at the barley harvest, the Feast of Pentecost at the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles during the fruit harvest. The Passover feast included roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. The lamb was reminiscent of the sacrificial lamb in Exodus 12, whose blood marked the doorposts to prevent the angel of death from slaying the firstborn. The unleavened bread represented the haste with which the Jews left Egypt, and the bitter herbs represented their suffering.

During these celebrations, Jewish men were required to travel to Jerusalem to make an offering, so the city pulsed with activity and anticipation.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us" (Mark 14:12-15).

The disciples had the rare privilege of enjoying a meal face to face with Jesus. They shared celebrations of both

HUMMUS RECIPE

Prep Time: 10 minutes
Total Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 (16 ounce) can of chickpeas or garbanzo beans
1/4 cup liquid from can of chickpeas
3-5 tablespoons lemon juice (to taste)
1 1/2 tablespoons tahini
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon sumac or parsley for garnish

Instructions:

1. Drain chickpeas and set aside liquid from can. Combine remaining ingredients in blender or food processor. Add 1/4 cup of liquid from chickpeas. Blend for 3-5 minutes on low until thoroughly mixed and smooth.
2. Place in serving bowl and create a shallow well in the center of the hummus.
3. Add a small amount (1-2 tablespoons) of olive oil in the well. Garnish with sumac or parsley (optional).

Serve immediately with warm or toasted pita bread, or cover and refrigerate.

ENJOY!

simple and elaborate meals. Before partaking of the meal, Jesus blessed the food and thanked God for His provision. As they shared the food, they probably discussed important topics and enjoyed times of light-hearted conversation and laughter. I'm certain they marveled at Jesus, His words, and His ways. Yet I suspect they didn't realize how precious those times were until He had gone. Across time and cultures, celebrations are integral to life. We are social creatures wired to enjoy fellowship with one another.

Today, Arabs still practice a form of hospitality similar to the ancient Hebrews. A few years ago, my son, Nathan, and I were invited into a Jordanian Bedouin tent to enjoy a special feast known as mansaf. Picture the desert version of a Hawaiian luau, but instead of a pig on a platter, the tray held roasted lamb with all the trimmings. A long line of local sheikhs who said, "You are among your family," greeted us. Nathan especially was treated as a most honored guest. The sheikh who owned the tent patted him on the head, embraced his cheeks, and gave him double portions of the mansaf, and we were honored by their gracious hospitality.

I have my own favorite foods that I enjoy when in Israel. One of my favorites is hummus from Lina's Restaurant. This popular spot is found down the winding streets and alleys of the Old City of Jerusalem. The flavor of their hummus is velvety and a bit on the sour side, flavored with olive oil.

Like Americans love peanut butter and Australians adore vegemite, the Israelis love the spreadable side dish of hummus. This pureed chickpea dip is eaten by sopping pita bread into the mixture, like a tortilla chip into salsa. A variety of toppings can be added to hummus like broad beans called *ful*, mushrooms, pine nuts, and meat.

Although no one knows the exact origin of hummus, the dish is served throughout the Middle East from the Mediterranean to India. To this day, a lively dispute exists between Lebanon and Israel about the origin of hummus.

Lina's Restaurant guards their special recipe, but here is one of my own favorites that I'm delighted to share. Enjoy!

Lena Heitzig is an award-winning author and sought-after speaker at conferences and retreats worldwide. Visit Lena's blog at sheabq.org

The Bible makes it clear that God will NEVER cast away or forsake His people—the nation and its land will exist forever! -Dr.

David Hocking

.....

Modern Israel is the result of God's direct intervention in history. I believe that those who speak contrary to this will be found to be fighting God. -Dr. Thomas Ice

.....

Genesis 12:3 promises that God blesses those who bless Abraham's Jewish descendants.... The histories of nations that have abused the Jewish people provide more than enough examples of the inevitable doom brought down upon their own heads. -David Jeremiah

.....

Israel is so tiny.... Yet God says she will be at the center of the end times events. And it is happening just as the Bible promised it would. -Greg Laurie

.....

Israel is a God-ordained, God-called, God-protected, and God-blessed nation.

-Dr. Adrian Rogers

.....

The great and main end of separating one particular nation from all others, as God did the nation of Israel, was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

-Jonathan Edwards

FROM THE BLOG

Who Are the

144,000

That Revelation Speaks of?

By Skip Heitzig

→Unfortunately, some people like to spiritualize Scripture. They take it out of context and say, “The church is Israel, and Israel is the church, and it’s all one group.” No, it’s not! They are two distinct groups. When God deals with the Jews, it’s different than when He deals with other people, with Gentiles. These people (in Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5) are 144,000 Messianic Jews, “Jews for Jesus,” so to speak, during the great tribulation period.

The Jews have been chosen by God for some specific purposes. Some people don’t like that: “What do you mean, ‘the chosen people’?” And there are some of the Jews who don’t like it either, that they’re the chosen people, because they look back on their history and they see all the persecution, hatred, anti-Semitism, murder, and destruction that has happened to their people. But nonetheless, they’re special, and God has a special plan for them.

WHY ARE THEY SO SPECIAL?

NUMBER ONE: They gave us the Scripture. It came breathed by God through the Jewish nation. Almost every author in the Scripture, with just a couple of exceptions, was Jewish.

NUMBER TWO: They preserved the Scripture. They meticulously handed it down from father to son. The scribe would write all of the Scripture with his pen, letter by letter, page by page, train his son how to do it, and they did this for hundreds and thousands of years. And they did it very accurately. The best example of this is the Dead Sea Scrolls, because of what was not found in them: mistakes. The experts compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were written in about 200 B.C., with

what were previously the most ancient manuscripts, from about A.D. 900, and they were the same. For instance, the entire scroll of Isaiah was found intact, and it was found to be virtually identical, without mistakes, to the one written 1100 years later! This showed the accuracy of the preservation of the text, from generation to generation.

AND NUMBER THREE: Our Savior came through the Jewish nation. Paul reminds us of that: “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). The first disciples were Jewish, and they took the gospel of the Messiah to all of the nations of the earth at that time. And so Paul sums this up in Romans 9, “Theirs [that is, the Jews’] is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!” (vv. 4-5, NIV).

