

SHOULD CHRISTIANS SUPPORT ISRAEL?



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We're going to begin a study that will explore several important questions concerning the nation of Israel from a Biblical basis – questions such as the following:

- What should the attitude of the Christian be towards Israel as a nation?
- Should the fact that national Israel is currently in unbelief affect the way we view the covenants and promises God has given to them?
- Is Israel as a unique chosen nation still relevant in God's program – and do they still have a future in His plan?
- How should Christians view the modern State of Israel?
- Should Christians support the independent sovereignty of the modern State of Israel?

These questions have emerged as some of the most polarizing and hotly contested issues in our modern religious and geopolitical world. As we enter into an examination of this subject, we will do our best to exclusively look at what *the Bible* says about this subject – and not the

frequent disinformation routinely spewed by both political and religious institutions.

Although this may seem like a very simple subject to a well-trained and Biblically-based Christian, we should recognize that not all who call themselves Christians agree on this subject. While some Christians are avid supporters of the modern state of Israel, others have outright denounced Israel's right to even exist as a nation. Who is correct?

There are mainstream churches and seminaries today that have been greatly influenced (but we could even go as far as to use the term "infiltrated") with far-Left political ideologies, and have abandoned using a sound study of the scriptures in formulating their opinions on current issues. Most of these churches also make a habit of ignoring Biblical eschatology altogether, or they espouse beliefs in eschatological schemes that are not based upon a literal/grammatical/historical interpretation of scripture, which greatly influence their conclusions regarding modern-day Israel.

In addition, there are many people who simply have never been exposed to an explanation of what the Bible actually says about this subject. Because of that, they may default to the anti-Israel propaganda that has become so common in many of our modern cultural institutions, including the media and even our universities. In this study, we will just look at what the Word of God has to say about this subject. It will be a profound exercise in hermeneutics (or methods of Bible interpretation), allowing us to reflect on how seriously we take the words of scripture. Of course, this issue of hermeneutics is intimately linked with the subject of eschatology (or the study of what the Bible tells us about the end-times). It has rightly been said that your hermeneutics will determine your eschatology. In other words, the interpretive method you hold to will absolutely frame the way you understand what the Bible has to say about the future. You will see what we mean as we get underway.

But before we get started, it's important to first spend some time clearly defining some of the terms and concepts we will be dealing with.

Terms

The following terms and concepts will be discussed throughout this study. Let's define how they will be used for the purposes of this study.

Israel: What do we mean when we use the term "Israel" in this study? Israel is a national identity that began with Abraham, Isaac and then Jacob, who was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel is a specific nation chosen by God to play a specific role in his overall program for humanity. As a nation, Israel is sustained by a number of covenant promises (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). Not all individuals in this chosen nation are saved (Romans 9:6; 11:28). Unbelieving Jews were physical children of Abraham and spiritual children of the devil (John 8:37-44). Believing Jews were Old Testament saints such as the prophets and those who obeyed the Law and covenants of God.

Jew: What do we mean when we use the term "Jew" in this study? Some mistakenly try to create a distinction between Israel and the term Jew, claiming that Jew only means a descendant of the tribe of Judah. There are those who wish to create entire doctrines based on this false idea. This notion is utterly false, which we will demonstrate from scripture further ahead.

Easton's Bible Dictionary is helpful, outlining for us the following definition for "Jew":

The name derived from the patriarch Judah, at first given to one belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the separate kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jeremiah 32:12; 38:19; 40:11 and 41:3), in contradistinction from those belonging to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were called Israelites.

During the Captivity, and after the Restoration, the name, however, was extended to all the Hebrew nation without distinction (Esther 3:6; 3:10; Daniel 3:8; 3:12; Ezra 4:12; 5:1 and 5:5).

Originally this people were called Hebrews (Genesis 39:14; 40:15; Exodus 2:7; 3:18; 5:3; 1 Samuel 4:6; 4:9; et al.), but after the Exile this name fell into disuse.

There are three names used in the New Testament to designate this people:

- Jews, as regards their nationality, to distinguish them from Gentiles.

- Hebrews, with regard to their language and education, to distinguish them from Hellenists, i.e., Jews who spoke the Greek language.

- Israelites, as respects their sacred privileges as the chosen people of God.¹

So, in this study, we will at times refer to members of the distinct group called Israel as “Jews.” Understand that we are using this term as the Bible does – as a synonym of the terms “Israel,” “Israelites,” and “Hebrews.”

Gentiles: The word Gentile is an English translation of the Hebrew word *goyim* (“people, nations”) and the Greek word *ethne* (“nations, people groups, people”). The Latin Vulgate translated these words as *gentilis*, and this word was then carried over into English as “Gentile.” The term refers to a person who is not a Jew.²

From the Jewish perspective, Gentiles were often seen as pagans who did not know the true God. During Jesus’ time, many Jews took such pride in their cultural and religious heritage that they considered Gentiles “unclean,” calling them “dogs” and “the uncircumcision.” Gentiles and the half-Gentile Samaritans were basically viewed as enemies that were to be shunned (John 4:9; 18:28; Acts 10:28).

The Church: The Church is a called-out assembly of believers out of every nation, who have been initiated into the body of Christ by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The identity of the Church is the beloved bride of Christ.

Members of the Church include those saved through the gospel plan beginning at the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was first poured out on the believers (Acts 2), and ending with those who will be removed from earth in the supernatural catching away of the Church (known as the Rapture – 1 Thessalonians 4:17; et al.).

Believing Jews/Gentiles prior to Pentecost, believing Jews/Gentiles during the Tribulation, and mortal believing Jews/Gentiles during the

earthly Kingdom reign of Christ (the Millennium) are not members of the Church. There are saved Old Testament saints as well as saved Tribulation saints. They are not part of the Church. The Church Age on earth began at Pentecost and will end at the Rapture.

The Rapture: The Rapture is an important term to define, as it serves as the terminal event of the Church Age. The Rapture is the next event to take place on the horizon for the Church – it is called our “blessed hope,” and what we yearn for (Titus 2:12-13). As mentioned, the Rapture is the supernatural “catching away” of the Church from earth to heaven, and includes the instantaneous transition from a physical body to a supernatural “glorified” body (1 Thessalonians 4:17; et al.). It is at this time that the dead in Christ (or Christians of past times who have died) will be resurrected to also receive their glorified bodies.

Zionism: This term has been used in various ways – often as a pejorative. But what do we mean in this study when we refer to this term or concept? Zionism is derived from the Biblical word “Zion” used one hundred sixty-three times in the Bible. Zion is used to refer to Jerusalem and/or the land of Israel. For example, Zion is the term used by the Psalmist during the Babylonian exile when longingly remembering his homeland. “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion” (Psalm 137:1). It is not surprising then that the term “Zionism” became the term for those who support the Jewish people’s return to Jerusalem and Israel as an independent Jewish nation. Today, Zionism encompasses anyone who for any reason desires to see the nation of Israel continue as a Jewish state and prosper.

Replacement Theology: Replacement Theology (also known as Supersessionism) essentially teaches that the Church has replaced Israel in God’s plan. Adherents of Replacement Theology believe the Jews are no longer God’s chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel. Replacement Theology teaches that the Church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are allegorically fulfilled in the Christian Church. The prophecies in scripture concerning, for

instance, the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are spiritualized or allegorized into promises of God's blessing for the Church.³

The overall problem with this view is that God made a number of **unconditional** promises and covenants with Israel in the Old Testament. Replacement Theology neglects these promises God made to Israel and therefore challenges the integrity of God. It also results from an incorrect hermeneutic, in which adherents to this belief allegorize or spiritualize these promises God made to Israel instead of interpreting the plain meaning. In the Bible, Israel always means Israel. But in their view, Israel becomes spiritual code language to mean the Church. And instead of understanding the plain meanings of these promises, they come up with spiritual meanings that they can apply to the Church, and therefore, completely avoid acknowledging Israel's present and future relevance in God's program.

Premillennial Dispensationalism: Although we will not be using this term much throughout this study, it is the lens through which we rightly interpret eschatology, or the study of the end-times, and therefore is important to define. Everything that follows in this study will follow this system of interpretation, which we believe to clearly be the Scriptural one. Premillennial Dispensationalism is the natural end-result of a literal-grammatical-historical-contextual, or plain interpretation of the Bible.

The label "premillennial" derives from the fact that when one interprets the Bible in this way (without trying to allegorize the meaning of the text), the end-result is the recognition that there is a future literal Millennium of time in which Christ will rule earth from David's Throne in Jerusalem, as the scriptures plainly prophesy.

The name "Dispensationalism" comes from the recognition that God has dealt with mankind in a number of different ways throughout history. We call these different periods "dispensations," meaning different ages, characterized by, among other things, the different covenants God has made with man throughout history. In other words, Dispensationalism is the understanding that God administers His plan for mankind in various stages, or dispensations. It recognizes

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how these different ages involve different ways in which God has dealt with mankind in His ultimate plan for the redemption of mankind and of the earth.

Two of the essentials of Dispensationalism are as follows.

#1 - Consistent Literal Interpretation

In other words, consistently interpreting the Bible using the normal or plain meanings that the text is communicating, instead of spiritualizing or allegorizing the meanings.

#2 - Israel and the Church are Distinct

Dispensationalists believe the Bible teaches that God's single program for human history includes a distinct plan for Israel and a distinct plan for the Church.⁴

Because these points are foundational to the topic of this study, we find it necessary to draw your awareness to this subject of Premillennial Dispensationalism. It is the necessary lens for rightly interpreting scripture, especially Bible prophecy. Without utilizing these foundational principles of Biblical interpretation, we will arrive at the wrong conclusion concerning the topic of this study. Please recognize that these terms are just man-made labels that characterize what we believe is the correct approach to understanding and interpreting scripture. Many people are Dispensationalists without even knowing it. If you interpret the Bible literally, and believe Israel has a future, you view the Bible dispensationally.

Before moving on, let's do a quick run through the Premillennial/Dispensational understanding of eschatology. We will focus on this later on in our study, but it's important to enter in with a basic understanding of it. Correctly understanding the timeline for eschatology goes hand-in-hand with understanding God's future program for Israel, and how God has operated within the theater of humanity for the past four thousand years of history.

Our outline for this understanding is given in Daniel 9. This chapter records how in the mid-500s BC, the prophet Daniel was given the seventy-weeks prophecy, which declared seventy weeks or heptads of years that would take place for Israel and Jerusalem. In other words, this refers to a total of four hundred ninety years (seventy times seven). A beginning point and ending point are identified for marking the first through the sixty-ninth weeks of years.

The sixty-ninth week of years ended with the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in 33 AD, just days prior to His crucifixion. According to the prophecy, it is clear that this prophetic time-clock for national Israel stopped with the completion of the sixty-ninth week, leaving one future week – the seventieth week – to still be completed. But after the sixty-ninth week, something “unexpected” happened. After Israel killed her Messiah, rejecting His offer of the Messianic Kingdom (which had been prophesied of throughout the Old Testament), this prophetic seventy-week program of God for Israel was paused, and God instead introduced an interim program called the Church, as the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost of that same year – 33 AD (Acts 2).

Subsequently, the gospel was to be spread to all nations and God’s focus shifted from that of national Israel to His new work called the Church, which focused on all nations. And so, at the Triumphal Entry, the time-clock for Israel’s seventy-week countdown was paused and a gap period we call the Church Age was inserted. In 70 AD, the final harbinger of this shift took place as Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were eventually scattered to the uttermost parts of the earth in what is termed the Diaspora. The Church Age has been in effect since 33 AD, and will last until the closing event of this age – the Rapture, or supernatural catching away of the Church to heaven described in scripture (Romans 11:25; I Thessalonians 4:14-18; et al.).

Dispensationalists understand that God’s time-clock for the Church will stop with the Rapture, and either immediately or soon after, God’s time-clock for national Israel will again begin, as there remains one final week of years – the seventieth week – to be completed. During this time, Israel will once again become the

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primary focus of God's plan during this final seven-year "week" of time often called the Tribulation, or Daniel's seventieth week.

This final week for Israel, the Tribulation (Revelation 6-19), will be a time of great trouble for the world as God's wrath is poured out – but will be especially focused upon Israel, especially the second half of this seven-year period. Scripture says that the Tribulation begins with the Antichrist enforcing a covenant, which he afterwards apparently breaks midway through the seven years – an event known as the abomination of desolation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15).

After this midpoint abomination, the latter three and a half years of the Tribulation will be a time of unparalleled distress in human history, particularly for the Jews (Jeremiah 30:7; Zechariah 13:8). In fact, Jesus calls it the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:21-22. We will find out that one primary purpose of the Tribulation is to drive the nation of Israel to repentance through great affliction. Sometimes God has to knock us down in order to get us to look up at Him – and that's what's happening to Israel during the Tribulation. Through this experience of unimaginable distress, Israel will finally be brought to faith (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25). We find out from scripture that Israel turning toward her true Messiah – Jesus Christ – acknowledging Him as such, and petitioning His return is actually a precondition for the next event – the Second Coming of Christ, which will end the Tribulation, or the seventieth week (Hosea 5:15; Matthew 23:39).

When Christ does return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, Israel will be ready to receive Him as their Messiah. This now-righteous remnant of Israel will be rescued from the nations that have gathered to destroy her, and Christ will set up His Millennial or Messianic Kingdom on earth (Zechariah 12:2-3; Chapter 14). The Church will have returned with Christ at the Second Coming (Revelation 19:14) and will then rule and reign with Him as His bride for a literal thousand years along with the other First Resurrection believers (Revelation 1:5-6; 20:6; et al.).

Strong support for a literal future Millennium is found in the clear teaching of Revelation 20:1-7, where it says six times that Christ's Kingdom will last a thousand years. Scripture tells us that during this

thousand-year period, the Lord will establish His physical kingdom on this earth with Jerusalem as its capital. With Christ reigning as King, Israel will be the prominent nation on earth, after being restored spiritually and physically. Representatives from all nations will come to Jerusalem to honor and worship the King – Jesus Christ – who will reign on the throne of David, fulfilling a multitude of Old Testament Kingdom prophecies (Isaiah 60; Zechariah 8; Micah 4:2). Then, following the Millennium, will come the Eternal State, as God’s full plan for the redemption of mankind will have been realized (Revelation 21-22).

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament support a Premillennial/Dispensational understanding of God’s plan for Israel, and this was always the traditional understanding of the ancient Jews and early Christians. Although they would not have been familiar with these modern labels of “Premillennialism” or “Dispensationalism,” this was the lens of literalism through which they generally viewed Bible prophecy. It is essential to understand that the Church has not replaced Israel in God’s plan. While God’s time-clock has shifted to focus on the Church for the past two thousand years (the Church Age), He has not forgotten Israel and will one day restore them to His intended role as the nation He has chosen (Romans 11).

This was just a brief outline of the viewpoint this study takes in eschatological interpretation. If what we just discussed was new to you, or difficult for you to follow, or you simply don’t understand how we came to those conclusions, we encourage you to consult the companion study entitled, “Understanding The Distinction Between Israel And The Church”. That study is in many ways a “Part 1” to this study, and goes into more depth on some of the concepts we’ve just discussed.

Now that we have defined some of our important foundational terms and concepts, let’s begin to investigate the topic of this study – should Christians support Israel? In the next section, we will start right at the beginning of world history and the Biblical narrative, in order to help us understand the plan and purpose of God for Israel as a nation.

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1. Matthew George Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, entry "Jew," *Bible Study Tools*. (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/jew/> - Retrieved 2/05/19)
2. "What is a Gentile?" *GotQuestions.org*. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-a-Gentile.html> - Retrieved 2/01/19)
3. "What is replacement theology/supersessionism?" *GotQuestions.org*. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/replacement-theology.html> - Retrieved 2/01/19)
4. Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, rev. and exp. ed., Chicago: Moody Press, 2007, pp. 46-48.

CHAPTER 2

GOD'S PURPOSES FOR ISRAEL

God had a special, divine purpose for Israel when He called them into existence as a nation. Unfortunately, it is common for Christians today to be unaware of this divine purpose, as it's rarely spoken of in many churches. But in order for us to understand what our viewpoint and attitude as Christians should be concerning Israel, we need to first understand God's original purposes for choosing Israel as a nation.

So, why did God create the people/nation of Israel? The story really begins in Genesis 3:15, which turns out to be the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible. At this point in Genesis, the Fall of Man has already taken place, and in this passage, we will begin to see the first prophetic glimpse of God's redemptive plan being revealed to man. God, speaking to the Serpent (Satan) who had deceived Eve, says the following.

And I will put enmity between thee [the Serpent, or Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between thy seed and her seed; it [referring to her seed, or offspring] shall bruise thy head, and thou [the Serpent] shalt bruise his heel [the heel of her seed].

-Genesis 3:15

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So, right here at the beginning of the story of mankind in the Garden of Eden, we know from this prophecy that there is coming One (of the seed or offspring of the woman) who will crush the head of the Serpent (Satan). And of course, we know that figure spoken of is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who through His sacrificial death on the cross, overcame the problem of sin that the serpent had introduced, providing a way of redemption for all mankind.

But going back to this Garden, with that as our foundation, we can then understand that God – in order to bring about this Messianic promise – needed to choose a specific lineage through which He could bring forth this eventual Seed of the Woman.

The next major event in this epic storyline that we need to understand is recorded in Genesis 11 – telling the story of how human society became reestablished after the Flood of Noah, and how God confounded the languages at the Tower of Babel – resulting in the formation of the different nations. Let's familiarize ourselves with this account by reading a portion of Genesis 11.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

-Genesis 11:1-10

Here at Babel, we witness man's first post-Flood attempt at world government – and it was here at Babel that many scholars have traced the origins of paganism. We're told these people wanted to make a name for themselves, and wanted to avoid being spread out all over the earth (in direct disobedience to what God had commanded them to do in Genesis 9:1 – “Be fruitful and increase in number and *fill* the earth.”). This was taking place in Mesopotamia in the land of Shinar (the Hebrew term for what we call Sumer), in the land located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. And from the Biblical record, we can see that all people on the entire earth had the same language prior to God's intervention.

In their defiance, they began constructing a tower that they hoped would “reach unto heaven.” Instead of thinking they were naive enough to believe a tower could be tall enough to physically reach heaven, we should recognize that these people were actually trying to open what we might call a hyper-dimensional portal or a gateway. In other words, by the ritual opening of a portal, they were trying to reestablish a connection with the supernatural realm in order to reinstitute the activity that was taking place in the antediluvian world. They were apparently trying to summon the same powers that existed on earth as a result of the Genesis 6 intermingling of fallen angels and human women, which had set the conditions in motion that led to the global Flood of Noah in the first place.

In their effort to rebel against the one true God, these ancients, who we would probably identify as the Sumerians, established a pantheon of false gods based upon these fallen angelic beings whom they were attempting to ritualistically contact. They had Enil (the prince of the air), Anu (ruler of the heavens), Enki (the god of water),

and so on. Under these existed a second level of deities, including Nanna the moon god, Utu the sun god, Ninhursag the mother goddess, and Inanna the goddess of love, sensuality, fertility, procreation, and also of war.¹

This pagan pantheon was eventually exported and adopted by the ancient cultures, who changed the names according to their own languages, and would at times make slight cultural changes to the stories. For instance, Inanna, also identified by the title the “Queen of Heaven,” later became identified as Ishtar to the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians; Astarte or Ashtoreth to the Phoenicians, Canaanites, and Israelites; Aphrodite to the Greeks; and Venus to the Romans, among many others.² She was just one of the false gods of the ancient pantheon that characterized the pagan religions that permeated the cultures of antiquity.