These are the Jews, and God made some promises to them which He will fulfill during the tribulation period, as Revelation shows. ←

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ON THE CONNECTION

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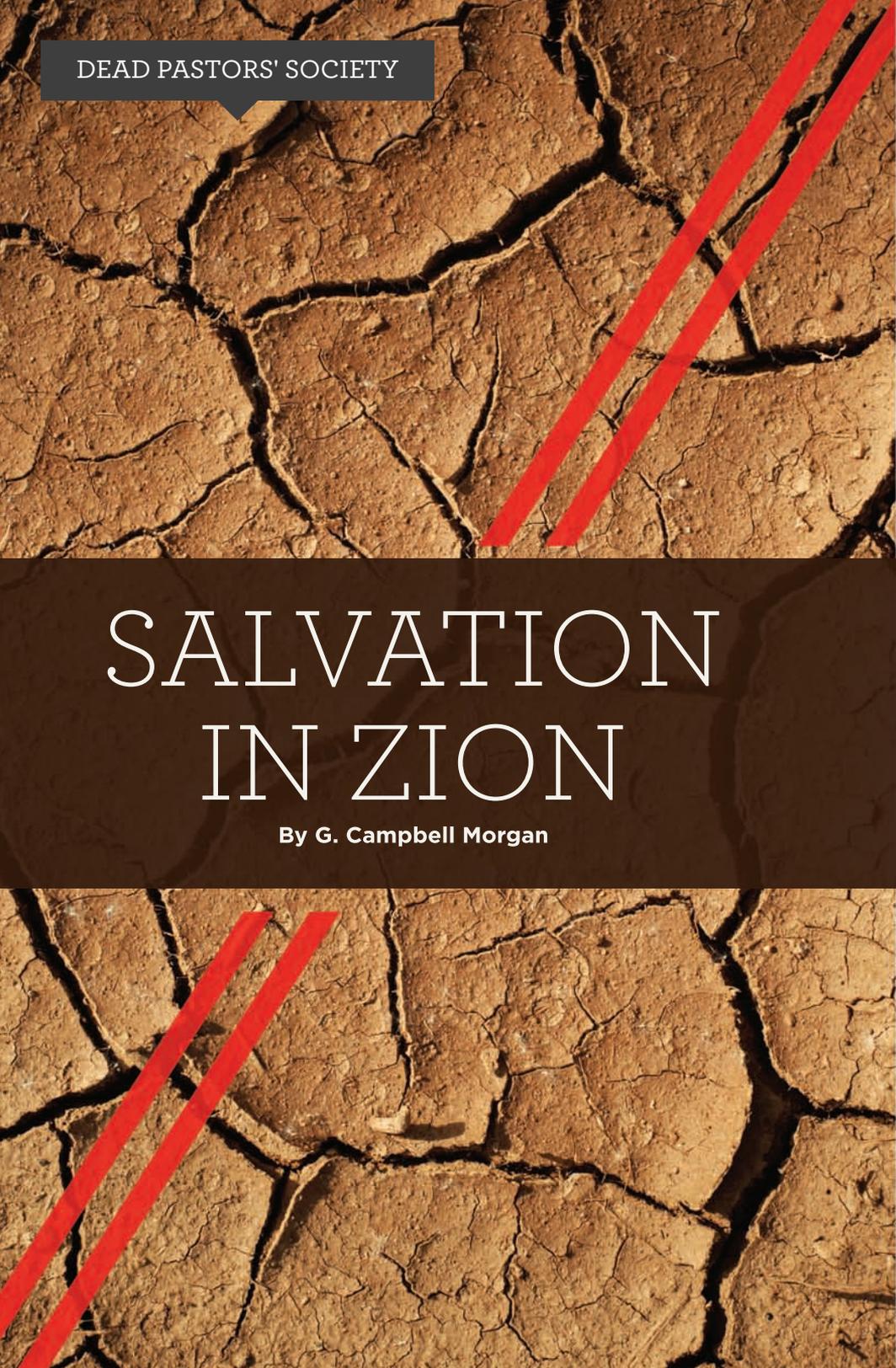
In this verse-by-verse study, Pastor Skip Heitzig presents an in-depth look at Moses, the ten plagues, the ten commandments, the desert wanderings, the construction of the tabernacle, and more. As we study, we'll see the grace of God, witness the glory of the Lord, and catch a glimpse of Israel's coming Savior.

FROM THE LISTENER

→On the podcast of Skip's teaching, the narrator encouraged listeners to write on how they have been ministered to so here's a short account:

I was called to Christ by Skip on January 16, 1994 while attending college at UNM. I had been an unhappy Catholic for many years and was overwhelmed with the atmosphere at Calvary and, most especially, Skip's teaching. I had always wanted to know the Bible but it wasn't until I heard Skip that it all opened up for me. I have been diligently studying the Word ever since but recently felt frustrated with some of the resources I was relying on. It was with great joy that I found Skip's teachings again via the free Podcast on iTunes. Having spent so much time studying Scripture it is the rare teacher that can keep my attention yet, Skip still has the gift. He will always be my "home pastor" and Calvary Albuquerque will always be my "home church" in tithing, prayers and a strong bond of emotion. Although I pay my bills as a soldier, I still spend extensive time studying, writing and blogging on our Savior and His Scriptures and Pastor Skip was the voice the Holy Spirit used to make it all possible.

—John



DEAD PASTORS' SOCIETY

SALVATION IN ZION

By G. Campbell Morgan

ZION WAS THE HOME OF THE FREE; BECAUSE IT WAS A DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

The city of God was in ruins; the people of God were scattered; the nation, peculiar to God for the fulfillment of His purpose in the world, was represented by the feeblest remnant. The chosen people of God are seen by the prophet, under the dominion of Babylon. Then the mind of Isaiah, illumined by the Spirit, sees a Deliverer... [T]he prophet instituted a contrast between Babylon and Zion; between the city of God and the city of men; between all that man is able to do without God, and all that God is able to do in spite of man... [T]he contrast in this chapter, being peculiarly a contrast between religions, the conception of the prophet most evidently is, that what a nation is, depends upon the religion of the nation. Babylon has worshipped idols. Zion is the center of the worship of Jehovah...

What does Zion mean? ...It means desert... When the Hebrews sang of Zion they never thought of the desert. The Hebrews associated with the name great essential values, and principles, and aspirations.

A devout Hebrew who knew the secret mystery of his own life, and who lived in true consciousness of his relationship to Jehovah, sang of Zion and thought of Zion, as the place of Divine founding; the place of Divine dwelling; the place of Divine revealing. Zion for the Hebrew was the synonym of the Divine presence, the Divine government, the Divine unveiling; and the thought that came to the heart of the Hebrew when turning from those central verities to consider his own relationship to Zion was always the thought of the other word in my text, salvation.

Let us then inquire the meaning of this great word. The particular word, here translated "salvation," is somewhat rare in the Old Testament. The root significance is that of freedom. The idea here is that of safety based upon freedom. Zion was the home of the free; because it was the dwelling place of God, it was the place where bondage could not continue. Zion, the place of Divine dwelling and Divine revealing and Divine government, was the place of human security, and human realization, and human happiness. The captive exiles sang of Zion, and sighed for Zion, because Zion was the dwelling place of the great King, and consequently the place of the perfect Kingdom. Zion and salvation to the thinking of the Hebrew were always closely associated...

The principle revealed as a great ideal is that of the establishment of the Divine order in the world; Zion instead of Babylon. Babylon, the city and the life of godlessness. Zion the city and the life of godliness. All the prophetic writers and all the prophetic singers in the Old and New [Testaments] saw the ultimate victory, the victory of Zion over Babylon, of Jehovah over idols, of that religion which consists in worship of the One Who creates and carries, over that religion which consists in the creating of idols which men have to carry, and carry until overburdened by their weight they stoop to dust and destruction.

Now finally, hear the word of Jehovah, "I will place salvation in Zion." The ultimate victory of Zion will not be Zion's victory, but Jehovah's victory...

Let the Church embody the principles of Zion, and faith, and return to Jehovah, make His will supreme in all the affairs of her own service, and in all the affairs of the lives of her own people; let her remember and let her return, and then "I will place salvation in Zion." He will make the Church a city of free men, for bondage to God is freedom from all other bondage. The neck bent to His yoke is the most erect in the presence of every other form of tyranny. The man wholly submitted to Jehovah is the man who is master of lust and passion and the alluring forces of the world which only win a man, for his destruction. It is the bondsman of God who is the free man in the world. That is the whole principle of Zion in a sentence. ←

G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) was a British pastor and Bible expositor. He preached the gospel for nearly 60 years, most famously at the Westminster Chapel in London, and he authored over 70 books.



OFF THE CUFF

Q&A
WITH
SKIP HEITZIG

With many of the people Skip has interviewed for *The Connection*, he has asked about the situation in Israel and the Middle East. Here are some of their responses:

Dr. Tim LaHaye, pastor and best-selling author:

What's going on in the Middle East right now—I hope this grips our audience at the rightness of the Word of God—that for the first time in all of history, Russia and the Islamist world are getting together as allies, exactly the way Ezekiel 38 and 39 describes it. And then God is going to destroy this group that are trying to destroy Israel, on the mountains of Israel, as a testimony... God told Moses that he was going to deliver Israel “so that all the world will know that I am the Lord.”

General Jerry Boykin, former head of US Delta Force:

It comes back to something very fundamental...it's not just the hatred for Israel, it's also the dependence of the rest of the world on that Middle East oil, and not wanting to risk losing the supply of oil.

Dr. Thomas Ice, Executive Director of the Pre-Trib Research Center:

Israel since the 1920s has had the legal right to all the land west of the Jordan, and therefore they are not occupiers... I'm opposed to [the division of the land of Israel], and I think it will bring the judgment of God upon people who identify with that. We find that in the book of Joel where He says the reason

why He is going to judge the world is because of the way they treated Israel, which includes “dividing my land.” And Dave Hunt made an interesting point in his book *Judgment Day* a while back where he pointed out that only in the twentieth century have people attempted to divide Israel's land.

Joel C. Rosenberg, best-selling author and Middle East expert:

We are at a moment when all of the nations on the planet, including the United States, are trying to pressure Israel to divide the land. And we need to be loving but firm and clear from the Scripture: This will bring judgment and war, not peace and reconciliation...

I think God is shaking the people of the Middle East, through war, through rumors of wars, through revolutions, through terrorism, through persecution. He's shaking people who are so dependent on Islam and he's getting them to think, “Maybe Islam is not the answer. Maybe Jihad is not the way. Maybe everything I've always thought was right, isn't... What is the truth? Where do I turn? Who really is God?”

But these winds of change are not light breezes. These are hurricanes and tornadoes that are blowing through the region... What's interesting is they're seeing open doors now. Like they have never had teams inside Libya, ever; now they do, smuggling in Bibles, preaching the gospel, winning people to Jesus. It's a very unstable situation but God is creating openings now. And we have to keep praying from the perspective of the gospel,



THE REASON
WHY HE IS
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WAY THEY
TREATED
ISRAEL.

not from the perspective of democracy, how do we advance the Kingdom amidst all this tumultuous and dangerous change?

The Iranian government [is] convinced that their false messiah, the “twelfth imam,” is coming and that these uprisings are evidence of their prophecies coming true. But the short version is, the Iranian leadership is convinced they need to get nuclear weapons and use them against Israel to destroy Judaism and then that will help bring their messiah. And that is incredibly dangerous situation...

You can listen to current and past interviews with Christian leaders like these at the new skipheitzig.com website—just click on the “Radio Show” tab and “First Friday” and you’ll find all the broadcasts.

Also, be sure to attend the 2012 Epicenter Conference at Calvary of Albuquerque, September 14-16, 2012. Addresses and panel discussions will feature major Christian speakers and theologians including Dr. Norman Geisler of Veritas Seminary, Dr. Mitch Glaser of Talbot Seminary, Dr. Michael Rydelnick of Moody Bible Institute, Dr. Ed Hindson of Liberty University, Dr. Erez Soref of the Israel College of the Bible, Rev. Labib Madanat of the Palestinian/Israeli Bible Society, and host Joel C. Rosenberg. ←