Inanna’s husband was the dying-and-resurrecting god Tammuz, and, annually at the autumn equinox, people would celebrate the sacred marriage rites of Inanna and Tammuz, as he supposedly returned from the underworld to mate with her again. These pagan fertility rituals were thought to be centrally connected to the fertility of the land, and were re-enacted at annual pagan festivals by ritual sexual intercourse with her priestesses.³ Women across the ancient Near East worshipped Ishtar by dedicating to her cakes baked in ashes (known as *kamān tumri*).⁴

There was also a ritual period of “mourning/weeping for Tammuz,” which was a pagan idolatrous practice in which the women’s tears recalled the supposed tears of Inanna/Ishtar that brought Tammuz back from the dead. This mourning for Tammuz was celebrated in Mesopotamia by women on the second day of the fourth month, which actually became named the “month of Tammuz.”⁵

So, we should recognize how the pagan religious systems of man likely find their origin all the way back in Babel. When the Lord scattered the languages, the result was the formation of seventy different nations that spoke a common tongue. And each of these resulting people-groups brought this Babylonian pagan religion – or elements of it – with them into their own cultures. Of course, with the scrambling

of the languages, each group called these gods by different names, as we mentioned earlier.

All people groups today can ultimately track their origin back to these seventy nations. The Bible presents to us the “Table of Nations” in Genesis 10 – a list of the patriarchal founders of these seventy nations which descended from Noah through his three sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. But the key to recognize here is that the pagan Babylonian cultic religion that was occurring at the Tower of Babel was then exported into every culture as the languages were divided and each nation went their own way.

The next point we need to recognize is that because every nation had been corrupted by this system of idolatry, then in order for God to export His promised Messianic blessings to the world, He needed a nation uncorrupted by this system. This was God’s purpose in creating Israel, a nation which at that point in time, did not yet exist. Israel was the only nation God Himself created, and He chose them to be His unique instrument free from this false religious system.

As we noted, the corruption of all nations through the Babylonian religious system is recorded in Genesis 11. And in the very next chapter, Genesis 12, God introduces the future nation of Israel by calling out their forefather Abraham. So, if you want to understand Genesis Chapter 12 (the creation or origin of Israel as a people-group), then you have to understand the *need* for Israel as a people-group, which is spelled out in the previous chapter – Genesis 11, as we read.

And so, God began the process of creating the nation of Israel with the purpose of being the instrument through which He would fulfill His Messianic promises of redemption for mankind. The prophet Isaiah later records the words of God, describing how He created the nation of Israel, and that they belong to Him.

But now, thus says the Lord, **your Creator, O Jacob** [Israel],

And **He who formed you, O Israel**,

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; **you are Mine!**”

-Isaiah 43:1

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God created the nation of Israel to be His own chosen people. And for this reason, early in Genesis, we are given a genealogy that begins with Adam and Eve (to whom the promise of this Coming One was originally given in Genesis 3:15). Beginning with Adam, genealogical subject matter in Genesis Chapters 4, 5, 10, 11, 22, 25, 29-30, 35-36, and 46 move the narrative forward to the beginnings of Israel's birth as a nation that would be described in the following book – Exodus.

For instance, in Genesis we're given the genealogy from Adam and Eve down to Noah (whose genetic purity was preserved during the Genesis 6 angelic rebellion). We should note that the events of Genesis 6 were apparently one of Satan's attempts to contaminate the genetics of humanity, in order to prevent this original Messianic promise given in Genesis 3:15 from being fulfilled. The promise was given to the seed of Eve, meaning that this promised seed had to be a genuine human – and yet had to be a human that was uncontaminated by the events of Genesis 6. Mankind needed a kinsman Redeemer in order to atone for the sins of mankind. And so, this was the significance of Noah, as Genesis 6:12 tells us that *all* flesh on earth had been corrupted by the events described just a few verses earlier (the intermingling of fallen angels and human women, producing hybrid Nephilim). *All* flesh was corrupted in this way, except for Noah, as we're told (and presumably his family, of course).

Of Noah's three sons, the promise is then passed down through Shem. Genesis 11:10-32 provides us with the genealogy from Shem down to Abram (or Abraham), who was the progenitor of the nation of Israel. So, we can see how these genealogies carefully trace the story and lineage of Israel in Genesis, as the epic story of the Bible begins to take shape.

Next, in Genesis 12, as we mentioned earlier, we see how God begins to call this man Abraham out of his home city of Ur of the Chaldees. Like the rest of Abraham's culture, he also was a pagan idolater (Joshua 24:2-3). But God called him to leave that lifestyle and walk by faith to a place which God would lead him.

Through His dealing with Abraham, God would create a new nation, uncontaminated by the false religious system of Babel – and

therefore, a nation that would be given the mission of preserving the Word and ways of God, to be a light of God's truth for mankind, and ultimately to bring forth the Messiah who would redeem all nations. **But here is a key point: along the way, God would make a number of unconditional covenant promises to Abraham (and his descendants, Israel).** For instance, we see the following covenant promises in Genesis 12.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

-Genesis 12:1-3

Here, we see a number of important promises given by God to Abraham, which would later officially become the Abrahamic Covenant several chapters later in Genesis 15, in which the land between the River of Egypt and the Euphrates River was promised to his descendants. This of course, has never been completely fulfilled. Abraham's covenant descendants (the people of Israel) have never controlled this land in its entirety.

But going back to Genesis 12, we see God's promise that Abraham's descendants would also become a great nation. And we're told that those that bless Abraham (and by obvious implication, his covenant descendants) would be blessed, but those that curse them would be cursed.

But most importantly, we see the promise that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" – a great Messianic prophecy referring of course to Jesus Christ – the long-awaited Seed of the Woman. We will find out later that Abraham would actually become a father of many nations – not just Israel. And yet, it will become clear to us that God's promises would be reconfirmed specifically to the line of Abra-

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ham's descendants that would become the nation Israel (through Isaac and then Jacob), and not through the other nations that he also fathered.

And so, this is the significance of Israel. God designed Israel to be an instrument of blessing to the entire world. Through Abraham and his descendants – specifically the nation of Israel (the nation God created that was uncorrupted by the Babylonian false cult) – the promise of Genesis 3:15 would be fulfilled.

Before going on, let's acknowledge some of the most profound blessings that all the nations of earth have been privileged to receive through Israel, demonstrating fulfillments of this promise that all families of the earth will be blessed.

First, humanity was given God's Word through Israel. Obviously, the Old Testament writers were all Jewish, but the New Testament writers were as well, with the possible exception of Luke (who wrote Luke and Acts).

Second, humanity was given the promised Messiah – Jesus Christ – through Israel. Jesus of course was Jewish, and His death and resurrection purchased the redemption of all nations.

Third, we can also say that in a more specific sense, the New Covenant outpouring of the Spirit that Christians experience today came through Israel. We can say this because it was only through the Messiah Christ that this was made possible. And even this promise was initially given to Israel and recorded in the Word of God by Jewish prophets. So, the Church, although it's comprised of all nations and is a group distinct from Israel, also came into being through Israel. All of our blessings find origin in Israel.

And fourth, we are given the promise of the future Millennial Kingdom on earth through Israel. This will certainly be a time when all nations of earth will be blessed. And again, it's tied to the Messiah and the promises of God to Israel recorded in God's Word. And furthermore, this Kingdom will be headquartered in Jerusalem, in Israel, and will be governed by a Jewish Messianic King (Jesus Christ), who will sit upon the throne of David (a Jewish king).

All of these blessings are the outworkings of God's promise to

Abraham – that through him, all nations of the world would be blessed. And so, hopefully this helps us gain a perspective of what Israel is in the eyes of God – and in addition, also helps us understand the purpose for Israel’s establishment as a nation. Israel is the means by which God would export His promised blessings to all of humanity.

Like we mentioned, the promises to Abraham would officially be covenanted in Genesis 15 – and the critical takeaway there, is that these were all *unconditional* promises that God made. In the ancient world, a covenant would be made official by cutting apart a dove or a ram, or some other animal or animals, and placing them on the ground so that both parties involved in the covenant could walk between the pieces. This was a legal contract. The significance of the cut-up animal pieces was the implication that if one party of the covenant were to fail to uphold their end, they too should be cut up like those animal pieces. It goes back to a time and place where giving someone your word actually mattered!

In the case of this covenant that God made with Abraham, scripture tells us that God took on the form of a “smoking furnace and a flaming torch” and passed between the pieces *alone* (key word). But further yet, we’re told that God had caused Abraham to fall asleep before this took place, further communicating that the full weight of responsibility in this covenant was to fall on God, and not Abraham. So, this covenant was unconditional, or unilateral in every way. It did not in any way depend upon Abraham or his descendants doing anything.

Furthermore, God then in Genesis 17 makes clear that this covenant was an *everlasting* covenant that would be in effect for Abraham’s descendants in perpetuity.

I will establish My covenant between Me and you and **your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant**, to be God to you **and to your descendants after you**. I will give to you **and to your descendants after you**, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting possession**; and I will be their God.

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-Genesis 17:7-8 (NASB)

God then reconfirms this covenant through Abraham's son Isaac, as we see in chapter 26.

And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply **thy seed** for my servant Abraham's sake.

-Genesis 26:24

There is nothing that can or will prevent God from keeping this covenant with Abraham and his the descendants within his covenant lineage. After this covenant was confirmed with Abraham's son Isaac, it was then again confirmed with Abraham's grandson – Isaac's son Jacob. First notice the wording of Isaac's blessing upon his son Jacob, which repeated the same words God had spoken to Abraham.

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: **cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.**

-Genesis 27:29

So again it is said that everyone that curses you will be cursed, and everyone that blesses you will be blessed. And then notice in the next chapter, God's words to Jacob as he reconfirms the Abrahamic Covenant.

And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, **I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;**

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee **and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**

-Genesis 28:13-14

So, the covenant originally made with Abraham is then reconfirmed through his son Isaac and then his grandson, Jacob. Jacob's name is then changed to Israel, and his twelve sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. And so, this is why you can't "get rid" of Israel, or take Israel out of the picture. You can't cut her out of God's plans. You can't say she's irrelevant, or has no future. To do so is to say God is a liar and is one who reneges on His promises. The rest of the Old Testament is full of promises God makes to Israel regarding future blessings – many referring to the coming Kingdom Age. We fully expect God to fulfill these promises in the future. But let's get back to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Let's continue forward now to the actual establishment of the nation of Israel under Moses. As time passed, the family of Jacob and his sons had resettled in Egypt after one of his sons, Joseph, had become second in command over that nation. The Egyptians greatly honored Joseph's family, as it was his prophetic dreams and wisdom that prevented their starvation over a period of great famine. But over time, a man who did not know Joseph became king (or Pharaoh) of Egypt, and seeing the Hebrews' prosperity, feared they would eventually outnumber the native Egyptians. Because of this, the Egyptians under this new Pharaoh enslaved the Hebrew people, bringing about the story of Moses in the book of Exodus.

Through God's intervention of the plagues in Egypt, the descendants of Abraham (who had become slaves there) were now released from bondage. Under Moses' leadership, they were brought into the wilderness to Mount Sinai where they were given the Mosaic or Old Covenant – the Law. They were then brought into the land that had promised to them.

In Numbers 24 we even find while Israel is in the land, they come under conflict with Balak, the King of Moab. He hires the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. However, Balaam promised to only speak what God tells him to say. In Verse 9, we see Balaam prophesying the following about Israel as a nation.

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He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? **Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.**

-Numbers 24:9

This again reveals the perpetual nature of God's covenant promises originally made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then being reconfirmed to Israel as a nation.

We are again told of God's purpose for the creation of Israel in Deuteronomy 7.

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy **God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.**

-Deuteronomy 7:6

In the verses that follow, God reassures Israel of His perpetual, unending commitment to the covenants He made with their forefathers, referring back to the unconditional covenants given to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). He tells them:

The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

But because the Lord loved you, and **because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.**

-Deuteronomy 7:7-8

Let's recognize that the Mosaic Covenant, which God gave to Israel here at Mount Sinai, *did* have conditions (unlike the earlier unconditional covenants made with their forefathers). Deuteronomy 28 tells us of the blessings and the cursings that came along with the Mosaic Covenant for Israel. If they were obedient to it, they would experience

the blessings; but if they were disobedient to it, they would experience the cursings. However, this in no way revokes or annuls God's earlier unconditional covenants with Israel's forefathers. God emphasizes this in Deuteronomy 4.

For the Lord your God is a merciful God. **He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.**

-Deuteronomy 4:31 (ESV)

As we will see further ahead, Israel would break the Mosaic Covenant, and experience the cursings. But again, this in no way invalidates the unconditional covenants God had previously given. We see throughout the Old Testament that even when Israel turned their backs on God's Law and go into national apostasy, He sent them the prophets who began to speak of a future time in which they would be regathered under a *New Covenant*. They prophesied of a Messianic Age to come in which they would walk in His ways and fulfill their mission of being a light unto the nations.

In the following passage in Isaiah, God reemphasizes the special nature of Israel as His own chosen nation intended to be a light and a witness of His truth. And notice how God connects this to their original spiritual purity from the false religious system of the pagans.

I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, **when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses**, saith the Lord, that I am God.

-Isaiah 43:12

God created Israel to be a witness of His truth to the surrounding nations.

So, in a nutshell, God made a Messianic promise all the way back in the Garden in Genesis 3:15 – a promise that would ultimately lead to redemption for mankind, providing a solution to the problem created by sin. But to accomplish this, God's plan included a people,

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a culture, and a genealogy intended to be an incubator for the truth of God and bring the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, into the world!

Going back to the book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the people of Israel on how to conduct themselves in the land that God promised their ancestor Abraham. It's here that Moses mentions that, while Israel has their own God, the other nations have theirs – referring to the pagan false religious system that permeated all other nations – the system Israel was to remain separate from.

For instance, Moses tells the Israelites not to worship the sun, moon, the stars, and all the heavenly host (which were associated with pagan gods and goddesses) like the other nations did (Deuteronomy 4:19-20). Later, Moses reminds the people that long beforehand, the Lord divided up the nations. And when he did so, He gave each of the nations their own lands and inheritances – but chose Israel for Himself (Deuteronomy 32:7-9).

But unfortunately, Israel at many points in her history as a nation, did become corrupted by the false religious system that she was created to stay separate from. Scripture tells how King Solomon, for instance, became involved in these cultic practices. 1 Kings 11:4-11 mentions the cult of Ashtoreth by name (among numerous others).

For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that **his wives turned away his heart after other gods:** and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.

Then did Solomon build an high place for **Chemosh, the abomination of Moab**, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for **Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.**

And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was

turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

-1 Kings 11:4-11

Other kings of Israel, such as the wicked kings Manasseh and Ahaz also took part in these rituals, including offering their own children as sacrifices to the pagan gods. This horrific practice of child sacrifice was part of what lead to God's judgment, under which Israel was taken captive for seventy years to Babylon.

So, by the time of the prophets, the cult of Ishtar/Ashtoreth was certainly introduced into the Kingdom of Judah, and the Old Testament contains numerous direct mentions, as well as a number of allusions to her cult. Jeremiah 7:18 and Jeremiah 44:15-19 mention the worship of "the Queen of Heaven," referring to Inanna/Ishtar/Astarte, etc.⁶ The prophet Jeremiah states that the Queen of Heaven was worshipped by women who baked cakes for her (which, as we mentioned earlier, was a well-known pagan practice among the nations).

Ezekiel 8:14 mentions Tammuz, and describes a group of women mourning Tammuz's death while sitting near the north gate of the Temple in Jerusalem – a reference to the period of mourning for Tammuz that we mentioned earlier, which was also practiced by the pagan nations.

However, despite all of their spiritual whoredoms with false gods – in direct opposition to the very purpose for their founding as a nation – God still said He would forgive them, and that they would **remain forever as a nation in His sight**. For instance, the prophet Jeremiah writes, telling us that **as long as the sun, moon, and stars exist, the nation of Israel will also exist**. But even more specifically, he tells us

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that just as the heavens cannot be measured, **He will not permanently cast off the seed of Israel, despite their failures.** This incredible promise is found in Jeremiah Chapter 31, and takes place near the height of Israel's apostasy.

Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name:

If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

Thus saith the Lord; **If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,** saith the Lord.

-Jeremiah 31:35-37

Many anti-Zionists today advocate for a discredited theory that modern Jews are not even the actual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but are instead, descendants of a medieval nation called Khazaria that converted to Judaism around 800 AD. Although this theory can be easily disproven on historical and genetic grounds, this passage from Jeremiah completely demolishes it from a Biblical perspective. God says clearly that as long as the heavenly bodies are around, the nation of Israel will be a distinguishable people-group on earth.

Note: If you're looking for further information on this, we recommend Thomas Ice's book *The Case For Zionism: Why Christians Should Support Israel*.

This verse in Jeremiah also singlehandedly refutes the notion of Replacement Theology – the idea that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan, and that Israel has no future as a nation in God's program. It clearly tells us that unless you can measure the heavens,

Israel will never be permanently cast off based upon her spiritual failures. And it tells us that as long as the heavenly bodies exist, Israel will also exist. So, do you really want to get rid of Israel? Aim your rockets and missiles at the sun, moon, and stars. Because as long as they're around, Israel will also be around and will be a special nation in God's plan. This is the perpetual promise of God, and it relates back the Abrahamic Covenant.

So, even at the peak of Israel's apostasy as recorded in the Old Testament, God did not cast her off. To the contrary, it was at the height of their spiritual idolatry that He actually began to issue prophecies through Israel's prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and others) promising a future New Covenant and time in which the nation would experience spiritual restoration – that time being the Millennial Kingdom. He begins to tell them of their eventual regatherings in preparation to receive this spiritual regeneration in the coming earthly Kingdom, outlining His plan for their future as a nation. But we will get to that in more depth in a later chapter.

So, we understand very clearly that Israel was not cut off from God's program. To the contrary, a passage found in Ezekiel shows us Israel's position in God's viewpoint.

Thus says the Lord God, 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her at **the center of the nations**, with lands around her.

-Ezekiel 5:5 (NASB)

Israel is placed at the center of the nations. We see this also in Ezekiel 38.

To capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the **center of the world**.

-Ezekiel 38:12 (NASB)

This word "center" in Hebrew literally means "the navel," as we're

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told in a footnote in the NASB.⁷ In other words, just as the navel (or the bellybutton) is the center of the body, Israel is the center of the world in God's eyes.

Yet, it is fashionable today for those who know nothing about the Word of God to hate and persecute Israel. Israel as a nation is often viewed as an obstruction of progress which needs to be removed. But again, God sees Israel as central to everything. In fact, God actually uses Israel as his time-piece. In 1908 (around forty years *before* Israel became rebirthed politically as a nation), W.E. Blackstone had the farsightedness and perspective to say the following.