THE HOLY LAND

By John Greenleaf Whittier

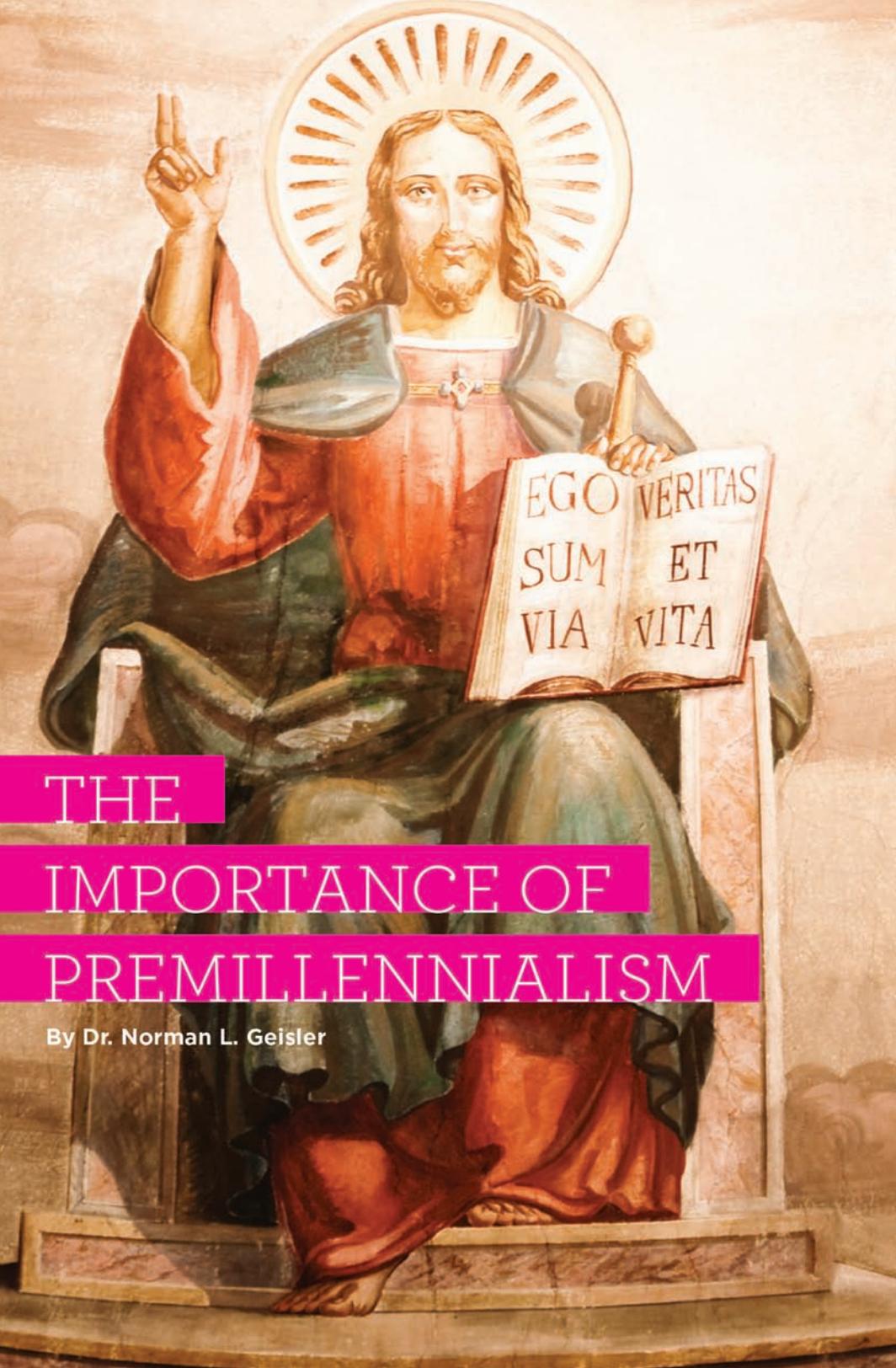
I have not felt, o'er seas of sand,
The rocking of the desert bark;
Nor laved at Hebron's fount my hand,
By Hebron's palm-trees cool and dark;
Nor pitched my tent at even-fall,
On dust where Job of old has lain,
Nor dreamed beneath its canvas wall,
The dream of Jacob o'er again.

Nor have I, from thy hallowed tide,
O Jordan! heard the low lament,
Like that sad wail along thy side
Which Israel's mournful prophet sent!
Nor thrilled within that grotto lone
Where, deep in night, the Bard of Kings
Felt hands of fire direct his own,
And sweep for God the conscious strings.

I have not climbed to Olivet,
Nor laid me where my Saviour lay,
And left His trace of tears as yet
By angel eyes unwept away;
Nor watched, at midnight's solemn time,
The garden where His prayer and groan,
Wrung by His sorrow and our crime,
Rose to One listening ear alone.

I have not kissed the rock-hewn grot
Where in His mother's arms He lay,
Nor knelt upon the sacred spot
Where last His footsteps pressed the clay;
Nor looked on that sad mountain head,
Nor smote my sinful breast, where wide
His arms to fold the world He spread,
And bowed His head to bless—and died!





THE

IMPORTANCE OF

PREMILLENNIALISM

By Dr. Norman L. Geisler

→Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will physically return to earth, set up a throne in Jerusalem, and reign over the whole earth for a thousand years. Amillennialism (no millennium) denies this literal future reign of Christ and claims that Christ is currently reigning over the world spiritually. Postmillennialism holds that Christ is coming to earth after the Church brings in the kingdom by progressively Christianizing the world before His return.

There are many arguments for pre-millennialism. Contrary to the opposing views, the premillennial view is based on a consistent use of the literal historical/grammatical interpretation of prophetic passages of Scripture. Here are some noteworthy reasons for believing in a literal millennial reign of Christ.

1. WITHOUT A MILLENNIUM, GOD LOST THE BATTLE IN HISTORY

God started human history by creating human beings in a literal Paradise (Genesis 1-2). But this Paradise was lost by sin. Being tempted by the Devil, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, thus bringing pain, suffering, and death on themselves and on all mankind. So, the Tempter won the first battle.

If the Paradise lost is never regained, then eventually God is the loser and Satan the winner. But God is omnipotent and cannot ultimately lose. Hence, there must be a literal Paradise regained, such as we have in the premillennial view of the end of history.

God will regain the Paradise that was lost. He will do this by a literal resurrection and by the literal reign on earth of Christ, the Last Adam.

2. WITHOUT A MILLENNIUM, HISTORY HAS NO CLIMAX

It is widely acknowledged that a linear view of history (that history is moving forward toward a final goal) is the result of the Judeo-Christian revelation. God has planned history and is moving it forward toward its end (Daniel 2, 7). But without a literal historical millennium on earth there is no real end to history. According to a traditional amillennial view, human history merely stops, but it never really comes to a climax. It simply ends and then the eternal state begins. However, on the premillennial view, the millennium is not the first chapter of eternity; it is the last chapter of time. It is the time when, by Christ's reign, sin, suffering, and death will be finally overcome.



IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT MANY OF THE MODERN MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS AND EVANGELISTIC EFFORTS WERE HEADED BY PREMILLENNIALISTS.

3. WITHOUT A MILLENNIUM, GOD WOULD BREAK AN UNCONDITIONAL LAND PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendents forever. This land promise was unconditional. But this promise to Abraham has never yet been fulfilled. However, according to the Bible it will yet be fulfilled in the future in the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-6). Without a literal national fulfillment, such as the millennium, God would have broken an unconditional covenant—which is impossible (Hebrews 6:17-18)!

4. WITHOUT A MILLENNIUM, GOD WOULD BREAK AN UNCONDITIONAL THRONE PROMISE TO DAVID

God promised David that he and his descendents would reign on a throne in Israel forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). This was an unconditional promise (Psalms 89:28-37).

However, no descendent of David

is now—nor has been for over 2500 years—reigning on a literal throne in Jerusalem. But Jesus promised that Christ, a descendent of David, would do so in the future (Matthew 19:28). Without Christ's return and perpetual reign, God would have broken this unconditional promise. But this, again, is impossible (Romans 11:29).

5. ONLY PREMILLENNIALISM EMPLOYS A CONSISTENT HERMENEUTIC

To deny premillennialism is to deny the consistent application of the literal historical/grammatical interpretation of the Bible. The non-pre-mill view fails because: 1) It takes parts of the Bible literally but not all (e.g., prophecy); 2) It takes part of the prophets literally (First Advent) but not all of the Second Advent texts; 3) It takes part of the Gospels literally, namely, Christ's death and resurrection, but not all of Jesus' predictions made in the Gospels, namely, His statements about His Second Coming; 4) It takes part of a verse

literally but not the rest. When quoting Isaiah, Jesus stopped in the middle of a sentence and pronounced it literally fulfilled (in His First Coming), but the rest of the verse speaks of His Second Coming which must be taken literally too (see Luke 4:18-21); 5) It takes one resurrection literally but not the other (Revelation 20:5-6; John 5:28-29). But the two are listed together in the same texts.

Further, if the non-literal (spiritualized) interpretations of a-mills and post-mills were applied to other sections of Scripture it would undermine the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. If applied to Genesis 1-3, it would deny the historicity of Adam, the Fall, and the Doctrine of Creation. (If the End isn't literal, then why should the Beginning be literal?) If applied to the texts about the Cross, it would deny the atonement. And if applied to the resurrection narratives, it would deny Christ's victory over death. So, to deny the foundation of premillennialism is logically to undermine salvation fundamentals as well.

6. PREMILLENNIALISM ADDS URGENCY TO EVANGELISM

Premillennialism, especially in those who hold the imminency of Christ's return, creates a certain sense of urgency not generated by the other views. For if Christ is coming before the millennium at a time we know not, then believers should live in a constant sense of expectation. If one believes his time is limited and Christ may come at any moment, then he will have more of a sense of urgency about evangelism. There is a far greater sense of urgency if one believes it could be our last opportunity to reach anyone at any moment.

For this reason, it is no coincidence that many of the modern missionary movements and evangelistic efforts were headed by premillennialists.

7. PREMILLENNIAL IMMUNITY ADDS AN INCENTIVE FOR HOLINESS

There are many incentives for godliness, but certainly the imminent premillennial expectation is an added one, for no true believer wants to be caught in sin when Jesus returns. The apostle John declared: "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Paul exhorted us to "renounce ungodliness" and to be a people "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:12, 14). So, the sense of imminency has a purifying effect on one's life. It also has a sobering effect. As Peter said, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief...what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives" (2 Peter 3:10-11).

Our spiritual forefathers did not put premillennialism in our doctrinal statement because they thought it was unimportant. To the contrary, premillennialism is based on an interpretation fundamental that underlies all the salvation fundamentals of the Faith. Giving it up could cause serious problems for the future of the church. First, we would be giving up the very basis for all the fundamental Christian doctrines. Second, there is the underlying tendency to sacrifice important doctrines for the sake of unity, fraternity, or multiplicity (growth). Yielding to this tendency sets a bad precedent for future deviation on even more important issues.

One final thought. It is of more than passing significance to note that few, if any, evangelical groups ever move from premillennialism to liberalism. However, this is not true of amillennial and post-millennial views. So, it is not without good reason that premillennialism is a safeguard against liberalism. ←

Dr. Norman L. Geisler is a prolific author, professor, lecturer, evangelist, and theologian. He has taught theology, philosophy, and apologetics on the college or graduate level for over 50 years, and has authored/coauthored over 70 books.

JULY

JULY 1

READ: Obadiah 1; Psalm 82
REFLECT: *Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy* (Psalm 82:3).
RETURN: Psalm 83

JULY 2

READ: 2 Kings 1-7
REFLECT: *The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha* (2 Kings 2:15).
RETURN: 2 Kings 8

JULY 3

READ: 2 Kings 9-10
REFLECT: *And the LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in doing what is right in My sight, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation"* (2 Kings 10:30).
RETURN: 2 Kings 11

JULY 4

READ: 2 Kings 12-13
REFLECT: *So Jehoahaz pleaded with the LORD, and the LORD listened to him* (2 Kings 13:4).
RETURN: 2 Chronicles 24

JULY 5

READ: 2 Kings 14
REFLECT: *Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers* (2 Kings 14:6).
RETURN: 2 Chronicles 25

JULY 6

READ: Jonah 1-3
REFLECT: *Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy* (Jonah 2:8).
RETURN: Jonah 4

JULY 7

READ: 2 Kings 15
REFLECT: *And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done* (2 Kings 15:34).
RETURN: 2 Chronicles 26

JULY 8

READ: Isaiah 1-3
REFLECT: *"Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18).
RETURN: Isaiah 4

JULY 9

READ: Isaiah 5-7
REFLECT: *Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory!* (Isaiah 6:3).
RETURN: Isaiah 8

JULY 10

READ: Amos 1-4
REFLECT: *Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!* (Amos 4:12).
RETURN: Amos 5

JULY 11

READ: Amos 6-8
REFLECT: *O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!* (Amos 7:2).
RETURN: Amos 9

JULY 12

READ: Isaiah 9-12
REFLECT: *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD* (Isaiah 11:2).
RETURN: 2 Chronicles 27

JULY 13

READ: Micah 1-5
REFLECT: *But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting* (Micah 5:2).
RETURN: Micah 6-7

JULY 14

READ: 2 Kings 16-17
REFLECT: *Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants*

the prophets
(2 Kings 17:13).

RETURN: 2 Chronicles 28

JULY 15

READ: Isaiah 13-16

REFLECT: *In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness (Isaiah 16:5).*

RETURN: Isaiah 17

JULY 16

READ: Isaiah 18-21

REFLECT: *He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them (Isaiah 19:20).*

RETURN: Isaiah 22

JULY 17

READ: Isaiah 23-26

REFLECT: *You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3).*

RETURN: Isaiah 27

JULY 18

READ: 2 Kings 18:1-8;

2 Chronicles 29-31

REFLECT: *For he held fast to the LORD, he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went (2 Kings 18:6-7).*

RETURN: Psalm 48

JULY 19

READ: Hosea 1-5

REFLECT: *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the later days (Hosea 3:5).*

RETURN: Hosea 6-7

JULY 20

READ: Hosea 8-12

REFLECT: *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you (Hosea 10:12).*

RETURN: Hosea 13-14

JULY 21

READ: Isaiah 28-29

REFLECT: *Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious conerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily (Isaiah 28:16).*

RETURN: Isaiah 30

JULY 22

READ: Isaiah 31-33

REFLECT: *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD! (Isaiah 31:1)*

RETURN: Isaiah 34

JULY 23

READ: Isaiah 35

REFLECT: *Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be stong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you" (Isaiah 35:4).*

RETURN: Isaiah 36

JULY 24

READ: Isaiah 37-39

REFLECT: *The LORD was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the LORD (Isaiah 38:20).*

RETURN: Psalm 76

JULY 25

READ: Isaiah 40-42

REFLECT: *The grass withers, the flowers fades, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).*

RETURN: Isaiah 43

JULY 26

READ: Isaiah 44-47

REFLECT: *For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9-10).*

RETURN: Isaiah 48

JULY 27

READ: 2 Kings 18:9-19:37;

Psalm 46, Psalm 80

REFLECT: *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (Psalm 46:10).*

RETURN: Psalm 135

JULY 28

READ: Isaiah 49-52

REFLECT: *Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God (Isaiah 50:10).*

RETURN: Isaiah 53

JULY 29

READ: Isaiah 54-57

REFLECT: *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).*

RETURN: Isaiah 58

JULY 30

READ: Isaiah 59-62

REFLECT: *He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound (Isaiah 61:1).*

RETURN: Isaiah 63

JULY 31

READ: Isaiah 64-65

REFLECT: *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him (Isaiah 64:4).*

RETURN: Isaiah 66

AUGUST

AUGUST 1

READ: 2 Kings 20

REFLECT: *Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen*

your tears; surely I will heal you" (2 Kings 20:5).