Israel is God's sun dial. If anyone desires to know our place in God's chronology, our position in the great march of events, look at Israel.⁸

So, in addition to all of the other purposes for Israel, we also recognize that as a nation, she acts as the time-piece of God, and is at the epicenter of future Bible prophecy. We will see this demonstrated very clearly further ahead in our study. Before moving onto our next subsection, let's recap what we've discussed.

What was God's purpose for Israel? Israel was the only nation created by God independent of the Babylonian false religious system, which was pervasive in the ancient world. God needed an uncorrupted nation which He would use as an instrument to bless all nations of earth. Through Israel we were given God's Word; we were given the Messiah; we were given the Church; and we are shown the promise of a future Millennial Kingdom. We also recognize that Israel is God's time-piece from a prophetic perspective.

We've also seen clearly that scripture tells us of God's unconditional and everlasting covenant promises to Israel. We've seen clearly that scripture tells us of God's everlasting commitment to Israel – and that as long as the heavenly bodies exist, Israel will also exist, and will be a special nation in God's plan.

So, just the content of this chapter should be enough to refute the false notion that Israel is somehow finished or has been replaced in God's plan. To infer this is to call God a liar. It's to say that He didn't

mean what He said in all of these Old Testament passages. It impugns His character. And those who take this view should recognize that if God can go back on His promises to Israel, He can also go back on His promises to us. So, just from what we've already seen thus far, we should recognize that this idea of Israel being finished or replaced is an idea that should be soundly rejected by all Bible-believing Christians.

In the following chapter, we will conduct an examination of the panorama of history in an attempt to determine if we can actually observe the unconditional covenants of God to Israel at work. If we can, and if this principle can be clearly demonstrated through history, then it should reinforce to us just how serious God is about keeping His Word.

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CHAPTER 3

GOD'S PROTECTION OF ISRAEL

One of the complications of being blessed by God is the fact that Satan works in history to destroy what God has blessed. Unfortunately, it's a package deal – whatever God blesses, Satan seeks to destroy. This is a principle that's easily observed throughout history. Satan has always had a plot to destroy Israel, knowing that she is God's covenanted nation and the instrument that He uses to bring about Satan's ultimate demise (to “crush” his head, as prophesied in Genesis 3:15).

In other words, Satan knows that Israel was created for the very purpose of blessing the world in order to undo what he did back in the Garden of Eden – which will ultimately result in his permanent defeat and judgment. In a later chapter, we will discuss this angelic conflict that we find summarized in Revelation 12 as the dragon tries to devour the woman (or Israel). But for now, let's recognize that from Pharaoh and Haman in the Old Testament, to Adolf Hitler in modern times, we should not be surprised to find Satan at the source of these schemes to annihilate Israel. Satan has always attempted to destroy God's nation that enjoys His blessings – in order to thwart the overall plans of God. But God had given Israel a perpetual promise, going all

the way back to the covenant He made with Abraham, which we examined earlier.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:

-Genesis 12:3a

People often question whether or not this principle is literal. To help answer that question, let's recognize the reason that God in Exodus 11 killed all of the first-borns in the land of Egypt (the tenth plague). The answer as to why He did this is found in Exodus 4:22, where God calls Israel His "firstborn."

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

-Exodus 4:22

In other words, God was telling Egypt, "you mess with my first-born, I'm coming after your first-borns." Do you see how literal that is? The one who curses Israel will be cursed.

Furthermore, let's also recognize the reason that God, in Exodus Chapters 14-15, drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea. The answer is found in Exodus 1:22.

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born [of the Israelites] ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

-Exodus 1:22

In other words, God was telling Egypt, "you drown my children, I'll drown you." The one who curses Israel will be cursed. It's extremely literal. And God never placed any "expiration date" on this promise. As we clearly saw in the previous chapter, **these promises are everlasting, and were reconfirmed to all of Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob.** In other words, they are to continue on

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perpetually for the remainder of God's plan for humanity on planet Earth. This principle is further noted in Zechariah 2.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath **he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you** [Israel]: for **he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.**

-Zechariah 2:8

The apple of the eye refers to the pupil. If a tiny speck of dust lands anywhere on your body, you really don't notice it. But let it land on your pupil! You drop everything you're doing and immediately direct all of your attention toward trying to flush that tiny speck out of your eye. What this passage is trying to express is that if you come against Israel, it's equivalent to jamming your finger into God's pupil – which will provoke a vengeful response from Him. This kind of response is *required* by His covenant with Abraham. And this has been shown to be the case throughout history – which we will attempt to demonstrate.

If you study human history with this principle in mind, you can demonstrate that quite often, world powers come and go based upon how they treat Israel. Further, you can also demonstrate that calamity often comes upon nations that move to abuse Israel. This pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant has been active and observable throughout human history.

We will span several thousand years of history, beginning with the Assyrian Empire and ending with present-day America – in an attempt to demonstrate this principle at work over time.

Assyria

The Assyrians were known as being some of the most brutal people of all time, inflicting terror into the hearts of their opponents. The Assyrian policy of conquest was to replace the original inhabitants of the lands they conquered with imported captives from other lands. They would intermingle the people in order to cut off the national

identity, in an effort to weaken or prevent any uprising. The Assyrians did this when they conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, resulting in the so-called “ten lost tribes” of Israel. That was why during the life of Jesus, the inhabitants of this land were a mixed-breed of Jew and Gentile, referred to as the Samaritans.

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, this would mean that just as the Assyrians had brutally attacked Israel, they themselves would be brutally attacked. Just like they razed Israel to the ground, they themselves would be razed to the ground. And just like they permanently ended the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they themselves would also be permanently ended as a nation.

In the year 612 BC, a coalition of Medes, Persians, Babylonians, and others attacked Assyria with fury, completely destroying it and razing its capital city, Nineveh, to the ground.¹

The prophet Nahum (in Nahum Chapter 3), prophesied beforehand that Nineveh would be completely destroyed, and would be cut off by the sword, just as they had done to the Northern Kingdom. He also prophesied in Verse 11 that the city would go away into “hiding.” In amazing fulfillment, it would not be until the 1800s that archaeologists would excavate portions of the ancient city of Nineveh.^{2 3}

In fact, many people actually believed the Bible was inaccurate and unreliable because no evidence at that time had yet been uncovered to show that Nineveh had ever even existed! Nineveh had indeed been “hidden,” in its destruction, just as Nahum predicted.

Once Nineveh fell, the Assyrian Empire limped on for another three years before it was finally relegated to the dust bin of history. So, Assyria cut off the Northern Kingdom, and God cut off Assyria.

Babylon

We then see this principle also in effect concerning the Babylonian Empire. Babylon subjugated what remained of Israel (the Southern Kingdom of Judah) into their empire beginning around 605 BC. But as Judah rebelled against them, Babylon came in and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple around 586/7 BC. The Babylonians greatly depopu-

lated the region as they deported many Jews into the Babylonian captivity.

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, Babylon, in 539 BC, was invaded and taken over by the Medo-Persians. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah had predicted this also. From that time, Babylon was subject to other nations – just like they had subjugated Israel. The city of Babylon eventually fell into steep decline, and constant turmoil emptied out the population – just as they had emptied out the inhabitants of Jerusalem. An ancient tablet dated to 275 BC states that the inhabitants of Babylon were transported to Seleucia, where a palace and a temple were built. With this deportation, Babylon became insignificant as a city.⁴

Medo-Persia

We then see this principle in effect concerning the Medo-Persian Empire that followed. But unlike the others, Medo-Persia never really invaded or destroyed Israel. The Medo-Persian kings actually did much good, in allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple – although it was not as great as it had once been.

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, we should expect something similar to happen to the Medo-Persians. We should expect that God would allow Persia to continue as a kingdom, even building itself back up, although never reaching the level it had once been at under the Medo-Persian Empire. And we absolutely do see this in history!

At the Battle of Issus in 333 BC, Alexander the Great of the Greek Empire conquered Darius III of Persia, and in the next several years, solidified his control over the Medo-Persian Empire. However, this fall of Persia was followed shortly after by the rise of two more unified Persian empires – the Parthian Empire (250 BC-226 AD) and the Sassanid Empire (226-650 AD). These latter dynasties even defeated the Roman Empire in battle while at the height of its power on several occasions.⁵

And beyond those two, there later arose another Persian empire – the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1736).⁶ Following that, another Persian revival would take place in the 1920s-30s – the Pahlavi Dynasty, which would rule until the Islamic Revolution in 1979.⁷ In fact, in 1971, the Persian ruler had a celebration of two thousand five hundred years of Persian monarchy. It was touted as being the most expensive party ever held. He even saw himself as the heir of Cyrus.⁸

None of these empires were as great as the original Medo-Persian Empire, but yet God allowed Persia to continue as a nation just as Persia had allowed Israel to return from captivity, build itself back up, and continue as a nation.

Greece

We then see this principle in effect concerning the Greek Empire that followed. When the Greek Empire under Alexander began to quickly sweep across the Middle East, they began to “Hellenize” the lands they conquered. In other words, they, much more than any of the other previous empires, would assimilate their conquered lands into their own Greek language, culture, religion, and worship of their gods.

There were also some extreme examples of this, specifically related to Israel. The most well-known example would be the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greek-Seleucid king. Earlier, under Alexander, Hellenization had been a movement that still allowed room for cultural variation. But under Antiochus, Hellenization took a big step further and became the agent of cultural totalitarianism – especially against the Jews.

He outlawed Jewish religious rites and traditions kept by observant Jews and ordered the worship of Zeus as the supreme god (2 Maccabees 6:1-12). This was anathema to the Jews and they refused, prompting Antiochus sent an army to enforce his decree. He attacked Jerusalem, slaughtering many Jews, and stealing items from the Temple, while also setting up an altar to Zeus. He then went as far as to sacrifice a swine to Zeus on the altar in the Temple. If you under-

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stand how Jews feel about pigs, you can imagine how this went over. It caused a huge backlash, which in turn resulted in Antiochus slaughtering many Jews, and selling many more into slavery.

Antiochus was also known for outlawing Jewish traditions associated with keeping the Mosaic Covenant, or the Law; he made reading the Jewish scriptures, or the Torah, illegal; he banned circumcision, making it a capital offense; and he ordered the Jews to sacrifice to pagan gods. He tried to completely destroy Jewish culture, and submerge them into Greek culture.^{9 10}

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, we should expect something similar to happen to the Greeks. First, it's interesting to note that once Antiochus committed his strongest persecutions against the Jews, his empire soon began to crumble. But this goes much deeper.

As the Greeks sought to assimilate the Jewish people into their own culture, religion, and traditions, God began to absorb the Greeks into His faith. God used everything Greek to lift up the God of Israel. The Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures was completed, making God's Word readable throughout the empire. This would be the Bible used by Jesus, the apostles, and early Church. God then used the Greek language to spread the gospel and write the New Testament. As they sought to eliminate the worship of the God of Israel, God eliminated the worship of the Greek gods as Christianity eventually overtook the Greco-Roman cultures. And as they sought to bring all the Jewish people into the Greek religion, God then brought the Greek people into the God of Israel through the ministry of the apostle Paul and others.

The first Gentiles to receive the gospel are called Greeks. In fact, the word "Gentile" in scripture in many ways implies "Greek." The word "diaspora" (the scattering of the Jews throughout the Greco-Roman empire) is a Greek name, and through this scattering of the Jews, God would spread His Word to the Greeks. The Jewish term "synagogue" comes from a Greek word (*episunagógē* – Strong's #1997), but God used the Jewish synagogues to spread His Word throughout the Greek-speaking empire. And when Paul made his missionary jour-

neys, he would first preach in the synagogues as a starting point before Christianity would then spread to the Greek Gentiles. Paul, a Greek-speaking Jew, was the one who brought the Gospel to the Greeks.

So, the Abrahamic Covenant again, is in effect. What you do to Israel will be done to you.

Rome

The last of the great empires of the ancient world is Rome. Rome was the empire of empires. The Romans were viewed by the Jews as barbarians ruling over them. Rome subdued Israel, oppressed Israel, occupied Israel, taxed and drained Israel, pushed its culture over Israel, showed little respect for the faith of Israel, and ultimately invaded and destroyed Israel, scattering them all over the world in a final great Diaspora.

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, we should expect something similar to happen to the Romans – and it did. Rome would become an increasingly oppressed civilization; they would be drained and taxed to death, ultimately contributing to their fall. They would ultimately be broken up, scattered into pieces, and taken over by those whom they considered to be barbarians. Let's take a look at how it happened.

First, just as Rome had drained and taxed Israel, historians have pointed to economic factors as a major cause of the fall of Rome. Some of the major factors described are inflation, over-taxation, and feudalism. Other lesser economic issues included the wholesale hoarding of bullion by Roman citizens, the widespread looting of the Roman treasury by barbarians, and a massive trade deficit with the eastern regions of the empire. Together, these issues combined to escalate financial stress during the empire's last days.¹¹

Just as the Roman Empire had done to Israel, it was done unto them. And just as the Roman Empire had caused Jerusalem to fall, God would cause the Roman Empire to fall. First, it was cut in two, into an Eastern and a Western leg. It was then further broken up, and

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was pillaged and plundered by neighboring tribes known as the “barbarians.”

In 410 AD, the Visigoths, led by King Alaric, breached the walls of Rome and sacked the capital of the Roman Empire. The Visigoths looted, burned, and pillaged their way through the city, leaving a wake of destruction wherever they went. This was the first time that the city of Rome was sacked, but by no means the last.¹²

In 476 AD, Odoacer, the “barbarian” Germanic king, deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last Roman emperor to rule the western leg of the Roman Empire. The eastern half became the Byzantine Empire, with its capital at Constantinople (modern Istanbul).¹³

Wave after wave of Germanic barbarian tribes swept through the Roman Empire. Groups such as the Visigoths, Vandals, Angles, Saxons, Franks, Ostrogoths, and Lombards took turns ravaging the Empire, eventually carving out areas in which to settle down. For example, Rome lost the British Isles (or Britannia) to the Angles and Saxons; France (or Gaul) to the Franks; northern Africa to the Vandals; and Spain to the Sueves, Alans, and Visigoths.^{14 15}

Just as the Roman Empire had broken up and scattered Israel, God broke up and scattered the Roman Empire. And just as Rome showed no reverence for Israel’s faith, God would end the faith of Rome. The pagan gods of Rome would be abandoned, and they would accept (at least, on the surface) the God of Israel, as Christianity was mainstreamed throughout the Roman Empire as the Church and state came together in an unholy union under the Roman Catholic Church. But even before this union, many historians point to Christianity as one of the major factors associated with the decline and ultimate fall of the Roman Empire.^{16 17} As the Roman Empire did to Israel, it was done unto them.

So, we can see that all throughout ancient history, this promise given to Abraham has been in operation. But what about history in between Rome and modern times? If we examine the major world empires during this period, do we find a similar pattern?

As we mentioned earlier, in 70 AD, Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, killing many Jews, and scattering the remnant among the

nations, in what is referred to as the Diaspora. Now that Israel had rejected her Messiah, seen her nation, its capital, and its Temple destroyed, and had then been scattered among the nations – exiled from her homeland – would God’s covenant promises given to Abraham, still be in effect?

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:

-Genesis 12:3a

We’ve seen how this pattern was operative throughout the ancient world empires – but now let’s pick up here and continue to see if the same pattern of blessings and cursings on the nations of the world as a result of how they treat Israel will continue to guide history. If God is real and His promises are everlasting, then we should expect to continue to see this throughout this next period of history, through the Middle Ages, and into the dawn of the modern world (even though the Jews have not been in their land for the majority of this period).

Byzantium

The Roman Empire eventually broke up into an eastern and a western leg. Long after the western leg fell in 476 AD (which included the city of Rome), the eastern leg would continue to exist. This eastern leg, often called the Byzantine Empire, existed from 330 to 1453 AD, with its capital founded at Byzantium, and later being renamed Constantinople by Constantine I in the 300s AD (today known as Istanbul, Turkey).

The Byzantine Empire reached its heights in the 500s AD, when Justinian I reigned as emperor between 527 and 565 AD. One of the significant actions of Emperor Justinian was the passing of a set of laws. The Code of Justinian, the first of four parts of the Corpus Juris Civilis (“Body of Civil Law”) was issued in 529 AD. Among its principles was Servitus Judaeorum (“Servitude of the Jews”), enforced by new laws that would further reduce the status of Jews beyond the

century-old discriminatory edicts of the earlier Theodosian Code (enacted by Theodosius II).¹⁸

Under these new laws enacted by Justinian, Jews (and other non-Christians) were now denied citizenship and disqualified from holding public office; they also could not testify in court against Christians. Hebrew prayer was banned, the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”) was condemned as being anti-trinitarian, and synagogues were liable to confiscation. Passover Seders were banned if they preceded Easter. Conversion to Christianity was encouraged through inheritance laws and taxation policies, while conversion to Judaism became a capital offense, as did the ownership of Christian slaves by Jews.^{19 20}

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, we should expect something similar to happen to the Byzantine Empire. Soon after the enactment of these laws, the Byzantine Empire started a long decline. About 10 years after these laws were passed, the first known bubonic plague pandemic on record – the Plague of Justinian – hit the Byzantine Empire, claiming the lives of millions of people.

The plague arrived in Constantinople in 542 AD. The outbreak continued to sweep throughout the Mediterranean world for another two hundred twenty-five years, finally disappearing in 750 AD.²¹

The plague contributed to the weakening of the Byzantine Empire in political and economic ways. As the disease spread throughout the Mediterranean world, the empire’s ability to resist its enemies weakened, and many of its holdings were lost. The decrease in the population not only impacted the military and the empire’s defenses, but the economic and administrative structures of the empire began to collapse or disappear. Trade throughout the empire became disrupted. In particular, the agricultural sector was devastated. Less people meant fewer farmers who produced less grain causing prices to soar and tax revenues to decline.²²

Procopius, a Byzantine historian, in his *Secret History*, describes the suffering of the plague’s victims. Many victims suffered for days before death, while others died almost immediately after the onset of symptoms. Interestingly, he laid blame for the outbreak on the emperor,

declaring Justinian to be either a devil or that the emperor was being punished by God for his evil ways.²³

What you do to Israel will be done unto you.

The Islamic Empire

Muhammad was the so-called prophet and founder of Islam. At age forty, he claimed to have received revelations from Allah that became the basis for the Islamic scriptures – the Koran – and the foundation of the religion and empire of Islam. By 630 AD, he had spread the message of Islam and the sword across the land, unifying most of Arabia under this single Islamic religion.²⁴

Following his death, subsequent Islamic wars were waged against the bordering nations, and Islam spread across northern Africa, the Middle East, towards India, and even into parts of Europe. But how did the Islamic Empire treat the Jewish people? The answer is a mix of good and bad.

The Jews were given a legally inferior status – called a “dhimmi.” A dhimmi has limited rights, limited tolerance, and limited protection, but only on the condition of paying a special tax. They were forced to wear a golden star to separate them, which should call to mind the later actions of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. It was a state of continual subjection for Jews, and yet, it was better than some alternatives – such as many places in Europe.