RETURN: 2 Kings 21

AUGUST 2

READ: 2 Chronicles 32

REFLECT: *Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart...so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:26).*

RETURN: 2 Chronicles 33

AUGUST 3

READ: Nahum 1-2

REFLECT: *The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him (Nahum 1:7).*

RETURN: Nahum 3

AUGUST 4

READ: 2 Kings 22-23

REFLECT: *Then the king...made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments (2 Kings 23:3).*

RETURN: 2 Chronicles 34-35

AUGUST 5

READ: Zephaniah 1-2

REFLECT: *Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility (Zephaniah 2:3).*

RETURN: Zephaniah 3

AUGUST 6

READ: Jeremiah 1-2

REFLECT: *For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 3

AUGUST 7

READ: Jeremiah 4-5

REFLECT: *Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and take away the foreskins of your hearts (Jeremiah 4:3-4).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 6

AUGUST 8

READ: Jeremiah 7-8

REFLECT: *Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so what wisdom do they have? (Jeremiah 8:9).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 9

AUGUST 9

READ: Jeremiah 10-12

REFLECT: *The LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King (Jeremiah 10:10).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 13

AUGUST 10

READ: Jeremiah 14-16

REFLECT: *Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me" (Jeremiah 15:19).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 17

AUGUST 11

READ: Jeremiah 18-21

REFLECT: *Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death" (Jeremiah 21:8).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 22

AUGUST 12

READ: Jeremiah 23-24

REFLECT: *"Am I a God near at hand," says the LORD, "And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" (Jeremiah 23:23-24).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 25

AUGUST 13

READ: Jeremiah 26-28

REFLECT: *Amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God (Jeremiah 26:13).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 29

AUGUST 14

READ: Jeremiah 30

REFLECT: *You shall be My people, and I will be your God (Jeremiah 30:22).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 31

AUGUST 15

READ: Jeremiah 32-33

REFLECT: *Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 34

AUGUST 16

READ: Jeremiah 35-36

REFLECT: *"Will you not receive instruction to obey My words?" says the LORD (Jeremiah 35:13).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 37

AUGUST 17

READ: Jeremiah 38-40; Psalm 74

REFLECT: *"For God is my King from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth" (Psalm 74:12).*

RETURN: Psalm 79

AUGUST 18

READ: 2 Kings 24-25

REFLECT: *Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done (2 Kings 24:3).*

RETURN: 2 Chronicles 36

AUGUST 19

READ: Habakkuk 1-2

REFLECT: *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness (Habakkuk 1:13).*

RETURN: Habakkuk 3

AUGUST 20

READ: Jeremiah 41-44

REFLECT: *But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods (Jeremiah 44:5).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 45

AUGUST 21

READ: Jeremiah 46-47

REFLECT: *But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity (Jeremiah 46:27).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 48

AUGUST 22

READ: Jeremiah 49

REFLECT: *"Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will cause to be heard an alarm of war" (Jeremiah 49:2).*

RETURN: Jeremiah 50

AUGUST 23

READ: Jeremiah 51

REFLECT: *For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, by his*

God, the LORD of hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel (Jeremiah 51:5).
RETURN: Jeremiah 52

AUGUST 24

READ: Lamentations 1-2
REFLECT: *The LORD has done what He purposed; He has fulfilled His word which He commanded in days of old* (Lamentations 2:17).
RETURN: Lamentations 3

AUGUST 25

READ: Lamentations 4
REFLECT: *The LORD has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, and it has devoured its foundations* (Lamentations 4:11).
RETURN: Lamentations 5

AUGUST 26

READ: Ezekiel 1-3
REFLECT: *Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me* (Ezekiel 3:17).
RETURN: Ezekiel 4

AUGUST 27

READ: Ezekiel 5-7
REFLECT: *Indeed I, even I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain men before your idols* (Ezekiel 6:3-4).
RETURN: Ezekiel 8

AUGUST 28

READ: Ezekiel 9-11
REFLECT: *Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim* (Ezekiel 10:18).
RETURN: Ezekiel 12

AUGUST 29

READ: Ezekiel 13-14
REFLECT: *Thus says the LORD God: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing* (Ezekiel 13:3).
RETURN: Ezekiel 15

AUGUST 30

READ: Ezekiel 16
REFLECT: *Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you* (Ezekiel 16:60).
RETURN: Ezekiel 17

AUGUST 31

READ: Ezekiel 18
REFLECT: *"Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the LORD God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"* (Ezekiel 18:23).
RETURN: Ezekiel 19

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 1

READ: Ezekiel 20
REFLECT: *Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doing, O house of Israel* (Ezekiel 20:44).
RETURN: Ezekiel 21

SEPTEMBER 2

READ: Ezekiel 22
REFLECT: *So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one* (Ezekiel 22:30).
RETURN: Ezekiel 23

SEPTEMBER 3

READ: Ezekiel 24-26
REFLECT: *Therefore thus says the LORD God: "Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up"* (Ezekiel 26:3).
RETURN: Ezekiel 27

SEPTEMBER 4

READ: Ezekiel 28-30
REFLECT: *Yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know*

that I am the LORD their God (Ezekiel 28:26).
RETURN: Ezekiel 31

SEPTEMBER 5

READ: Ezekiel 32-33
REFLECT: *"As I live," says the LORD God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezekiel 33:11).
RETURN: Ezekiel 34

SEPTEMBER 6

READ: Ezekiel 35-36
REFLECT: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh* (Ezekiel 36:26).
RETURN: Ezekiel 37

SEPTEMBER 7

READ: Ezekiel 38
REFLECT: *All men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground* (Ezekiel 38:20).
RETURN: Ezekiel 39

SEPTEMBER 8

READ: Ezekiel 40
REFLECT: *There was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hands, and he stood in the gateway* (Ezekiel 40:3).
RETURN: Ezekiel 41

SEPTEMBER 9

READ: Ezekiel 42
REFLECT: *Then he said to me, "The north chambers and the south chambers... are the holy chambers where the priests who approach the LORD shall eat the most holy offering"* (Ezekiel 42:13).
RETURN: Ezekiel 43

SEPTEMBER 10

READ: Ezekiel 44
REFLECT: *The best of all firstfruits of any kind, and every sacrifice of any kind from all your sacrifices,*

shall be the priest's (Ezekiel 44:30).

RETURN: Ezekiel 45

SEPTEMBER 11

READ: Ezekiel 46-47

REFLECT: Thus says the Lord GOD: "These are the borders by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ezekiel 47:13).