And so, although there were many restrictions, at the same time, this was somewhat of a golden age where culturally, Jews and Muslims prospered while living side-by-side. Even though they looked down on the Jews, their treatment was still somewhat better than many other places. In fact, as Islam rose, they began to conquer many of the nations that were more actively oppressing the Jewish people. For example, under the control of the Visigoths, the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal and Spain) had suffered almost unrelieved persecution, culminating in efforts to force them to accept Catholic baptism. So, we can say that the rise of Islam coincided with the time when Jewish people were being increasingly oppressed and perse-

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cuted by western Christendom. It's as if the rise of Islam was a judgment on western Christendom which had persecuted God's ancient people.

The Byzantine Empire, up until the rise of Islam, had controlled the land of Israel. In 629 AD, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius's army marched into Jerusalem to defeat the Persians, who had briefly regained control of the city. But after his victory, he ordered all the Jews killed and the synagogues burned, forcing many to flee to Egypt and other parts of the empire.²⁵

As the Byzantine emperor was doing this, the new power – the Islamic Empire was rising. Less than ten years after doing this to the Jews, the Byzantine Empire lost Jerusalem and most of its lands to the Islamic Empire under the Arab caliph Omar.²⁶

As they had sought to drive the Jews from the Holy Land, the Byzantines were driven from the Holy Land. What you do unto the Jewish people will be done unto you. The Islamic Empire would ultimately reign from Persia to Spain.

In Spain, as Jews and Muslims would live side-by-side in relative peace, the civilization flourished. But in the twelfth century, the golden age ended, and the Jews of Spain then found themselves under Islamic oppression.

Led by Abd al-Mu'min al-Mohade, the leader of a North African Berber dynasty that has been referred to as the Almohades, a new wave of Islamic warriors swept down from Algeria's Atlas Mountains. These invaders pressed across the Strait of Gibraltar to overrun central and southern Iberia.

Decades of brutal Almohade persecution followed – including increased violence toward Jews and forced conversions of Jews and Christians. Thousands of Andalusian Jews fled to the Spanish Christian kingdoms of the north. Muslim rulers began enforcing oppressive laws and regulating Jewish lifestyle. Jews were forced to wear distinctive badges or colored clothing. Jews in higher social positions faced new vocational restrictions. New methods of social isolation were imposed upon Jewish families. Jewish merchants were often accused of being responsible for unfortunate societal events like poor harvests

and food shortages, and were harassed in the streets and town squares.²⁷

So, the Islamic Empire was a mixed bag in their treatment of the Jews. In the beginning, it subdued – but in many ways actually freed them – from the yoke of western persecution. It was actually better than Europe for many Jews. But toward the end, the Muslims began to persecute the Jews just as badly.

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, we should expect something similar to happen to the Islamic world – and of course, it does. It is at this same time that the Islamic Empire began to decline. As the Jews were allowed to live, but only as a subjugated and inferior class, God allowed the Islamic world to live on in world history, but only in a stagnant, subjugated, and second-class manner as compared to much of the rest of the world. This has continued for centuries, all the way up until the twentieth century – and most Muslim countries even today are still in this stagnant condition.

Charlemagne and the Frankish Empire

Charles the Great, or in French, Charlemagne, became king of the Franks in 771 – becoming the most well-known king of the Carolingian dynasty. He would then embark on a mission to unite all Germanic peoples into one Christian kingdom.²⁸ But how did Charlemagne treat the Jews?

Although the Jews never had completely equal cultural status in every way to Christians, Charlemagne actually treated the Jews quite well – he saw them as a blessing. He protected and helped to develop Jewish culture and commerce in his kingdom. Charlemagne saw the Jews as an economic asset and prevented excessive demands being made upon them by the Church. His attitude toward the Jews was clever but tolerant. He realized the advantages and business abilities of the Jews, and gave them complete freedom with regard to their commercial transactions.²⁹

Jews were also involved in his court and as respected subjects in his empire. His paid personal physician, for example, was Jewish, and

he employed at least one Jew for his diplomatic missions – a personal representative to the Muslim caliphate of Baghdad. Letters have been credited to him inviting Jews to settle in his kingdom for economic purposes, generally welcoming them through his overall tolerant policies.³⁰

So then, according to the pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant, we should expect something similar to happen to this Western European empire under Charlemagne – and of course, it did!

Charlemagne became the most powerful man in Europe. In 800, Pope Leo III crowned him emperor of the Romans – with his rule being the peak of the Carolingian dynasty and was the first time in three centuries that the western leg of what used to be the Roman Empire would be unified. In this role, Charlemagne encouraged the Carolingian Renaissance, a cultural and intellectual revival in Europe. In fact, Charlemagne is actually referred to by some as being the “Father of Europe.”³¹ “I will bless those who bless you.”

Charlemagne’s death in 814 began an extended period of fragmentation of the Carolingian Empire and its decline would eventually lead to the foundation of the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire.

Barbarossa and the Holy Roman Empire

Following the rule of Charlemagne then came the Holy Roman Empire. Some historians actually point to the coronation of Charlemagne as the origin of the empire, while others prefer the coronation of Otto I of Germany as its beginning.

Before 1157, the realm was merely referred to as the Roman Empire. The term “holy”, basically meaning “consecrated,” when it is used in connection with the medieval Roman Empire, was used beginning in 1157 under Frederick I Barbarossa of Germany. The term was added to reflect Barbarossa’s ambition to dominate Italy and the Papacy.³²

Barbarossa means “red beard” in Italian, a name given to him by

the northern Italians. He was crowned emperor by Pope Adrian IV in 1155, and would rule until his death twenty-five years later.³³

Barbarossa, like Charlemagne before him, sought to protect the Jewish people in his empire. He stopped Christian priests from preaching against the Jewish people. Barbarossa would largely protect and bless the Jews.³⁴ So, then according to the Abrahamic covenant, what should we expect to happen?

The Holy Roman Empire reached its golden age and peaked under Barbarossa in the twelfth century. Historians consider Barbarossa to have been the greatest king of the one thousand-year Holy Roman Empire. He is remembered as having qualities that made him appear almost superhuman to his contemporaries: his longevity, his ambition, his extraordinary skills at organization, his battlefield acumen, and his political shrewdness.³⁵

In fact, Adolf Hitler, when he planned his attack on Russia in World War II, called it “Operation Barbarossa.” Ironically, he actually named it after a king that had blessed the Jewish people. Interestingly, that failed campaign would ultimately contribute to the defeat of Nazi Germany.³⁶

So then, what would happen next in Europe? Unfortunately, in subsequent times, the lands under the Holy Roman Empire would start becoming hostile towards the Jewish people, and the empire would ultimately spend most of its thousand-year history declining, before coming to an end in the nineteenth century. But let’s zoom in our focus here and look at exactly what began to take place.

After the Crusades, the situation became hostile for the Jews, as Western Europe began a persecution against them, and began killing and expelling them – mainly between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. There were countless massacres of the Jews during these centuries, but time doesn’t permit us to mention them all here. But let’s briefly point out some of the major expulsions of Jews from the European kingdoms.

- In 1288, the Kingdom of Naples (which controlled the southern half of Italy) issued an expulsion order for the

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Jews, and in 1293 any Jews still remaining were forced to convert to Catholicism.

- In 1290, Edward I of England issued the Edict of Expulsion, decreeing all Jews to be expelled from England.
- In 1305-1306, Philip IV of France seized all Jewish property and expelled them from France, although they were briefly allowed to return in 1315.
- But then in 1322, King Charles IV again expelled the Jews from France.^{37 38}

What happens then? Western Europe enters one of the most dreadful centuries in history. Less than five years after France expelled its Jews, came what some have termed the “Babylonian Exile” of the papacy, also known as the Avignon Papacy. This arose due to conflicts between the French kings and the Popes, resulting in the Roman Catholic popes resided in Avignon, France, instead of in Rome between the years of approximately 1309 to 1377. Because it lasted about seventy years like the Jews’ exile in Babylon, some have referred to it as the “Babylonian Exile” of the papacy. This then led to what became known as the Western Schism in Church history, in which some clergy supported the Avignon popes, and others supported the Roman popes. This schism, or division, lasted until the Council of Constance in 1417.³⁹

While this religious division was taking place, there also came the Great Famine of 1315-17, the first in a series of large-scale disasters of the late Middle Ages that befell Europe all at the beginning of the fourteenth century – when the kingdoms were expelling their Jews. This famine caused millions of deaths. According to estimates, around ten to twenty-five percent of the urban population died. It marked the end of the previous period of growth and prosperity of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.⁴⁰

Then in 1337, the Hundred-Years War began between France and

England – two of the main countries that had recently expelled their Jews.⁴¹

But then around 1346 came the Black Death, or Black Plague – said by historians to have been the worst single event in European history. This was an epidemic (thought to have been caused by the bubonic plague) which spread across almost all of Europe, killing over a third of the entire population. It's been described as the worst natural disaster in European history and is responsible for changing the course of its history to a great degree.⁴² Historians estimate that between twenty-five to sixty percent of the population of England was killed.⁴³

The Black Death arrived in Italy by sea, first making landfall in Sicily in 1347. It soon spread to Venice, Genoa, and Pisa and then moved rapidly inland, east through Tuscany and south to Rome. By the time it died down in the winter of 1348, more than a third of Italy's population had perished.⁴⁴

Horrendous as it was, the Black Death was only the crescendo of a series of calamities that had hit the Italian peninsula in the previous few years. Earthquakes had left severe damage in Naples, Rome, Pisa, Bologna and Venice. In 1346, banks in Florence and Siena collapsed, leading to an unprecedented economic disaster. Six months of almost continuous rain in 1347 had made sowing of crops impossible, and flooding had caused a breakdown in communications and transport. Food shortages ensued, bringing soaring prices and famine. Meanwhile, a series of local disputes between the city states embroiled much of the north in seemingly unending, bloody wars.⁴⁵

France, which had the largest population in Europe at that time was also hit hard by the plague. The French chronicler Jean Froissart estimated that the first wave carried off one-third of the population. Paris, the largest city in Europe at that time, was said to have suffered eight hundred deaths per day, according to the chronicle of French friar Jean de Venette. The French city of Toulouse lost half of its population. The population of Normandy is estimated to have declined by two-thirds between 1300 and 1450. And this trend was not reversed until the middle of the fifteenth century.^{46 47}

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Interestingly, if you recall, this was the same plague that had originally appeared when Justinian passed his laws also oppressing the Jewish people. And it now came to Europe just as the Western European kingdoms were massacring and expelling the Jewish people. But while Western Europe was being ravaged by calamity, there came the rise of the Eastern European kingdom of Poland.

Poland

As the Jewish people continued to be persecuted and expelled from the Western European kingdoms, they began to seek refuge by going east. They were welcomed into one of the most tolerant lands of Europe at the time – Poland. The Jewish people were received in Poland in great numbers under the Polish king Casimir the Great.

On October 9th, 1334, he confirmed the privileges granted to the Jews in 1264 by the earlier Polish duke, Boleslaw the Pious. Casimir was favorably disposed toward the Jews, who during his reign, became prominent in commerce, handcrafts, and agriculture. Under penalty of death, he prohibited the kidnapping of Jewish children for the purpose of forcible Christian baptism, and inflicted heavy punishment for the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. Under his reign, the Jews were protected as “people of the king.” Today, it has been estimated that around seventy percent of the world’s Ashkenazi, or European Jews, can trace their ancestry through Poland.^{48 49}

And what then happened to Poland, in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant? Poland becomes blessed! Casimir had inherited a kingdom weakened by war, but soon made it prosperous and wealthy. Under Casimir, the country was unified. He reformed the Polish army and doubled the size of the kingdom. He reformed the judicial system and introduced a legal code, gaining the title “the Polish Justinian” – except unlike Justinian, he treated the Jews well. Casimir built extensively and founded the University of Kraków, the oldest university in Poland. Casimir is also the only king in Polish history to both receive and retain the title of “the Great.”⁵⁰

So, Poland began to rise and would reach its golden age as a place

of prosperity in the early 1600s, becoming one of the largest and most prominent kingdoms of Europe at that time – just at the time they were blessing the ancient people of Israel.

But then in the mid-1600s, things began to change in Poland. There were uprisings that devastated the Jewish people. Cossacks came in, and hundreds of thousands of Jewish people – along with others – were slaughtered in what is known as the Cossack-Polish War. The Polish kingdom was broken up and taken over by another dynasty under which the Jewish people lost all support from the government. The time of tolerance was over, and the Jewish people began to face increasing persecution.⁵¹

But what happens after this? “I will curse those who curse you.” As the 1700s drew near, Poland’s political system became completely destabilized and was brought to the brink of civil war. By the end of the century, the Polish kingdom – one of the greatest kingdoms of Europe – had sunk so far that it was partitioned among the neighboring nations, and would not return again as a nation until the 1900s.⁵²

Spain

Let’s rewind in our review of history for a moment to focus on Spain – the Spanish Empire. Spain had become home to one of the most well-known Jewish communities in the world – as we had discussed earlier under the Islamic Empire. It was responsible for the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain, which refers to a period of history during the Muslim rule of Iberia in which Jews were generally accepted in society, and Jewish religious, cultural and economic life blossomed. This “golden age” is variously dated from the eighth to twelfth centuries. Al-Andalus was a key center of Jewish life in Spain during the Middle Ages, producing important scholars and one of the most stable and wealthy Jewish communities. A number of famous Jewish philosophers and scholars flourished during this time, most notably the famous Maimonides.⁵³

By the late thirteenth century, the Spanish Christian kingdoms of

Castile and Aragon had reconquered most of the Muslim-controlled territory – in what’s called the “Reconquista.” In 1479, the two kingdoms were united as a result of the marriage of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. The last Muslim kingdom, Granada, was reconquered in 1492.⁵⁴

It was at this time that Spain was about to become a great world empire. But as the Christian re-conquest of Spain gained momentum, Jews in these newly re-conquered Spanish territories began to suffer from increasingly harsher persecutions. In their blood-thirsty vengeance against the Muslims, the Spanish Christians included the Jews, whom they put in the same category of infidels. In fourteenth century Barcelona, for example, the whole Jewish community was murdered by a rioting mob.⁵⁵

In the late 1400s, a man rose up in the Church whose name was Father Tomas de Torquemada. He helped launch what is referred to as the Spanish Inquisition, convincing King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to issue an ultimatum to the Jews of Spain. Their choices were to convert to Catholicism, leave, or be killed. The Spanish Inquisition ironically sought to punish Jews who had been forcibly “converted” to Christianity (called “conversos”) but were not really “sincere” in their forced conversions. Many of these “converted” Jews had continued to practice their Judaism secretly.⁵⁶

Torquemada believed that as long as the Jews remained in Spain, they would influence the tens of thousands of recent Jewish converts to Christianity to continue practicing Judaism. Ferdinand and Isabella rejected Torquemada’s petition that the Jews be expelled until January of 1492, when after 800 years of Muslim rule, the Spanish defeated the Muslim forces in Granada, thereby restoring the whole of Spain to Christian rule. With their most important project – the country’s unification – accomplished, the king and queen concluded that the Jews were expendable. On March 30, 1492, they issued the expulsion decree, with the order to take effect in only four months.⁵⁷

The deadline for Jews to leave Spain was August 3, 1492, which was, ironically, the Ninth of Av (*Tisha B’av*) on the Jewish calendar, known as being a conspicuous day of recurring tragedy in Jewish

history. This was the same Hebrew day that both the First and Second Temples were believed to be destroyed – the First by the Babylonians and the Second by the Romans. Many Jews at this time made their way across the border to Portugal – but their stay there was short-lived. Five years later, Portugal offered them the same choice as Spain: convert, leave, or die.

So then, what happened to Spain? Spain discovered the New World, and because of this, they controlled a vast global empire with gold and wealth flowing in. The Spanish Empire would become one of the largest in world history, with colonies all around the world. However, with all those advantages, Spain should have been a world power for centuries to come.

But by the later part of the 1500s, signs of trouble started coming to Spain. A war began with the Netherlands – often called the “Eighty Years’ War,” or the Dutch War of Independence (1568-1648). It would end with the Netherlands gaining their independence, as the Spanish Empire would lose control over some of their key European holdings.

Then in 1588, the supposedly invincible Spanish Armada was destroyed by the English navy. By the mid 1600s, the Spanish empire was clearly declining, and was losing economically and militarily against the other rising powers of Europe, such as the English and the Dutch Empires. And interestingly, many of these rising powers are lands to which the Jews fled after being expelled from Spain. Spain, who after having discovered and colonized the New World, should have been the wealthiest of countries – but was bankrupt within one hundred years of the expulsion. “I will curse those who curse you.”

The Ottoman Empire

Thousands of Jews who fled Spain went to Turkey. Opening his doors to them, the Sultan of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, Bayezid II, declared:

They tell me that Ferdinand of Spain is a wise man but he is a fool. For he takes his treasure and sends it all to me.⁵⁸

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How did the treatment and movement of the Jews affect Turkey? Turkey, as we should expect, greatly prospered! The Ottoman Empire became one of the greatest powers in the world. The next two sultans, Selim I and Suleiman I, expanded the empire as far as Vienna, Austria. Incidentally, it was Suleiman – known as “Suleiman the Magnificent” who, in 1536, re-built the walls of Jerusalem – the same walls that stand today and define the Old City.⁵⁹

But the Ottoman Empire’s treatment of the Jews began to worsen around the nineteenth century. For the past four hundred years, Jerusalem had been under the control of the Ottoman Turks. The liberation of Jerusalem began in 1916, when British Prime Minister David Lloyd George ordered the invasion of southern Palestine. In November of 1917, Arthur Balfour, the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, issued the Balfour Declaration, expressing support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

This represented the pro-Zionist sentiments of the British government’s foreign policy at that time – which just so happened to be the same time that the British Empire was at its peak. It was said that “the sun never set on the British Empire,” as it controlled lands all around the globe. By December of 1917, the area of southern Israel had been conquered and the British had captured Jerusalem under the leadership of General Edmund Allenby, purposing to designate the land as a home for the Jews. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I.^{60 61 62}

These events would lead to the re-establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948, and the restoration of Jerusalem under Israeli control in 1967.

America

Let’s now rewind our focus back to the subject of the Spanish sending out Christopher Columbus’ expedition that would ultimately discover the New World. We will notice some interesting transitions as the persecuted Jews were leaving Spain. Some went to the Ottoman

Empire and elsewhere, as we mentioned, but something else was beginning – something that would end up being the greatest refuge for the Jewish people in history – that of course, being America.

The harbors in Spain were full of Spanish Jews fleeing the Inquisition, looking to find refuge in other countries. In 1492, during the same week that the Jews were being expelled from Spain, there sat three ships in the harbor waiting to set sail. These ships were the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria* – commanded of course, by Christopher Columbus.

The day after the Jews' expulsion, August 3, 1492, the renowned explorer Columbus left Spain on his famed voyage of discovery in which he would eventually land on the shores of the New World. This is recorded in his diary, even mentioning the forced expulsion of the Jews. His diary begins with:

In the same month in which their Majesties issued the edit that all Jews should be driven out of the kingdom and its territories, in the same month, they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my expedition of discovery of the Indies.⁶³

So, just as one of the greatest Jewish communities of Europe was being destroyed, God was opening up the doors of what was eventually going to become the greatest diaspora refuge for the Jewish people in history – America.

Columbus's voyage was not financed by Queen Isabella selling her jewels, as is often stated. The major financiers were two court officials – both Jewish conversos – Louis de Santangel, chancellor of the royal household, and Gabriel Sanchez, treasurer of Aragon. In fact, the first letter Columbus sent back from the New World was not to Ferdinand and Isabella, but to Santangel and Sanchez thanking them for their support and telling them what he found.⁶⁴

In addition, there were also Jewish conversos aboard Columbus' ships. Most school children have heard of the famous rhyme about Columbus sailing the ocean blue in 1492. But a lesser-known version goes, "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the

ocean blue; and his interpreter was a Jew whose name was Lou and that is true.” Yes, Columbus’ interpreter for the voyage was Luis de Torres, a Jew who was fluent in Hebrew. The ship’s doctor and navigator were also Jewish.

Interestingly, there is even speculation that Columbus himself may have actually been of Jewish ancestry. For those interested, there are many intriguing facts about Columbus collected in a book called *Christopher Columbus’s Jewish Roots* by Jane Frances Amler. But of course, we probably will never know for sure if this is true.⁶⁵

Spanish and Portuguese Jewish conversos took the colonization of the Americas as an opportunity to escape the persecution of the Spanish Inquisition. A group of Jews fleeing persecution in 1654 settled in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, soon to become New York. These were the first Jews to settle in North America.⁶⁶

A few years later, in 1658, a group of Sephardic Jews from Spain settled in Newport, Rhode Island. By 1700, Jews were living in many of the colonies of North America, and synagogues were springing up in every major city. But the Jewish community remained relatively small until the second half of the nineteenth century, when a mass migration from the Russian Empire brought hundreds of thousands of Jews to America’s shores.⁶⁷

Looking back, when the three ships of Columbus’ fleet left the Spanish harbor on August 3, 1492, they saw the ships on which the expelled Jews were leaving the country they had lived in for over a thousand years. None could have known that Columbus’ great voyage would lead to the establishment of the present American Jewish community, the most blessed of all Jewish communities ever to exist. Today, Spain is a relatively unimportant European country, while the United States of America has become the world’s most powerful and blessed country – and maybe the most powerful and blessed country in all of world history. “I will bless those that bless you.”

We have now covered thousands of years of human history, in which we can clearly see this pattern of the Abrahamic Covenant in effect. When a nation curses Israel, they are cursed. When a nation blesses Israel, they are blessed. But is this principle of blessing and

cursing of nations in connection to how they treat Israel still active today? The answer is a resounding *yes!* In fact, because we have access to so much more information, we're able to witness this pattern even more clearly today than ever before in history. Many authors have written about this pattern at work, specifically in modern America. For instance, author John McTernan has written a book recording this pattern at work, entitled, *As America Has Done To Israel*, which we strongly recommend.⁶⁸

Although America has historically been a tremendous blessing for the Jewish people and for the nation of Israel after its re-establishment in 1948, there is a worrisome trend that has been taking place in recent times. In the last several decades, America's leaders have begun to support the partitioning of the land of Israel in order to form a Palestinian state – in direct violation of the promises of God. God has made clear in His Word that the land which Israel had been promised is *His* land – and He promised it to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, this current trend of wanting to divide God's land is anticipated prophetically in the Bible, specifically within the context of the last days. Let's make note of this before continuing.

The first thing we should note is that in Zechariah Chapter 12, we are told that the city of Jerusalem will be particularly troublesome in the last days, and that all nations will ultimately gather against it. Zechariah 12:3 says:

And in that day will I make **Jerusalem** a burdensome stone for all people: all **that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces**, though all **the people of the earth be gathered together against it**.

-Zechariah 12:3

In other words, we're told that those nations who come against Israel in the last days will receive punishment from God – they “shall be cut in pieces,” as it says here. So, God's principle of blessing and cursing has apparently not been revoked even up until the last days (this is speaking of a future time at the end of this age).

But why does God say they would they be “cut in pieces?” Well,

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the likely answer is found in Joel 3. In Joel Chapter 3 we find a prophecy about the last days, and one of the things that God says He'll judge the nations for, are their attempts to cut His land in pieces and divide it up amongst themselves.

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And **I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land.**

-Joel 3:1-2

In other words, from looking at these two passages in Zechariah and Joel, we can understand that God is telling them “because you’ve tried to cut up my land, I’ll cut you up.” All that burden themselves with Jerusalem and try to cut up and divide the land will themselves be cut up and divided in judgment. God is still adamant that the land is His land and has been given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

So then since the Bible describes this principle and pattern of blessing and cursing upon nations to be in operation in the future (during the last days prior to the Second Coming), and we know it was in operation in the past, then we should expect it to also be in operation in the present. And as we alluded to earlier, we can witness this pattern perhaps more clearly now than ever before in history. Let’s observe some examples.

The following are just ten examples that McTernan records in his book, recording how America has been hit with disaster when our government has “cursed” Israel.

#1 -

The last time the U.S. government refused to veto an anti-Israel resolution at the UN Security Council was in 1979. On March 22nd,

1979, the Carter administration chose not to veto UN Resolution 446. Four days after that on March 26th, the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was signed in Washington. As a result of that treaty, Israel gave up a tremendous amount of territory. Two days later, on March 28th, the worst nuclear power plant disaster in U.S. history made headlines all over the globe. The following comes from a Wikipedia article written about it.

The Three Mile Island accident was a partial nuclear meltdown that occurred on March 28, 1979, in reactor number 2 of Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station (TMI-2) in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, United States. It was the most significant accident in U.S. commercial nuclear power plant history. The incident was rated a five on the seven-point International Nuclear Event Scale: Accident With Wider Consequences.⁶⁹

#2 -

On October 30th, 1991, President George H. W. Bush opened the Madrid Peace Conference which brought Israelis and Palestinians together to negotiate for the very first time. In his opening speech, Bush told Israel that “territorial compromise is essential for peace.” At the exact same time, the storm known as “the Perfect Storm” was brewing in the north Atlantic. This legendary storm traveled one thousand miles in the wrong direction and sent thirty-five-foot waves slamming directly into President Bush’s home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

#3 -

On August 23rd, 1992, the Madrid Peace Conference moved to Washington D.C., and the very next day Hurricane Andrew made landfall in Florida, causing thirty billion dollars in damage. It was the worst natural disaster up to that time in U.S. history.

#4 -

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On January 16th, 1994, President Clinton met with President Assad of Syria to discuss the possibility of Israel giving up the Golan Heights. Within twenty-four hours, the devastating Northridge earthquake hit southern California. It was the second worst natural disaster up to that time in U.S. history.

#5 -

On January 21st, 1998, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived at the White House but received a very cold reception. In fact, President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright actually refused to have lunch with him. That exact same day the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke, sending the Clinton presidency into a tailspin from which it would never recover.

#6 -

On September 27th, 1998, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was working on finalizing a plan which would have had Israel give up approximately 13 percent of Judea and Samaria. On that precise day, Hurricane Georges slammed into the Gulf Coast with wind gusts of up to one hundred seventy-five miles an hour. The hurricane hit the coast and stalled. On the next day – September 28th, President Clinton met with Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at the White House to finalize the land deal. Hurricane Georges pounded the Gulf Coast causing one billion dollars in damage. At the exact time Arafat departed from the US, the storm began to dissipate.

#7 -

On May 3rd, 1999, Yasser Arafat was supposed to hold a press conference to declare the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital – with the support of President Clinton, whose letter to Arafat encouraged him that the Palestinians have a right to “determine their future on their own land.” On that precise day, the most

powerful tornadoes ever recorded in the U.S. ripped through Oklahoma and Kansas. At one point, one of the tornadoes actually had a recorded wind speed of three hundred sixteen miles an hour.

#8 -

On April 30th, 2003, “the Road Map to Peace” plan which called for a Palestinian state was presented to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon by U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer. Over the next seven days, the U.S. was hit by a staggering four hundred twelve tornadoes. It was the largest tornado cluster ever recorded up to that time.

#9 -

In 2005, President George W. Bush convinced Israel that it was necessary to remove all of the Jewish settlers out of Gaza and turn it over entirely to the Palestinians. According to the New York Times, the very last of the settlers were evacuated on August 23, 2005. On that precise day, a storm that would be given the name “Katrina” started forming over the Bahamas. The city of New Orleans still has not fully recovered from the damage that storm caused, and it ranked as the costliest natural disaster in all of U.S. history up to that time.

#10 -

On May 19th, 2011, Barack Obama told Israel that there must be a return to the pre-1967 borders. Three days later on May 22nd, a half-mile wide EF-5 multiple-vortex tornado ripped through Joplin, Missouri. According to *Wikipedia*, it was “the costliest single tornado in U.S. history.”⁷⁰

And so, throughout history, up to the present, and even into the future as we see prophesied in scripture, this pattern of blessings and cursings upon nations based upon their treatment of Israel has been in operation. Our observations throughout this jog through history can

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be summed up in the words of Thomas Newton, the Bishop of Bristol (1704-1782). He said the following.

The preservation of the Jews is really one of the most signal and illustrious acts of Divine Providence ... and what but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner as none other nation upon earth hath been preserved. Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies, than in their preservation ... We see that the great empires, which in their turn subdued and oppressed the people of God, are all come to ruin ... And if such hath been the fatal end of the enemies and oppressors of the Jews, let it serve as a warning to all those, who at any time or upon any occasion are for raising a clamor and persecution against them.⁷¹

This pattern we observe is simply the outworking of God's promises to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant – “I will bless those that bless you, and curse those that curse you.” Of course, as present-day Christians, this Biblical principle alone should help guide our attitudes toward the nation of Israel. If this principle is still at work, as we have shown, how can we say God has abandoned them? How can we say Israel is no longer relevant in God's program?

We will further galvanize this understanding in the following section of our study, as we will begin to focus more specifically on the title of this study – the question of “should Christians support Israel?”

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CHAPTER 4

GOD’S PROPHETIC PLAN FOR ISRAEL’S FUTURE

Now that we have examined God’s purpose for the creation of Israel, as well as the way God has blessed and cursed the nations throughout history based upon their treatment of Israel, we are now in a position to understand God’s prophetic plans for Israel’s future. As Christians today, one of the best ways we can gain further understanding concerning the proper perspective we should have towards Israel as a nation is by recognizing their prophetic future. Where does Israel fit into God’s future program for humanity and world events?

Some have taken the position that due to Israel’s current state of unbelief, the attitude of the Christian towards them as a nation should be one of opposition (“unbelief” meaning they still have not accepted their true Messiah, Jesus Christ). Some have gone as far as to say that their current state of unbelief makes even the State of Israel’s national sovereignty illegitimate in God’s eyes. They claim that since Israel’s return to the land in the 1900s took place while in this state of unbelief, then that return is not in any way connected to Bible prophecy. From this train of thought, they often deny that the modern State of Israel has any significance at all in terms of Bible prophecy.

Of course, sentiments similar to these are often embraced by those

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who are motivated by aberrant eschatological and theological views. At the beginning of this study, we mentioned the erroneous doctrine of Replacement Theology – the view that advocates that the Church has replaced Israel, and that Israel no longer has a place in God’s program. It says that since Israel rejected their Messiah, they forfeited all of their God-given promises over to the Church. Obviously, if that’s your view, your attitude toward the Jewish people and toward the modern State of Israel will likely be one of indifference, if not hostility.

A somewhat similar view that essentially arrives at the same conclusion arises out of a hermeneutical framework called Covenant Theology. Covenant or Reformed theologians understand there to be only one people of God – the Church – which was represented as “the church of Israel in the wilderness in the Old Testament and as the Israel of God in the New Testament,” whose only kingdom is heavenly, and for whom all of the covenant promises have already been fulfilled in Christ.

One author, O. Palmer Robertson, is typical of Covenant theologians concerning the supposedly changed meaning of the land after the coming of Christ. He writes as follows.

The Land which once was the specific locale of God’s redemptive working served well within the old covenant as a picture of Paradise lost and promised. Now, however, in the era of new-covenant fulfillment, the land has expanded to encompass the cosmos.¹

Robertson clearly abandons the importance of the actual land God promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by inserting his own interpretation of what the land means – in which he allegorically expands it to mean the cosmos. He sees the New Covenant somehow as a means by which God will negate (not fulfill) His unconditional promises to Israel concerning the land He promised to their descendants – despite the fact that He made many of these unconditional promises prior to the institution of the Old Covenant.

In similar fashion, author Colin Chapman states the position that

the literal promise of the land to Israel ceased with Jesus, and certainly with the apostles.

Is there anything to suggest that after the ascension of Jesus his disciples continued to look forward to a restored Jewish state in the Land? Given the political situation in first-century Palestine, the writers of the New Testament had every reason to hope for a national restoration for the Jewish people. But did they in fact do so? There is nothing whatsoever to suggest that they held onto these hopes.²

From this quote, we can clearly understand the thinking of Covenant Theology advocates on this subject of Israel: the national promises made to Israel get allegorically re-applied to the Church. Of course, this statement by Chapman is one hundred percent factually inaccurate – the New Testament (and of course the Old Testament) extensively details God’s future plan for Israel’s national restoration – and it is addressed by Jesus in Matthew 24-25, by Paul in Romans 11, and is referenced in other places as well).

Of course, if these advocates were utilizing a consistent literal interpretation of the Bible, they would clearly see this. But instead, like Replacement Theologians, Covenant theologians also use an inconsistent hermeneutic – they interpret some parts of the Bible literally while other parts allegorically. And so, they commit the same interpretive errors as those who embrace the allegorical hermeneutic of Augustine, which was adopted and mainstreamed by the Catholic Church.

Note: For a deeper look into the development of this method of allegorical interpretation in Church history, see our companion study entitled, “Understanding The Distinction Between Israel And The Church”.

So, according to the Covenant Theology system of Bible interpretation, there can be no prophetic fulfillment for the Jewish people as a national or ethnic group distinct from the Church. Additionally, there

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can be no physical fulfillment in an earthly place such as the Land of Israel, since “the Land” is reinterpreted to mean the cosmos. Since under this view, there is no recognition of Israel as being part of God’s program, and believing that no regathering or restoration of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland has any Biblical foundation, the conclusion they come to of course, is that the modern State of Israel has no connection at all to the handiwork of God or Bible prophecy. To them, the Jewish State is no different than any other ethnic group in the region seeking to dominate a particular territory.

So, it shouldn’t be difficult to see how one’s framework for Bible interpretation (or one’s hermeneutics) will absolutely define all of the downstream issues, such as the place of Israel in God’s future plans. Of course, then, this will ultimately frame our attitudes toward Israel. In other words, as the late Dr. Chuck Missler used to say, “your hermeneutics will determine your eschatology” (or your understanding of the end-times).

And so, with that background in place, we will now begin to dive into an exploration of these questions: Is the modern State of Israel prophetically significant? Does God have a future plan for national Israel? And if so, what does it include? Answering these questions will help us gain a perspective as to the overall question of this study concerning the attitude of the Bible-believing Christian towards Israel. Should we support Israel? Why or why not?

Is the Modern State of Israel Prophetically Significant?

First, we will explore the topic of whether Israel’s current regathering from worldwide dispersion (or in other words, the establishment of the modern State of Israel in the 1900s) has any connection to Bible prophecy. The answers we uncover will logically guide our perceptions going forward. In other words, if we **do** find that the modern State of Israel has prophetic relevance, and we recognize what scripture tells us about Israel’s future in God’s plan, then those understandings must logically guide how we as Christians think towards modern Israel.

In order to recognize how prophetically significant the current

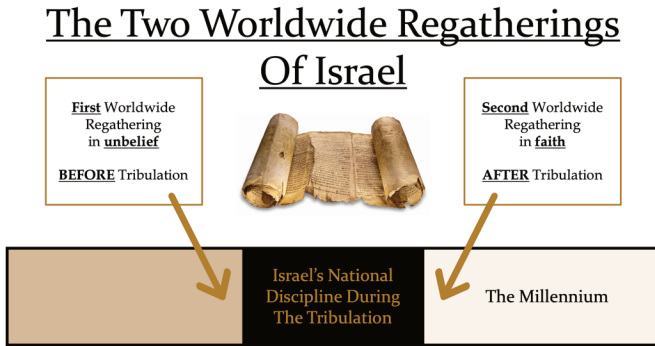
State of Israel actually is according to Bible prophecy, we need to first have an understanding of what the Bible says about Israel's regathering to their ancestral homeland. The Bible is full of these prophecies. In fact, Bible scholar Thomas Ice notes:

Every Old Testament prophet, except Jonah, speaks of a permanent return to the Land of Israel by the Jews.³

The Biblical focus on the people of Israel being permanently regathered to the land is a pervasive theme throughout the Old Testament. But one of the most ignored topics of Bible prophecy is the awareness that scripture plainly declares that Israel will undergo **two different regatherings from worldwide dispersion** (or if you prefer, two distinct phases of worldwide regathering).

Further, the Bible also declares that these two regatherings would take place under very **different circumstances** and for very **different purposes**. It turns out that these differences actually help us recognize just how significant the current State of Israel is within the Bible's prophetic outline for Israel's future.

We will begin by first stating our proposition. We will then thoroughly demonstrate the reality of this proposition as being a clear Scriptural teaching throughout the remainder of this section. Our proposition is that the Bible contains a number of prophecies indicating that Israel would be regathered first in a state of **unbelief** in **preparation for judgment** (the judgment that culminates in the **Tribulation**), and that afterwards, they would then be regathered a second and final time in **faith** (this taking place after the Tribulation), in **preparation for blessings** to be received in the **Millennial Kingdom**.



This is significant because many people overlook the distinction of these two regatherings and only recognize one regathering. Some only recognize or expect a regathering in **faith** – and because of this, they deny the prophetic significance of the current secular regathering (in **unbelief**) that has been taking place over the past hundred years or so. Let's dive right into this and see for ourselves what the Bible has to say about it.

The first thing to take note of is that from the very beginning of Israel's history, God had promised to scatter them among the nations worldwide if they refused to keep the terms of the Mosaic Covenant and later refused to recognize Him as Messiah when He visited them. For instance, Deuteronomy 28:64 says God would:

Scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other...

-Deuteronomy 28:64

From this passage, it's clear that the dispersion would be **global**, as God had promised to scatter them from **one end of the earth to the other**. Predictions like this one are spoken of in a number of places throughout the Old Testament. Although the nation was somewhat scattered during the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, in

which many were brought captive into those lands, **these events were only a local dispersion and cannot act as the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies describing a worldwide dispersion.**

Instead, these prophecies of worldwide dispersion find clear fulfillment in the events of 70 AD and following. At this point in time, God brought discipline upon unbelieving Israel through the invasion of the Roman general Titus Vespasian, whose armies would level Jerusalem and the Temple in order to quell the Jewish uprisings of the late 60s AD. During this time, many Jews were killed or sold into slavery and removed from the land. Then, during the 130s AD, the Bar Kokhba revolt would result in most of the remaining Jewish population of Judea being killed, sold into foreign slavery, or forced to flee the land. The area of Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina by the Romans. For the last two thousand years, the Jews have found themselves in this worldwide dispersion without a home country (this dispersion referred to as the Diaspora) exactly as foretold by God through the writings of Moses in Deuteronomy, and in many other places.