RETURN: Ezekiel 48

SEPTEMBER 12

READ: Joel 1-2

REFLECT: "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12).

RETURN: Joel 3

SEPTEMBER 13

READ: Daniel 1-2

REFLECT: But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days (Daniel 2:28).

RETURN: Daniel 3

SEPTEMBER 14

READ: Daniel 4-5

REFLECT: In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace (Daniel 5:5).

RETURN: Daniel 6

SEPTEMBER 15

READ: Daniel 7-8

REFLECT: And when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end" (Daniel 8:17).

RETURN: Daniel 9

SEPTEMBER 16

READ: Daniel 10-11

REFLECT: Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard" (Daniel 10:12).

RETURN: Daniel 12

SEPTEMBER 17

READ: Ezra 1-2

REFLECT: Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (Ezra 1:3).

RETURN: Ezra 3

SEPTEMBER 18

READ: Ezra 4-6

REFLECT: And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the LORD made them joyful (Ezra 6:22).

RETURN: Psalm 137

SEPTEMBER 19

READ: Haggai 1

REFLECT: "Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD (Haggai 1:8).

RETURN: Haggai 2

SEPTEMBER 20

READ: Zechariah 1-5

REFLECT: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD. (Zechariah 2:10).

RETURN: Zechariah 6-7

SEPTEMBER 21

READ: Zechariah 8-13

REFLECT: Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).

RETURN: Zechariah 14

SEPTEMBER 22

READ: Esther 1-4

REFLECT: Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14).

RETURN: Esther 5

SEPTEMBER 23

READ: Esther 6-8

REFLECT: So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" (Esther 6:6).

RETURN: Esther 9-10

SEPTEMBER 24

READ: Ezra 7-9

REFLECT: For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach

statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10).

RETURN: Ezra 10

SEPTEMBER 25

READ: Nehemiah 1-4

REFLECT: And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18).

RETURN: Nehemiah 5

SEPTEMBER 26

READ: Nehemiah 6

REFLECT: So the wall was finished...in fifty-two days...they perceived that this work was done by our God (Nehemiah 6:15-16).

RETURN: Nehemiah 7

SEPTEMBER 27

READ: Nehemiah 8-9

REFLECT: So they read distinctly from the book, in the law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading (Nehemiah 8:8).

RETURN: Nehemiah 10

SEPTEMBER 28

READ: Nehemiah 11-13

REFLECT: So I contended with the rulers, and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their place. (Nehemiah 13:11).

RETURN: Psalm 126

SEPTEMBER 29

READ: Malachi 1-3

REFLECT: For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles (Malachi 1:11).

RETURN: Malachi 4

SEPTEMBER 30

READ: Luke 1

REFLECT: And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus (Luke 1:31).

RETURN: Luke 1:1-14

Adapted from Reading Plan—the Bible Chronologically in a Year; bibleplan.org

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, NKJV.

DID YOU KNOW?



When God gave the Promised Land to the Israelites, He said, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory” (Joshua 1:3-4).



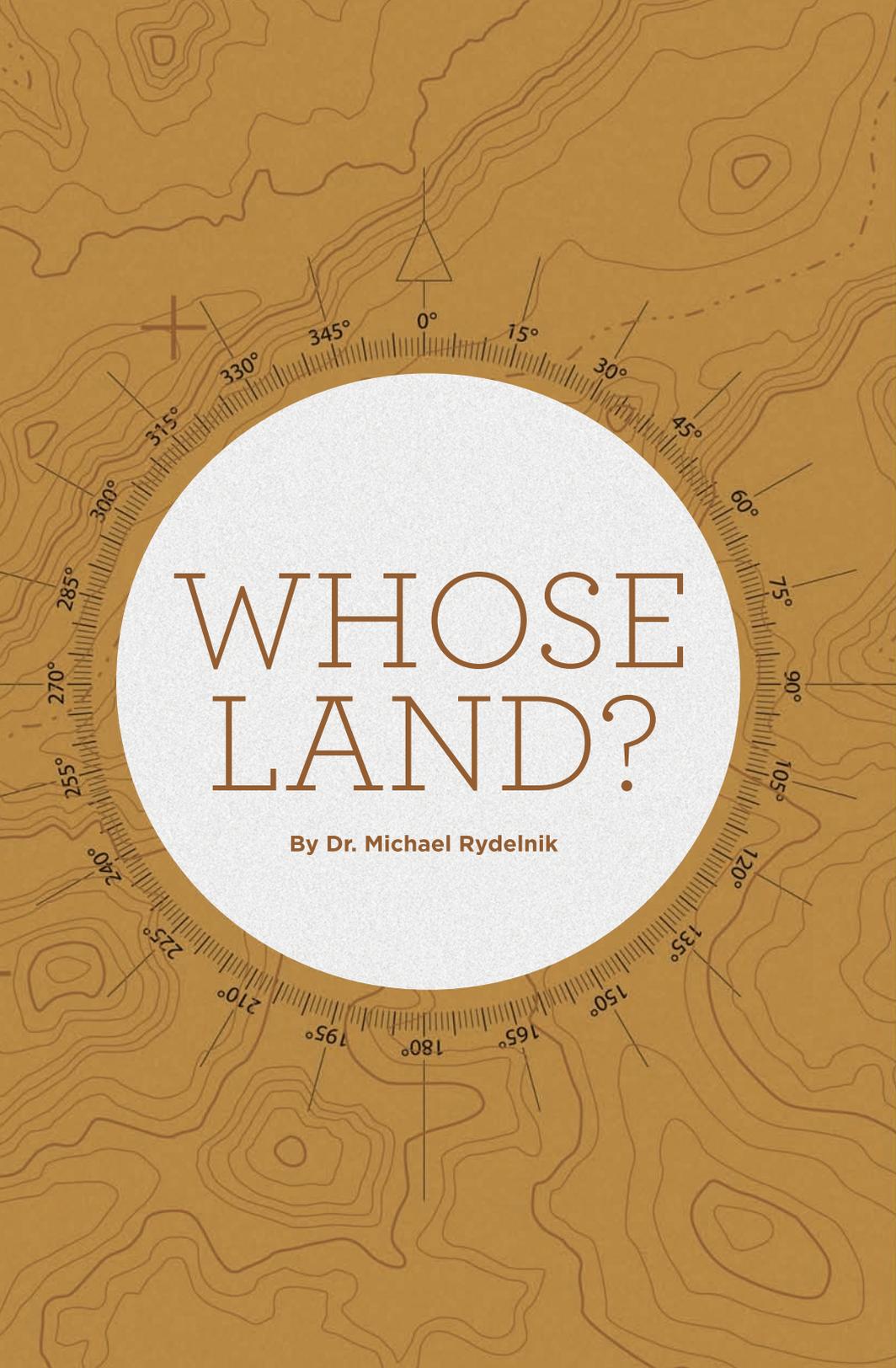
This area encompassed 300,000 square miles! But they never occupied more than 30,000 square miles—only one tenth of all that God gave to them!