But just as Israel's disciplinary dispersion is prophesied in the Old Testament, so is her eventual restoration. As we already stated, the Bible specifically predicts **two worldwide regatherings** for national Israel. First, there would be a regathering in **unbelief** when Israel returns to part of her original land promise – a return in preparation for the eventual judgment of the Tribulation, through which the nation will be brought to faith. But this regathering will be followed by another future regathering in **faith**, after the discipline of the Tribulation leads the Jewish remnant to cry out unto Christ in their time of trouble – prompting His response. After He returns to save this righteous remnant and destroy their enemies, He will then regather the global outcasts of Israel and bring them back to the land in preparation for blessings in the Kingdom Age. In this final regathering, Israel will be restored not only to part of her land, but to all of her land, according to the original boundaries promised by God to the Patriarchs and reiterated to Joshua in the Old Testament (Genesis 15:18 and Joshua 1:4). These boundaries have never yet been

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completely under Israel's control, but they will be in this future Kingdom Age.

But here's a key point to recognize: We know that there are *only* two worldwide regatherings of Israel, and that this second and final one will occur after the Tribulation, prior to the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. We learn all of this from Isaiah 11:11-12.

And 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**, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and **shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.**

-Isaiah 11:11-12

The setting of this passage is clearly eschatological, referring to the final regathering in faith after the Tribulation as the Millennial Kingdom is being established. Verses 1-5 of this chapter describe the Second Coming of Christ in judgment to rule the earth. Verses 6-9 depict the peaceful conditions of restoration under the New Covenant, and Verse 10 introduces Israel's national repentance and return to their true Messiah. Verses 11-12 (which we just read) continue this theme, helping us understand the context of this final worldwide regathering. You will see this clearly in the other parallel passages we will examine further ahead.

But let's recognize the important marker given to us in Verse 11 – the phrase “the second time.” In light of what we just discussed, it becomes clear that if this final worldwide regathering is the “second one,” then that means there was an earlier worldwide regathering – “the first one”. The Hebrew-Christian scholar Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains this further.

[Isaiah] is speaking of the final worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. Isaiah numbers the final worldwide gathering in faith in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom as the **second** one. In other words, the last one is only the second one. If the last one is the second one, how many can there be before that? Only one. The first one could not have been the return from Babylon since that was not an international regathering from the four corners of the world, only a migration from one country (Babylonia) to another (Judea). The Bible does not allow for several worldwide regatherings in unbelief; it allows for one worldwide regathering in unbelief, followed by the last one, the one in faith, which is the second one. This text only permits two worldwide regatherings from the four corners of the earth.⁴

Let's take note that this "second time" regathering as a time of repentance indicates that national Israel **must have existed in a state of unbelief prior to this** (cf. Zechariah 12:10-14; 14:4; Romans 11:25-27). If this was not the case, then there would be nothing for Israel to repent of! **Therefore, the "first time" regathering, which must be identified as taking place before this, must have involved Israel's regathering to the Land in unbelief.** If there are only two regatherings, then this "first time" regathering of the Jews to the Land of Israel must be the modern one we've witnessed over the past hundred years or so – and it certainly has been a return in unbelief.

Further yet, **since the Bible describes Israel dwelling "in the land" throughout the end-times, and if there are only two regatherings, then there cannot be another dispersion before the future "second time" regathering.** Logically then, this requires that the modern State of Israel will remain in possession of the Land perpetually from now until the fulfillment of end-time prophecy. Otherwise, there would be more than two worldwide regatherings.

Although the first regathering has already been occurring within modern times, we of course can recognize that many Jewish people will remain scattered among the nations awaiting the future "second time" regathering, according to prophecy. In other words, there have to be Jews still in worldwide diaspora who do not return during the

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first regathering, in order for a final worldwide regathering to occur later on. Another way of putting it is there must be Jews living both in Israel and in the worldwide diaspora among the nations throughout the end-times. That of course is what we see currently taking place. The first regathering has been gradual and partial. The final regathering will be a full regathering of all remnant Jews, and seems to be more of an immediate event.

So, the logical conclusion of all of this requires us to accept that the modern return of Israel to the Land (even while in a state of unbelief) **is a divinely ordained event**, and therefore **the modern State of Israel must be part of God's prophetic program**. Clearly, it is part of God's plan to bring the nation of Israel to future repentance and spiritual restoration. Fruchtenbaum arrives at the same conclusion: "Therefore, the present Jewish state is relevant to Bible prophecy."⁵

And so, from this key passage in Isaiah 11 that tells us of this second and final regathering, we can recognize the logical conclusion we are brought to: **the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant**.

We will now examine a number of the Biblical passages that prophetically detail these two worldwide regatherings of Israel. As we examine each, you will begin to see this concept more clearly.

Israel's First Worldwide Regathering in Unbelief

Let's begin by examining Israel's first or initial worldwide gathering – which we will see is the modern-day regathering we've been witnessing over the past hundred years or so. Numerous passages appear to speak of this initial regathering in unbelief prior to the Tribulation period. One of the clearest examples is found in Zephaniah 2.

Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff,

before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.

-Zephaniah 2:1-2

This passage depicts a regathering of the nation clearly described as taking place *before* the outpouring of God's discipline upon Israel in the Tribulation – helping us to recognize this as a first regathering passage. As we continue to go through these examples, it will become clear that there is one regathering *prior* to the Tribulation and one directly *after* the Tribulation, as the Millennial Kingdom is being introduced.

It is also evident that when this first regathering takes place, the nation is still in unbelief, since they're described as a "nation not desired" (Verse 1), or as the NASB puts it, a "nation without shame." In other words, they are shamelessly in sin. Clearly, this indicates that they haven't yet repented, and are in unbelief at the time of this regathering. For this reason, they are threatened with judgment when the Tribulation arrives (as we see in Verses 2-3). Therefore, this passage unmistakably shows a regathering of the nation in unbelief prior to the Tribulation – through which they will be brought to national repentance.

We should also note the contrast presented one chapter later in Zephaniah 3:11, which speaks of the later Millennial Kingdom, saying, "In that day shalt thou *not be ashamed* for all thy doings." Rather than conveying a condition of shamelessness while in sin (as before), the nation at this point will have repented and been redeemed, thereby removing their shame. This further clarifies for us that this regathering in Zephaniah Chapter 2 was the regathering in unbelief prior to the discipline that would lead to their repentance and the removal of their shame. So, this first regathering is a regathering in unbelief in preparation for the judgment and discipline of the Tribulation.

This is just the first example, and we already see how clearly Biblical it is that Israel will be regathered first in a state of unbelief – which refutes the arguments of those who oppose the modern State of Israel on the basis of its formation taking place while in unbelief.

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Unbelieving Israel is part of God's plan, according to these scriptures! This is part of the process whereby God will bring them into faith. Before they can be brought to faith, they of course will be in a state of unbelief. Their unbelief does not mean God isn't working to move them to a state of faith. This is exactly what we, as saved Christians also experienced. Before we came to faith, God was moving in our lives to draw us to Him in faith. And so, it should not be difficult to understand this same concept at work in the case of national Israel.

But let's continue on to examine a second example. Another incredible portrayal of unbelieving Israel's initial regathering for judgment is found in Ezekiel Chapter 22.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, **therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.**

As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you.

Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you.

-Ezekiel 22:17-22

Some have incorrectly attributed the fulfillment of this prophecy to the historical return of the Jews from Babylonian Captivity around 538 BC. But a careful reading of the context of this passage demands that this prophetic regathering is speaking of the current regathering we've

witnessed in the modern State of Israel over the past hundred years or so.

For example, this can be seen in the fact that the Jews' return around 538 BC was in belief, not unbelief, and was in restoration, not judgment. Ezra 1:5 makes it clear that those 49,897 Jews that participated in the return from Babylon were those "whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem." By contrast, in the above passage in Ezekiel, it's stated that the Lord will gather them in "anger" and "wrath" and will "pour out His wrath" on them. The purpose of this judgment, described by the imagery of smelting metal in a furnace or a foundry, is to bring Israel to national repentance and regeneration, as seen in the words "you will know that I am the Lord" (Verse 17, cf. Verse 22). In other words, at the time of this regathering, the nation was in rebellion and unbelief. But through God's discipline of fiery wrath and judgment (here described as a furnace), they will be brought to faith.

So, we easily see that this is a return in unbelief prior to a time of God's wrath being poured out upon Israel. This future period of wrath clearly refers most specifically to the last half of the Tribulation (the Great Tribulation). This is the time of the consummation of the outpouring of God's wrath and indignation described throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is the time of unparalleled distress for national Israel, which Jeremiah 30:7 describes as being a time unlike any other, calling it the "time of Jacob's trouble."

It's at this time that the invasion of Jerusalem by the international armies of the Antichrist will take place (Revelation 11:2; Zechariah 12:2-3, 9; 14:2a), and there will be a battle for the city, in which half of its Jewish population will be exiled, while the rest remain in a condition of siege (Zechariah 14:2). As a result of this purifying experience (cf. Zechariah 13:1), many Jews in Jerusalem will join in a national repentance (Zechariah 12:10-14). And so, going back to Ezekiel 22:17-22, we can see how that regathering depicts the first or initial regathering of Israel in unbelief in preparation for this time of discipline during the Tribulation.

In addition to these clear and specific passages, there are also many

other passages that depict the Jews inhabiting Jerusalem towards the end of this present age. The prophetic corpus of scripture takes this for granted. This is significant to our current discussion because the entire context of end-time events focuses around an unrepentant Israel in the land being cast into the fiery discipline of the Tribulation. This entire context logically requires an initial regathering in unbelief.

In other words, since we know they were dispersed out of the land in 70 AD and following, how could they be described as being **in** the land in these end-time passages, which we know take place **before** the final regathering that takes place after the Second Coming? **It logically implies an initial regathering phase prior to all of this, while they are still in a state of rebellion.**

So, to summarize, we have seen from Isaiah 11:11-12 that there can only be two worldwide regatherings of Israel. The next several passages we looked at in this article (Zephaniah 2:1-2 and Ezekiel 22:17-22) clearly depict the first regathering – a regathering of the nation of Israel in unbelief prior to the Tribulation, through which the nation will be brought to repentance. Therefore, if we have witnessed the Jews being regathered to the land of Israel for the first time in history since their worldwide dispersion among the nations, returning in unbelief to form the modern secular State of Israel, just as these texts have foretold, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?

Israel's Second and Final Worldwide Regathering in Faith

Let's now begin to examine some of the numerous second regathering passages found in scripture. The far more frequent mentions of Israel being regathered do refer to her second and final regathering after the end of the Tribulation in preparation for entering the Millennial Kingdom. We will find that this ultimate regathering of the Jews around the time of the Second Coming of the Messiah is one of the most talked-about events in all of Bible prophecy. We will examine a handful of them.

Incredibly, we find that as early as Deuteronomy, this entire

prophetic picture is revealed in detail. Deuteronomy Chapter 30 foretells in advance that Israel would disobey the Mosaic Covenant that had just been given to them (most ultimately by rejecting the Messiah to whom it was designed to lead them towards). They would then be scattered globally among the nations. But in the end, they would ultimately repent and God would then regather them in faith. Following this, He would then fulfill for them the promises of His many Old Testament unconditional covenants – one of which guaranteed their full possession of the Promised Land, stretching from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18). They will one day possess this land in its entirety. Israel will also receive spiritual restoration under the New Covenant at this time, although this final covenant wouldn't be revealed until the later prophets (mainly Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel). But the entire canvas of this prophetic portrait is detailed all the way back in Deuteronomy by Moses! Let's see this in Deuteronomy 30.

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind **among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee,**

And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.

If any of thine be driven out **unto the outmost parts of heaven,** from thence will **the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:**

And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of

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thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

-Deuteronomy 30:1-6

We know this refers to the final regathering because Verse 2 describes a worldwide regathering in faith (the Jews turning back to God) – or in other words, in repentance, finally acknowledging Christ as their true Messiah. Obviously, this would not be an accurate description of the first worldwide regathering in the 1900s. Furthermore, it describes a return from the uttermost parts of heaven, which points to a global regathering. This eliminates any possibility that the passage could refer to the return from Babylonian captivity. Further yet, Verse 6 (referring to circumcision of the heart, etc.) is a clear reference to the New Covenant later described in the prophets (cf. Ezekiel 36:24-28; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 2:29), which Israel as a nation will receive in the Millennium.

Let's look at another passage that describes this final regathering – this one being found in Isaiah Chapter 43.

Fear not: for I am with thee: **I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;**

I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

-Isaiah 43:5-7

Again, this passage quite clearly refers to the final regathering, as the previous chapter (Chapter 42) describes the Tribulation in Verses 15-16, and the context of Chapter 43 involves the ultimate redemption and restoration of Israel – events that have no immediate connection to the modern-day regathering. We can also see this as depicting a global regathering (meaning it cannot refer to the return from Babylon), as the passage is clear in its reference to the four cardinal direc-

tions (east, west, north, south), and its description as a regathering “from the ends of the earth”.

Another important final regathering passage is found in Isaiah Chapter 27.

In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and **you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel.** And **in that day a great trumpet will be blown**, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

-Isaiah 27:12-13 (ESV)

We can see that the second national regathering of Israel is accompanied by the blowing of a “great trumpet.” Although this passage only makes specific mention of Jews being regathered from Assyria and Egypt, there are a number of clues that positively identify its context with the Day of the Lord, and therefore, the second and final regathering.

First, there is the double mention of “in that day,” which generally refers to the eschatological Day of the Lord, which more broadly encompasses the Tribulation period; but in the narrower sense, focuses specifically on the day of the Second Coming – the event that will occasion the second and final regathering. Second, this passage describes a regathering associated with faith rather than unbelief, as we can see from the mention of Israel worshipping the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem. And third, the sound of the great trumpet is associated with the time of the final judgment. There was no trumpet associated with the modern regathering. This speaks of an eschatological event.

We see this same concept described in Matthew 24 as well, as Jesus states that at the blowing of a great trumpet, people would witness His return, and His angels would gather the elect (this being the second regathering of Israel – the righteous remnant who had survived the Tribulation and turned to faith in Christ as Messiah).

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They will be regathered and brought to Jerusalem in preparation for blessings in the Millennial Kingdom.

Furthermore, Matthew 24 also gives the same “directional” language as many of the regathering passages we’ve already read, which allude to the four cardinal directions – north, south, east, and west. Let’s review this parallel passage in Matthew 24 and observe the obvious language that places this event after the Tribulation, at the Second Coming of Christ.

Immediately **after the tribulation of those days** shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And **then** shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see **the Son of man coming** in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a **great** sound of a **trumpet**, and they shall **gather together** his elect **from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.**

-Matthew 24:29-31

We can see here the same language that was used in the last several Old Testament passages we’ve examined that also describe this final regathering of Israel: a great trumpet blast and a worldwide regathering of the elect (Israel) from the four cardinal directions under heaven. And when will this final regathering occur? It occurs “immediately *after* the Tribulation.” After the Tribulation, Christ returns, and *then* the regathering occurs.

Many people misunderstand this statement of Jesus in Matthew 24 to refer to the Rapture of the Church. But if you know your Old Testament, and understand the concept of the two worldwide regatherings of Israel, it should be easy to recognize that this statement in Matthew 24 speaks of Israel’s second and final regathering in faith after being brought to repentance through the divine discipline of the Tribulation. At this time they will be led into the Millennial Kingdom that has been promised to Israel throughout the Old Testament.

Another passage, Ezekiel 20:33-38, describes a future judgment of national Israel (during the Tribulation) that will lead a remnant of Israel to national repentance and restoration – in connection with a regathering.

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and **with fury poured out, will I rule over you:**

And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and **with fury poured out.**

And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God.

And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: **and ye shall know that I am the Lord.**

-Ezekiel 20:33-38

Here, we can see that the Lord will regather Israel in connection with the outpouring of His fury and wrath (the Tribulation), as He purges the rebels from the people. Zechariah 13:8 says two thirds of the Jews will perish at this time. He will then bring a repentant remnant into the bond of the New Covenant and will rule over them during the Kingdom Age. Everything about this describes the final regathering as Christ initiates the Kingdom. We see this same sequence being consistently repeated throughout the Bible when speaking of these events.

These same prophetic themes are further detailed in Jeremiah 31.

For thus saith the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among

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the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, **the remnant of Israel.**

Behold, **I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth,** and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: **a great company shall return thither.**

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, **He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.**

For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

-Jeremiah 31:7-11

We can see that this is a worldwide regathering, as it references the north country and the coasts of the earth. We also see that this is a regathering in faith, as those being gathered are described as the righteous remnant returning with much weeping and supplications, or repentant prayers. This account is then elaborated on for the next twenty verses. Following this, we're then shown the prophetic promise of the outpouring of the New Covenant upon Israel in Verses 31-34. So, the context reveals that Israel will receive this New Covenant *after* their second and final regathering in the Kingdom Age. Verses 31-34 say:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:**

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house

of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: **for they shall all know me**, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, **and I will remember their sin no more.**

-Jeremiah 31:31-34

God would continue to give more details about this through the inspired insights of other prophets. For instance, we see that Ezekiel Chapter 36 also foretells the worldwide regathering of Israel in preparation for receiving this New Covenant.

For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

-Ezekiel 36:24-28

Again, the ultimate redemption and spiritual restoration of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom is the clear context of this passage, helping us to understand that this prophecy speaks of the regathering that occurs directly prior to it. Notice how this regathering implies a newly-repentant Israel, which is a scriptural requirement for the outpouring of the New Covenant (in the context of national Israel). Scripture tells us that God will not pour out the New Covenant upon an unrepentant Israel – but will pour it out upon the repentant

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remnant when they are regathered at Christ's Second Coming (as all of the other verses clearly agree).

And so, the prophetic timeline laid out in scripture is consistent and clear. It is repeated over and over, as we see from this examination. When we're aware of Israel's two worldwide regatherings, their significance as a modern and future national entity in God's program becomes abundantly clear. We get all of this straight from the actual and literal meanings of the scriptural text. We did not have to change or allegorize anything in order to insert a new meaning. Instead, when we let God's Word speak for itself, we can only conclude that **modern Israel is prophetically significant.**

So far, we have already demonstrated from scripture that Israel's first worldwide regathering in unbelief must be the modern regathering in the current State of Israel. But in order to recognize the reality of just how much modern Israel really is a part of God's plan, we will now focus on several characteristics of this regathering that allow us see this with precise detail. So, we will shift our focus back to the first regathering that we have witnessed in recent times involving the modern Jewish State.

#1 – Israel's first worldwide regathering will be through persecution and for judgment

A key prophetic aspect that we need to be aware of regarding the current State of Israel and their present-day regathering has to do with the way in which this regathering has occurred. The Bible even gives us the specifics on the stimulus for this regathering. It tells us that they will be regathered through the means of being "fished" and "hunted" – or in other words, through persecution. This is outlined for us in Jeremiah 16:15-16.

But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and **I will bring them again into their land** that I gave unto their fathers.

Behold, **I will send for many fishers** [or fishermen], **saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them** from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

-Jeremiah 16:15-16

Here, Jeremiah predicts a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel through the means of persecution. In Verse 16, this means of persecution is metaphorically described as involving “fishermen” and “hunters” whose actions will essentially chase the Jewish people back to their land. These pursuers, said to be sent by God, have been used to force the Jewish people to return back to their land in preparation for the events of judgment that will result in their final restoration.

In an article entitled “Is the Modern State of Israel Prophetically Significant?” author and scholar Randall Price concludes:

The modern history of Israel reveals that persecution has been the leading cause of the Jewish return to the Land. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries czarist pogroms and Polish economic discrimination in Eastern Europe motivated the creation of the Zionist Movement. During the Second World War, the attempted genocide of Jews during the Nazi holocaust encouraged international sympathy for the Jewish plight and led to the creation of the State of Israel. The Arab-Israel war of 1948-49 then forced Jews from Arab lands and later Soviet repression forced over a million Jews to immigrate to Israel. Over fifty years Israel has had to fight five major wars with its Arab neighbors for its survival and wage an on-going war of attrition with the Palestinians that during last decade Jews has resulted in a growing hostility in the international community toward Israel and provoked a renewed anti-Semitism in Europe. These “fishermen” and “hunters” continue to drive otherwise complacent Jews from the Diaspora to find safe haven in the Jewish State. **If this modern history of events has occurred as these prophetic texts have predicted, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?**⁶

#2 – Israel will be regathered to the land in stages

Those who deny the prophetic significance of the modern return of the Jewish people often point out that the return has been only partial (meaning it has included only part of the Jewish people returning to only part of the land). In addition, some also object by saying the return is secular, and not spiritual in nature. However, we should understand that these objections are invalidated by scripture (as we've already shown so far).

It is a misconception and a non-scriptural idea to expect that that all of the Jewish people would return to the land immediately, all at once, when the process of national regathering began. It's also a misconception that the regathering would be only spiritual in nature. To the contrary, as we've seen, the Bible prophetically reveals that the regathering would take place in two stages – a regathering before the Tribulation and a regathering before the Millennium.

Furthermore, this is also clearly depicted in Ezekiel's well-known vision of Israel's restoration. Recorded in Ezekiel Chapter 37, this vision uses the imagery of a valley of dry bones (referring to Israel's state of physical and spiritual deadness) that slowly and through several stages begin to experience restoration to life. It portrays a progressive physical restoration that ultimately ends in spiritual restoration. Professor Michael Rydelnik writes:

The bones come to life in stages: first sinews on the bones, then flesh, then skin, and finally, breath of life (Ezekiel 37:6-10). Then God told Ezekiel that "these bones are the whole house of Israel" (Verse 11) and their restoration is a picture of the way God will bring them "back to the Land of Israel" (Verse 12).⁷

Through this vision, we can recognize a prophetic pattern that reveals sequential stages of restoration: **first a progressive physical regathering to the land, followed by a spiritual regathering to the Lord**. Since this first regathering takes place in spiritual unbelief, then of course we should expect it to be a regathering characterized by

secular and political means. That is exactly what we observe with the modern re-establishment of the secular Jewish State. So, this is not a reason to deny the prophetic significance of the modern regathering. Clearly, the opposite is true. Scripture requires it to be this way.

Additionally, we would totally expect that a regathering of this nature (secular and political) would only result in a partial physical regathering. Total restoration cannot take place without a spiritual movement. Further, since this regathering is partial, it leaves the remainder of the Jewish population still living outside of the land. This is a necessity since the Bible teaches two regatherings. If the initial regathering was total, then how could there be a second one? There would be no Jews remaining to be regathered. So, again, this idea of a partial regathering is not unscriptural. Rather, it is a Biblical requirement.

But even with the initial regathering being only partial, it still remains in perfect harmony with the prophesied pattern of a world-wide regathering. Geographically, we can see that Jews have returned from “the four corners of the earth,” just as scripture anticipated. Randall Price concludes:

The second regathering, then, which would follow a time of world-wide Jewish persecution in the Tribulation will result not only in Israel’s seeking deliverance physically but also spiritually in a time of national repentance (Luke 21:25-28). Therefore, just as the Jewish **dispersion** occurred in successive stages over time (722 B.C., 586 B.C., A.D. 70, A.D. 115, et. al), so the Jewish **regathering** can be seen to occur in stages modern and future (before the Tribulation, e.g. 1897, 1948, 1967, and at the end of the Tribulation). **If the regathering is in stages, and the first regathering of the Jewish people to their Land is the historic modern regathering, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?**⁸

#3 – Modern Israel parallels the Israel predicted to exist during the end-times

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In his article, Price observes that historically, Christians embracing a futurist and a consistent literal view of eschatology fully expected that at some point in history, the following would occur:

- the Jewish people would have to return to their ancient homeland, “the land of Israel”
- they would have to regain their national status as “the people of Israel”
- they would again be in an adversarial position with the Gentile nations

Interestingly, all of these expectations *have* currently been fulfilled! Why did futurists and literalists always expect these conditions to come about? The simple answer is that they are all required by clear scriptural prophecies describing Israel in the end-times. Anyone who reads these prophecies from a literal perspective (and does not try to allegorize or spiritualize them away) could recognize the requirement of their future literal fulfillment. The prophecy of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel Chapters 38-39 is a good example. Price notes:

Set in an eschatological context (Ezekiel 33-48), the text specifically states that its fulfillment “will come about in the last days” (38:16). At this time “the people of Israel” are described as living in “the cities of Israel” in “the Land of Israel” (38:14, 18-19; 39:9). According to Ezekiel 37:25 this Land is “the land that I (God) gave to Jacob (Israel) My servant, in which your fathers lived.” Ezekiel 38:8 also states that the Jewish People who had returned to the Land had been “gathered from many nations” (a worldwide regathering). The regathering of Jews from exile in 538 B.C. had only been from one nation (Babylon). Only in our modern period have we witnessed a regathering of Jews to Israel from “many nations” in accord with this prophecy.

Ezekiel’s Gog and Magog prophecy also speaks of “the mountains of Israel” (39:2, 4, 17). This mountainous region that extends the

length of the country did not become a part of the modern State until after the Six Day War of 1967. Only then could this region again be properly called “the mountains of Israel.” Before this date it was under a succession of foreign rulers until wrested from Jordan (who last controlled it from 1948-1967). This is in harmony with Ezekiel 38:8, 12 which states that this mountainous land, before being restored to Israel, had been under “the sword” (foreign dominion). The text further states that the Land had been “a continual waste.” History affirms that under foreign domination, and especially under the 400 years of Ottoman Turkish domination, the once fertile mountain region (particularly in the north) had been denuded and had eroded into a wasteland.⁹

As Price notes, some have attempted to claim that the restoration being spoken of was the one that occurred in the 530s BC as the captive Jews were allowed to return to Israel after seventy years of Babylonian exile. However, a careful reading of this prophecy eliminates that return as being the fulfillment spoken of, as it was only a migration from one nation (Babylon). The prophecy requires the return to be worldwide, from “many nations.” Only in modern times have we witnessed a regathering of this kind. The many points of similarity between the conditions required by Ezekiel 38 and those of the modern regathering make it clear that this is the one intended. Price concludes:

Therefore, Ezekiel 38-39 demonstrates that an Israel with the conditions presently experienced by the modern State was predicted to exist before final prophetic fulfillment would be possible. Other texts also reveal that the Israel of the end time will have conditions that parallel those existing in the modern Jewish State. Daniel 9:27 depicts Israel in the Land, in possession of the Land, and in the city of Jerusalem when the seventieth week of Daniel starts. It also speaks of a “covenant” being made between the Jewish leadership (“the many”) and a foreign leader (“the prince that shall come,” verse 26). In order for any covenant to be legally binding and enforceable, both parties

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must be recognized entities that have the authority and power to fulfill the terms of the agreement. Since this verse implies that the covenant has something to do with the restoration of the Temple and the sacrificial system, it is understood that the Jewish leaders have a control in the city that qualifies them as partners in the contract. Matthew 24:16 likewise implies that Jewish law (the Sabbath) is being observed in the Land, another factor that indicates Jewish control of the city or at least freedom from foreign rule that would restrict the free exercise of the Jewish religion. Today, the modern Jewish State fulfills all of these conditions, including having sovereignty (whether fully exercised or not) over the Temple Mount. **If the modern State of Israel parallels the Israel of the end times, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?**¹⁰

After examining all of this evidence, our overall conclusion is simple: the creation of the modern Jewish State in 1948 has the prophetic significance of beginning the process of the regathering of Israel from the nations (the first regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment), which will be followed by a further regathering (the second regathering in faith) after the Tribulation, in preparation for the time of Israel's full physical and spiritual restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. This is the result of a plain, literal reading of scripture, and it aligns perfectly with what we can observe in real time as we've watched the nation of Israel emerge back onto the world scene.

So then if modern Israel is prophetically significant, and we know that God's plan is to ultimately use this process to bring them to national salvation, then it should be clear what the attitude of the Bible-believing Christian should be towards Israel as well as the Jewish people. Our viewpoint towards them should mirror the mind of God – He still loves them, has plans for their future, and ultimately will get them back! Our attitudes as Christians should be in line with this.

In the next subsection, we will continue to explore a supporting Biblical theme that aligns with this understanding, and will help us

zoom out our perspective in order to perceive the “big picture” concerning the supernatural conflict over Israel.

God’s Plan for Israel Versus Satan’s Plan for Israel

Many scripture passages allude to the constant warfare taking place in the spiritual world all around us, but Paul gives us a good summary of this mysterious reality in the following verse.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

-Ephesians 6:12

Throughout this study, we have examined God’s purposes for Israel, God’s protection of Israel throughout history, and God’s future plans for Israel. But there is another aspect of this that we need to recognize before continuing on – one to which we’ve alluded throughout this study. That concept is simply this – if God’s plan is to bless, use, and protect the nation of Israel, and fulfill all of His promises to humanity through the nation of Israel, then what would be Satan’s plan? Of course, it would be the opposite – to oppose and eradicate Israel. Based on the first several sections of our study, this should come as no surprise to us.

We are shown a glimpse of this angelic conflict in Daniel 12, in the way the archangel Michael is portrayed as being an angel that fights on behalf of Israel.

And at that time shall **Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people:** and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

-Daniel 12:1

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In Revelation Chapter 12, John gives us a prophetic window into the panorama of Satan's attempts to destroy the nation of Israel. Let's begin by looking at the first five verses of this chapter.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

-Revelation 12:1-5

By exercising some basic Bible study interpretive techniques, we can easily understand what the symbols within this Revelation 12 sign represent:

- The Woman represents the nation of Israel (Revelation 12:1; Genesis 37:9-10).

In Joseph's dream in Genesis 37, we're given the key to understanding the prophetic imagery of the Woman. We're told that the sun, moon, and stars represent Israel (Jacob being the sun, his wife being the moon, and his eleven sons plus Joseph being the twelve tribes of Israel). So, the Woman represents Israel – which makes perfect sense, as Israel brings forth (or "births") Christ.

- The great red Dragon represents Satan (Revelation 12:3, 9).

This chapter plainly tells us that the Dragon is Satan in Verse 9.

- The stars of heaven represent the fallen angels (Revelation 12:7; Job 38:7; Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18; Revelation 9:1).

The context of verse 9 involves Satan and his angels (as we see in verse 7), and the Bible repeatedly refers to angels by calling them “stars.”

- The male child represents Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:5; Psalm 2:9; Acts 1:9; Revelation 19:15).

The identity of Jesus as the male Child is clear to us from these supporting passages we’ve listed. Let’s explore this passage in more detail in order to recognize exactly what is happening in this chapter.

Verse 2 describes the Woman (Israel) in travail, waiting to give birth to the Christ Child. This undoubtedly refers to the sufferings of the nation and her troublesome and restless times at the First Coming of Christ. She was even then suffering under not only the judgment of the previous deportations (see Matthew 1:11, 17) but also the hatred of Satan through the many Gentile nations that had overrun Israel in the centuries leading up to Christ’s First Coming – the most current at the time being the Roman occupation.

Immediately following the description of the Woman in travail, another sign, a great red Dragon, appears in heaven. The ultimate cause of all the anti-Semitism in the world is the Dragon’s hatred for Israel. The red Dragon is clearly identified in Verse 9 and then also in Revelation 20:2 as none other than Satan himself.

That the red Dragon is called “great” points to the magnitude of Satan’s power and activity in the world. “Red” emphasizes his murderous and bloodthirsty character and behavior throughout history (cf. John 8:44).

The imagery of a “dragon” pictures his ferocious and intensely cruel nature. “Having seven heads and ten horns” relates him to the ten-nation confederation of the system of the beast (Daniel 7:7-8 and

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Revelation 13:1). “Seven crowns” speaks of his ruling power, but also his usurped power and authority which he has and will have especially in the last days.

In Verse 4, we read that his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven – like we said, probably referring to one-third of the angels who rebelled with Satan and who became his chief emissaries in his fight and hatred against Israel and the purposes of God. So, Verse 4a seems to take us back to the beginning, to Satan’s original fall. Now Verse 4b skips thousands of years forward and takes us to the First Coming of Christ, and Satan’s efforts to destroy Him as a child.

This passage says, “and the dragon stood before the woman (Israel) who was about to give birth ... ” This clearly refers to the way Satan, acting through Herod, attempted to kill all the baby boys of Judea aged two years and under, in order to kill the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:13-18).

In between Satan’s fall and His attempts to destroy the Christ-child were His numerous attempts to defeat God’s purposes through the seed of the woman and especially with the Jews.

- In Genesis 6, Satan attempted to infiltrate the human gene pool in an effort to thwart the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 – the promise that the serpent’s head would be crushed by the seed of the woman (a Messianic anticipation).
- In Genesis 10 and 11, Satan instituted the pagan religious systems of the world which came from the Babylonian cult system (that we described at length earlier in this study).
- Then through the rest of the Old Testament, Satan attempted over and over to defeat God’s purposes with Israel through the actions of Pharaoh, through the Canaanites, through Amalek, through Balaam and Balak, etc., but always to no avail.

So, from the very beginning of humanity, we can trace the attempts

of Satan to foil the plans of God. And as it becomes clear that God will fulfill His plans through the nation of Israel, we can see Satan's attempts begin to focus on their destruction. But let's continue with this chapter.

It reads, "and she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne." Like we said, this male Child that the Woman gives birth to is Christ. The reference to ruling with a rod of iron is a clear Messianic reference from Psalm 2:9. It then speaks of the Child being "caught up to God and to His throne." These words take us from the birth of Christ to Christ's ascension – which by implication include the key events of the cross and the resurrection which were both necessary for Christ to defeat Satan and rule on the earth (cf. Hebrews 2:14; Acts 17:30-31; John 16:10-11; 12:31-33). This is the proof of Satan's failure and of Satan's certain ultimate defeat (cf. Romans 16:20). As Genesis 3:14-15 anticipates, Satan bruised Christ's heel (the painful death of the crucifixion), but Christ crushed Satan's head through death, resurrection, and ascension (cf. Colossians 2:15).

Let's now continue on in Revelation Chapter 12. In between where we left off (Verse 5) and where we will pick up (Verse 6), intervenes the age of the Church, the potential gap period after the Church and before the Tribulation, and the first half of the Tribulation. In other words, we are transported forward in time from the ascension of Christ in Verse 5 to the Great Tribulation in Verse 6, as the Woman (Israel) flees to the wilderness to escape the fury of the Dragon (operating through his man-of-the-hour, the Antichrist). So, let's pick up here at Verse 6 where we'll witness a synopsis of Satan's closing act in his unsuccessful effort to eliminate Israel.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

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And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

-Revelation 12:6-17

Verse 6 begins with the Woman fleeing into the wilderness during the last half of the Tribulation where she will be under great persecution for three and a half years, or 1,260 days. But we might ask, “what is the point of Verse 6 in relation to the whole picture thus far?”

The idea is this: since Satan failed to defeat Christ (which is described earlier in this chapter) – and by extension Christ’s Church,

he will then turn in dragon-like fury against the Woman – Israel – and pour out his vengeance upon her. Verses 13-17 give us the details of this persecution; but first, Verses 7-12 point us to the immediate cause. Between Christ's First and Second Comings, the Church of Jesus Christ is the prominent figure in the plan of God. But before the Tribulation begins, the Church will be raptured out of the reach of Satan – leaving Israel to be the main subject of his anger. In the middle of the Tribulation, something will happen which will create the greatest Jewish persecution the world has ever known. This is described for us as we continue in this chapter, as we've read – and in it, we can clearly see the angelic conflict being fought as Michael and his angels fight against Satan and his angels.

Although we won't examine the remainder of this passage in detail like we did with the first part, we can clearly recognize that in this chapter, we are given a sort of panoramic view of the angelic conflict and of the supernatural forces of darkness at work from antiquity and into the future. Through this prophetic glimpse, we can see how the nation of Israel has been the perpetual object of Satan's hatred throughout history – and the worst is yet to come.

We are also given a clear revelation of the ultimate cause and answer to the problem of anti-Semitism, which has shown itself to be a trans-generational recurrence from the very beginning of Israel's history. This ultimate cause is the Satanic dark-side of the supernatural conflict, which is perpetually warring against the plan of God. But it also brings out another astonishing reality that many overlook – the fact that according to Bible prophecy, the Second Coming of Christ cannot and will not happen until Israel turns to their Messiah in repentance! We are shown this prophetically in a number of places in the Bible, and will take a look at several of them shortly.

Knowing this, Satan's continual agenda seems to be the destruction and elimination of Israel in order to prevent the Second Coming (which includes his ultimate defeat) from taking place. Let's now examine several key passages that clearly require the repentance of the nation of Israel as a prerequisite to the Second Coming of Christ.

In Matthew 23, we find a recording of Jesus' confrontation with the

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Pharisees, who acted as representatives of the unbelieving nation of Israel during His First Coming. Due to their unbelief and rejection of Him as their promised Messiah, Jesus says:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**

-Matthew 23:37-39

This phrase “blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” was a well-known Messianic phrase from Psalm 118:26. The Jews were to proclaim this greeting when the Messiah arrived. But here, Jesus laments the continual unbelieving nature of His people. He makes it clear that He was sent unto them, and He would have gathered and brought them into His Messianic Kingdom if they were found in faith when He came. But because they rejected Him, they would have to endure a time of national desolation until the time of the end. Jesus said they wouldn’t see Him again until they cry out to Him, finally acknowledging Him as their Messiah. Just prior to His Second Coming, a righteous remnant will have cried out to Him in faith, and will then proclaim this Messianic greeting when He comes. So, it is clear that the Jewish remnant turning to Him in faith is a precondition to His Second Coming. He will not return (“ye shall not see me henceforth”) *until* they acknowledge Him with that Messianic greeting.

This is also spoken quite clearly in Old Testament prophecy. In Hosea, we read the following.

I will go and return to my place, **till** they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

-Hosea 5:15

Note: The Hebrew word translated “early” in that passage actually means “diligently” or “earnestly” (*shachar* – Strong’s #H7836).¹¹

This passage records God speaking in the first person, saying that He will go and return to His place. First of all, this would make no sense if God had never left His place (heaven). He couldn’t return to a place He had never left. But this makes perfect sense in light of the Incarnation, where God came to earth in a physical body as a genuine human. Through the manifestation of the Son, Christ Jesus, God *did* leave “His place” and come to earth; and He will one day return. When? This verse tells us! He said He wouldn’t return “*till*” – or *until* they acknowledge their offense (which was rejecting Him as their Messiah), and seek His face. He will not return until they repent, acknowledge Him as their true Messiah, and petition His return. So again, the Jewish remnant turning to Christ in faith is a precondition for His Second Coming. It simply cannot take place until this happens.