The modern state of Israel is only 8,500 square miles (smaller than the state of New Hampshire).



The population of Israel today is 7.8 million (New York City has 8.1 million). Over 75% are Jewish (Israeli-born as well as immigrants), 16% are Muslim, 2% are Christian, and 1.5% are Druze; the remaining 5% are from many different religious groups.

The background is a brown topographic map with contour lines. A large white circle is centered on the map, containing a compass rose. The compass rose has degree markings from 0° to 345° in 15-degree increments. A red cross is located at approximately 315° and 300°. A triangle is located at 0°. The title 'WHOSE LAND?' is written in a brown, serif font inside the white circle.

WHOSE LAND?

By Dr. Michael Rydelnik

→ Conflicts about land are not unusual. Just a glance at the daily newspaper shows that there are constant disputes about land all over the world—from the India/Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, to Russia’s struggle with Chechnyan separatists, to the Kurds who want to be liberated from Iraq, to whether Northern Ireland should be part of the United Kingdom or Ireland. So it is no surprise that the biblical land of promise also has a long history of dispute.

But when it comes to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict over the land, Bible believers have a distinct advantage: the Scriptures declare to whom the land belongs. While it is important to understand both historical and political arguments also, this article will only examine the scriptural answer to the question, “To whom does the biblical land of promise truly belong?” Here are five biblical propositions drawn from the evidence.

PROPOSITION ONE:

God promised the land of Israel to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. This proposition is derived from the covenant God made with Abraham. God made a promise to Abraham and then reiterated and expanded it several times.

The first record of God’s promise

to Abraham is found in Genesis 12:1-7. There Abram is told to leave his native country, and when he finally arrives in the land of Canaan, the Lord tells him, “To your descendants I will give this land” (v. 7). This promise is repeated in the next chapter (see Genesis 13:14-15).

The land promise recurs in Genesis 15. The covenant that was established was unconditional, subject only to the will and power of the God of Abram, not Abram at all. God told Abram, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18).

Furthermore, God made it clear in Genesis 17 that the land would go to Abram’s descendants through Isaac, not Ishmael (Genesis 17:21). Additionally, the Lord repeated the land promise to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:13, 35:12).

DESPITE ISRAEL'S OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL, THE JEWISH PEOPLE REMAIN CHOSEN BECAUSE OF THE COVENANT

In addition to the clear promises of Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible, the land promise to all the people of Israel is restated in the last book of the Hebrew canon (1 Chronicles 16:16-18; 2 Chronicles 20:7). So the Hebrew Bible, from the beginning to the end (and many verses in between), recognizes that God gave the promise of the land to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants.

PROPOSITION TWO:

God defined the boundaries of the land of Israel. In Genesis 15:18, God established the boundaries of the land given to Abraham “from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.” Although there is a dispute regarding the identification of the southwestern boundary, the river of Egypt likely refers to the Wadi El-Arish, a dry riverbed in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula.

In the north and east, the boundary is the Euphrates River, extending

the land up to what is today's Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Obviously, Israel never obtained their entire land grant in the past or today. Nevertheless, God's promise is faithful, so there will certainly be a time in the future when this will be the boundary of Israel.

PROPOSITION THREE:

God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people as an eternal inheritance. Both Genesis 13:15 and 2 Chronicles 20:7 state that God gave the land to Israel as an inheritance “forever.” It is possible that the Hebrew word used in these passages (*olam*) and translated “forever” does not necessarily mean “for all eternity” but for the length of the promise.

There is another Hebrew phrase used to describe that which is eternal—*min olam v'ad olam*, commonly translated “forever and ever,” or “from everlasting to everlasting.” For the most part, the phrase is used of matters pertaining to God alone and His eternal nature.

PROPOSITION FIVE:

There are but two exceptional usages in which the phrase does not refer to God. In both cases, Jeremiah 7:7 and Jeremiah 25:5, it refers to the Israel's eternal ownership of the land of Israel. Jeremiah's words could not be any clearer. God has given the land of Israel to the people of Israel as a perpetual and eternal inheritance.

PROPOSITION FOUR:

God made total enjoyment and habitation of the land of Israel contingent on Israel's faithfulness. God's promise of the land as an eternal inheritance to Israel did not preclude the possibility that Israel would be temporarily removed from the promised land. In fact, God warned the nation that disobedience could and would lead to their exile and dispersion (see Leviticus 26:27-33).

Despite Israel's disobedience to the Torah and the discipline of dispersion, God assured them He would not destroy them or break His covenant with them (see Leviticus 27:44-45). Clearly, the Jewish people can be exiled from the land without forfeiting or nullifying the gift of the land as an eternal inheritance.

History confirms the accuracy of these warnings. After the failure of the Jewish revolts against Rome, the people of Israel gradually did go into exile. Nevertheless, according to these passages, Israel's ownership or title to the land is eternal and unconditional. It belongs to them for all time because the land grant was not dependent on Israel's obedience but on God's faithfulness to His oath.

By virtue of the Lord's unconditional and eternal land grant found in the Abrahamic Covenant, the Jewish people may indeed temporarily lose the enjoyment and habitation of the land of Israel but they never can lose the title to the land.

God's promises to the Jewish people are irrevocable regardless of their unbelief in Messiah Jesus. Some have argued that Israel's unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah has caused God to transfer the nation's promises to the Church, either permanently or temporarily. But this is a mistake. Describing the current unbelief of the Jewish people, Paul writes "From the standpoint of the gospel, they are enemies for your sake; but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:28-29 NASB). Despite Israel's opposition to the Gospel, the Jewish people remain chosen because of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, God's gifts, including the gift of land, belong irrevocably to them.

Two conclusions must be drawn from these five propositions. The first is that the land of Israel is the inalienable and eternal possession of the Jewish people. While there are other political and historical factors that must be considered when evaluating to whom the land belongs, the most essential factor is the biblical. The Bible is plain—God gave the land of Israel to the patriarchs and their descendants, the people of Israel.

The second conclusion is that the Palestinians do not have any biblical claim to the land of Israel. That is not to say that they cannot make historical or political arguments. But as far as the Scriptures are concerned, the land does not belong to them. ←

Condensed from Chapter 11 of *Understanding the Arab Israeli Conflict: What the Headlines Haven't Told You* (Revised Edition) by Michael Rydelnik (Moody Publishers, 2007).

Dr. Michael Rydelnik is Professor of Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute. The son of Holocaust survivors, he trusted in Jesus in high school. He is a biblical scholar specializing in the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and biblical prophecy.

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I was renamed Israel, because I struggled with God and men and have prevailed.

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And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."
[Genesis 32:28]

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