If we take these understandings back to the Revelation 12 passage where we see the dragon (or Satan) pouring out his wrath against the woman (Israel) during the Tribulation, we can understand his motives. He knows that Israel turning to Christ in faith is a necessary prerequisite for the Second Coming to take place. Therefore, in his darkened mind, if he can destroy Israel first, maybe he can prevent this Second Coming from taking place – and in so doing, prevent his ultimate judgment.

Israel will face unparalleled crisis during this period of Tribulation. The prophet Zechariah foretold that two of every three inhabitants of Israel will perish during this time, with a remnant of only one third of the population being saved.

And it shall come to pass, that **in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.**

And **I will bring the third part through the fire**, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: **they shall**

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call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people:
and they shall say, The Lord is my God.

-Zechariah 13:8-9

But through this period of trouble, a remnant of Israel will come to faith in Christ, which will bring to pass the Messiah's Second Coming. God will use Satan's evil plan to bring about the fulfillment of His own divine purposes for Israel's future spiritual and physical restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. But we say all of this to bring out a very simple point: if this is true, then of course Christians should support national Israel (in this sense)! Israel as a nation has a definite future in God's program. Israel's future national repentance is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Christ! What kind of Christian would oppose this, knowing that it's God's plan?

While the Church will have been raptured well prior to this, we will have the privilege of returning with Christ at His Second Coming. Understanding this, what kind of Christian would not then root for Israel to turn to their Messiah in order to bring this all about? What kind of Christian would oppose Israel's right to exist in their national homeland, knowing that this is all part of God's plan to bring them to repentance?

At the Second Coming, Christ defeats His enemies and brings judgement against all wickedness, establishing His righteous rule on the earth – where the Church will rule and reign with Him. Again, what kind of Christian would want to oppose this? To oppose it is to oppose God's plan as He has clearly laid it out in scripture. And to oppose God's plan is to oppose God. It really is that simple.

In the end of it all, what we can understand from Bible prophecy is simple: God's plan is to protect and promote Israel, while Satan's plan is to devour and destroy Israel. So, on which side of this angelic conflict would you like to be? That's what it really comes down to, and it answers the main question of this study. You need to recognize that the kind of Biblical hermeneutics you embrace (allegorism or literalism) will totally determine your attitude towards Israel, and dictate which side of this angelic conflict you will place yourself.

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CHAPTER 5

THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF THE BIBLE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN TOWARDS ISRAEL

As we begin this final informational chapter of our study, let's take a moment to review what we've learned so far.

We began our study with an in-depth look at God's purposes for Israel, in which we discussed the reasons why God chose Israel as a nation in the Old Testament. We saw how after the Flood, mankind began to exercise rebellion against God, and began the building of the Tower of Babel in Mesopotamia. We saw how the pagan Babylonian religious cult that was occurring at Babel was then exported into every culture as the languages were divided and each nation went their own way.

We then saw that because every nation had been corrupted by this system of Babylonian false religion, then in order for God to export His promised Messianic blessings of salvation to the world, He needed a new nation uncorrupted by this system. This was God's purpose in creating Israel, a nation which at that point in time, did not yet exist. Israel was the only nation God Himself created independent of the false religious system.

God would make a number of unconditional covenant promises to Israel's forefathers – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – and to their descendants. We are told in Deuteronomy 4:31 that God will not go back on the

covenants He made with them. God would then use Israel as a mechanism to deposit His Holy Word, including the promise of His Messianic Redeemer for all mankind. It's through these covenants and promises made to Israel, and through the actions of this Jewish Messiah (Jesus Christ) that all of the world is blessed by Israel.

But after time passed, even Israel began to go after false gods, allowing the system of Babylonian cult worship into their society, bringing with it the judgments of God. However, despite all of their spiritual whorings after false gods (in direct opposition to the purpose for their founding as a nation), God still said He would forgive them, and that they would **remain forever as a nation in His sight**. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah (in Jeremiah 31:35-37) writes, telling us that **as long as the sun, moon, and stars exist, the nation of Israel will also exist**. But even more specifically, he tells us that just as the heavens cannot be measured, **He will not permanently cast off the seed of Israel, despite their failures**.

This verse in Jeremiah singlehandedly refutes the concept of Replacement Theology – the idea that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan, and that Israel has no national future in God's plan. Again, it clearly tells us that **unless you can measure the heavens, Israel will never be permanently cast off based upon her spiritual failures. And as long as the sun, moon, and stars are in existence, Israel will also exist as a special nation in God's plan**. This is the perpetual promise of God, and it relates back the unconditional promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Even at the peak of Israel's apostasy as recorded in the Old Testament, God did not cast her off. To the contrary, it was at this time of the height of their spiritual idolatry and forsaking of God's Old Covenant that He actually began to issue prophecies through Israel's prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and others) promising a future New Covenant and time in which they would walk in His ways – that time being the Millennial Kingdom. He begins to tell them of their eventual regathering in preparation to receive this spiritual regeneration in this coming earthly Kingdom, outlining His plan for their future as a

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nation. And so, throughout the Old Testament prophets, we can clearly see that God has a future plan for national Israel.

In the next part of our study, we then jogged thousands of years of history, from the Assyrian Empire to the present. In fulfillment of God's unconditional and everlasting covenant with Abraham, we were able to witness how through documented history, those who bless Israel are blessed, but those who curse Israel are cursed. And so, we can see this everlasting principle at work throughout the record of history even up to modern times, demonstrating God's disposition towards Israel even while they're in a state of unbelief.

Then in the next section of our study, we took a deeper look at God's plans for Israel's future in eschatology (or what the Bible tells us about the end-times yet future). We saw how the Bible depicts two future regatherings for Israel – telling us that Israel would be regathered first in a state of unbelief in preparation for judgment (the judgment of the Tribulation), and then afterwards, they would be regathered a second and final time in faith (after the Tribulation), in preparation for blessings to be received in the Millennial Kingdom.

We also saw how scripture says there will only be two worldwide regatherings of Israel. Therefore, the “second time” regathering in the context of a national repentance indicates that Israel must have existed (and been regathered) first in a state of **unbelief** prior to this. This “first time” regathering must then be identified as a time in which Israel has been regathered to the land in unbelief. If there are only two regatherings, then this “first time” regathering of Jews in unbelief must be the modern one that we've witnessed over the past hundred years or so. According to prophetic scripture then, unbelieving Israel is part of God's plan and process, whereby through the unparalleled distress of the Tribulation, He will ultimately bring them to repentance.

So, we were forced to the logical conclusion that if we've witnessed the Jews being regathered to the land of Israel for the first time in history since their worldwide dispersion among the nations, returning in unbelief to form the modern secular State of Israel, just as these

texts have predicted, then how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant? It of course, must be.

We have also taken time to understand the angelic conflict that has been taking place throughout history, largely centering on the nation of Israel. Both the Old and New Testaments make it clear that God's plan is to bless Israel, but Satan's plan is to eradicate Israel. In other words, as God progressively reveals His plan to use Israel as an instrument of blessing for humanity, Satan then progressively focuses his attacks on Israel (and the promised Messianic line) in order to thwart God's plans. And as we witnessed in the words of prophetic passages, this will continue into the future, culminating in the Tribulation as the dragon (Satan) pursues the woman (Israel), but ultimately failing due to the divine protection God has placed upon her.

Based upon all of this background information we've studied so far, it should be clear what the attitude of the Bible-believing Christian should be towards the modern State of Israel, as well as the Jewish people. As we have shown throughout this study, our viewpoint towards them should parallel the mind of God on this subject – which is that He still loves them, has plans for their future, and ultimately will bring them to repentance! Our viewpoint, of course, should be in line with this.

In this section, we will anchor this conclusion even further by first delving into the main theological adversary of the Biblical viewpoint – the view called Replacement Theology. Replacement Theology is the view that says God has replaced Israel with the Church, is no longer honoring His unconditional covenants with Israel, and has deleted Israel from His future plans. Most Christians who oppose Israel today do so as a result of embracing this view. In our exploration of this, we will look further into the history of this view, and discover its incorrect foundational hermeneutics, as well as its results: the disastrous consequences it has brought upon the Jews throughout Christian history.

We will then take a deeper look into the New Testament writings of the apostle Paul in Romans, as he gives his readers a dissertation on the proper attitude a Christian should have regarding Israel. We will

see that his writings align perfectly with everything we've discussed thus far, but are in absolute opposition to the views expressed in Replacement Theology. With that said, let's begin.

An Evaluation of the Wrong Attitude

In our exploration of the proper attitude a Bible-believing Christian should have towards Israel, we find it useful to first discuss the *wrong* attitude. Although many unbiblical viewpoints regarding Israel exist, the one that is predominant in Christianity both today and throughout history is the view called Replacement Theology (also known as Supersessionism). This is the view that erases Israel from having any current or future relevance in God's plan, as adherents instead view the Church as being Israel's replacement. It is believed that because Israel did not receive her Messiah, Christ, that God has gone back on His unconditional promises towards her and has removed her from His program. They believe that all of the prophetic words of scripture that clearly speak of Israel's future should not be interpreted literally, but instead find allegorical or "spiritual" fulfillment as referring the Church.

It is a documented fact of history that beliefs such as Replacement Theology developed as an *outgrowth* of anti-Semitism in the early church. But it also can be said in the reverse – that embracing a belief in Replacement Theology often *leads* to anti-Semitism. Let's examine this in more depth.

In order to recognize the origin of the mainstream Church's acceptance of Replacement Theology, we must go all the way back to the early centuries of Christian history. Early on in Church history, there developed two centers of Biblical interpretation: the **Antiochian** school of thought and the **Alexandrian** school of thought.¹

The Antiochian school (which was centered in Antioch near the modern border of Syria and Turkey) interpreted Bible prophecy **literally**. But the Alexandrian school in Egypt had developed an **allegorical** interpretation of prophecy. By the fourth century, the Alexandrian school had gained preeminence as the dominant school of thought in

mainstream Christendom – largely due to the writings of the Church father **Augustine** (354-430 AD). He penned the book *The City of God*, giving the allegorical school of thought a formal treatise. Augustine's views were accepted by the Catholic Church, leading to the widespread dominance of allegorism over the next thousand years of Church history.^{2 3}

In this book, he portrayed the events of his time within a framework that we refer to today as “Amillennialism.” Within Amillennialism, the clear Scriptural prophecies and promises given to Israel regarding a literal and physical future earthly Kingdom reign of the Messiah are “spiritualized” away and interpreted as the present “reign of Christ” within the hearts of the Christians. In other words, through the allegorizing of scripture, Amillennialism denies a future thousand-year Millennial Kingdom, which scripture repeatedly promises. Through this system of interpretation, the allegorist becomes the ultimate decider of what the Bible says – not the text.⁴

These views of allegorism, Amillennialism, and Replacement Theology go hand in hand. The scholars who introduced these aberrant views were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy, such as Gnosticism, which taught that the physical world was evil and only the spiritual was capable of good. On this basis, Gnosticism denied the physical Incarnation of Christ. It was a short slide to then conclude that the perfect Son of God could not rule a physical earthly Kingdom (despite the promises of scripture). In this view, His reign must instead be over the immaterial hearts and souls of mankind. Everything the Bible plainly says about future prophecy was interpreted through this “spiritual” lens. The city of Alexandria at the time was the hotbed of Gnosticism and Greek philosophy, and so it is easy to see how these false beliefs worked their way into the Church.⁵

Although on the surface it might seem to be an insignificant change, Amillennialism profoundly changed the Church in the centuries after Augustine. It altered the Church's view of scripture, as well as of prophecy, and the negative impact of Augustine's doctrine continues to this day. Let's briefly try to backtrack in time in order to understand the evolution of allegorism and how it led to the Catholic

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Church system that pursued temporal earthly power and set the stage for the rampant anti-Semitism that was active throughout Church history.

After centuries of persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire, a monumental turning point within Christian history occurred in 313 AD. During this year, the Roman emperor **Constantine** issued the **Edict of Milan**, making Christianity an approved religion in the Roman Empire.⁶ This edict led to Christianity eventually becoming the official state religion, prompting the forced so-called “conversion” of pagans.⁷

The Roman government’s sudden approval of, and involvement in the Christian faith dramatically changed the course of Church history. From a theological perspective – and specifically an eschatological perspective – the Edict of Milan and the edicts that followed signaled a monumental paradigm shift from the well-grounded literal interpretation (Premillennialism, at that time called Chiliasm) of the ancient Church fathers, to the views of Amillennialism and Postmillennialism that would dominate Christian thinking from the fourth century AD to at least the middle part of the nineteenth century. Premillennialism of course, is the expectation of a future literal thousand-year Kingdom (or Millennium) on earth in which Christ reigns on David’s throne – just as the Bible speaks of.

Like we mentioned already, this shift away from the early Premillennialism of the Apostolic Church gained strength with Augustine and his allegorical approach to Biblical prophecy, as popularized in his book. Grant Jeffrey describes the transformation of the Church after the time of Augustine in the following way.

Consequently, as the Church formed powerful alliances with the kings of Europe, it lost interest in the literal prophecies about Christ’s coming Kingdom ... and leaders of the medieval Church set out to change humanity and to rule the world themselves and in alliance with Christian rulers.⁸

So, as the Church took upon itself the role of introducing and

expanding God's so-called kingdom on earth, it sought to exert its power through human government. It began to rely on military might to conquer and forcibly "convert" people to Christianity (much like Islam), rather than on the presentation of the Gospel. It was not coincidental that all these factors led to the atrocities of the Medieval Period, and the continual persecution of the Jews as heretics and infidels who must be converted or destroyed. The edicts of the Roman emperors mandating Christianity, combined with the emergence of Amillennialism, contributed greatly to this distortion of the entire purpose and mission of the Church. It was these distortions that characterized the Catholic Church and its dominance over the majority of Christian history. Like we mentioned, these distorted views also provided the perfect breeding ground for anti-Semitism, as these doctrines provided a way to delete Israel from the future program of God.

In his book *Israel and the Church: The Prodigal Heirs*, Chuck Missler documents a sampling of the history and writings of some of the early Church fathers, even prior to the Edict of Milan and Augustine. The Church fathers unfortunately, espoused tremendously negative views towards Judaism. It's astonishing to discover the blatant anti-Semitism in the early Church.⁹

Missler points out that even very early on, this hatred of the Jews was present. For example, **Ignatius** (50-117 AD) taught that those who partake of the Passover are partakers with those who killed Jesus.¹⁰

As we go through these examples, you will note this skewed mentality to be a common pattern of thought, in which there exists this continual theme of "the Jews killed Jesus." This mistaken mentality completely misses the point of everything Jesus did. First, it was always in God's plan and foreknowledge to die for us. Revelation 13:8 calls Christ the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" – indicating that it was always in His plan to perform the redemptive work of the cross. Secondly, the reality is that it wasn't "the Jews" that killed Jesus, but rather the sins of humanity – of all of us – that made the cross necessary. Because of His love for us, Jesus voluntarily went

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to the cross, looking past all of the hurt and pain it included, because He saw into the future. He saw the joy set before Him of having a bride – a people, called the Church – holy, set apart, and filled with His Spirit. A group who would make the free-will choice to follow Him out of love, despite the earthly consequences.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who **for the joy that was set before him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

-Hebrews 12:2

In this passage, the phrase “despising the shame” means He thought little of it, or disregarded it. He was the God of the universe being put through the most painfully excruciating and embarrassing death possible – but He looked past it to see us as His joyful reward – and He just ignored the pain and shame.¹¹

So, we can see how misplaced it is to “hate the Jews” for “killing Jesus.” This is to completely miss the point of Christianity, the New Covenant, and the Bible. It’s to make Jesus some sort of victim. It’s to imply that Jesus didn’t fulfill His mission, which they evidently must believe to have been His human survival. According to that view, maybe Jesus’ true mission was to reach His golden years and enjoy His grandkids. Obviously not. Jesus’ mission was always to come to Earth and die for the sins of His beloved image creature – mankind.

But getting back to our exploration of Church history, let’s point out a number of other recognizable early Church figures who promoted similar beliefs.

- **Justin Martyr** (100-165 AD) is a well-known name in Church history, and he too claimed that God’s covenants with Israel were no longer valid. He argued that the Gentiles had replaced the Jews.¹²
- **Irenaeus** (130-202 AD) believed that the Jews were disinherited from the grace of God.¹³

- **Tertullian** (155-240 AD) also blamed the Jews for Jesus' death and argued that they had been rejected by God.¹⁴
- **Origen** (263-339 AD) also asserted that the Jews were responsible for killing Jesus.¹⁵
- **Eusebius** (263-339 AD) taught that the promises of scripture were meant for the Gentiles and the curses were meant for the Jews.¹⁶

So, we can see that there was a long and unfortunate history of these mistaken beliefs that the Church is the true Israel, the Jews were to be hated for their role in killing Jesus, the Jews were no longer the chosen people of God, and that they no longer had any place in God's plan. As we mentioned earlier, these beliefs were greatly embraced and mainstreamed by the Catholic Church, as we will see in the next several points.

- Emperor Constantine (who had issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD) created a law on October 18, 329 AD, making it illegal to convert to Judaism. Half a century later, laws issued by emperors **Gratian**, **Valentinian II**, and **Theodosius I** declared things like: "Those Christians who have insulted the dignity of their own religion and name and have contaminated themselves with the Jewish disease will be punished for these shameful acts."¹⁷
- Fueled by his hatred of the Jews, Constantine himself said: "Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd."¹⁸
- The **Synod of Elvira** in the early fourth century AD prohibited Christians from sharing a meal with a Jew, marrying a Jew, or blessing a Jew.¹⁹

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- The **Council of Nicea** in 325 AD changed the date of the celebration of the Resurrection in order to purposely distance the Church from the Jewish calendar. Christ rose the first Sunday after Passover – which is the Jewish Feast of First Fruits, which would be the accurate time to commemorate His resurrection. But this council made sure the observation of Easter was well removed from this date.²⁰ Concerning this ruling from Nicea, the theologian and Church historian Theodoret records a letter that Constantine wrote to the bishops who couldn't attend the Council of Nicea, saying: "It was ... declared improper to follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival, because their hands are imbued in crime, and their minds blinded with defilement."²¹
- The Church under Constantine excommunicated any Quartodecimans – who were men who wanted to memorialize the crucifixion according to the correct calendar day (in connection to the fourteenth of Nisan, the date of Passover on the Jewish calendar). The Archbishop of Constantinople **John Chrysostom** (347-407 AD) condemned this supposed association with the Jews, saying: "But you dishonor him so much that you pay honor to those who slew him on the cross, that you observe with them the fellowship of the festivals, that you go to their profane places, enter their unclean doors, and share in the tables of demons. For I am persuaded to call the fasting of the Jews a table of demons because they slew God."²²
- Augustine (who we've already discussed at length), asserted that the Jews deserved death, but were destined to wander the earth to witness the Church's victory over the synagogue.²³

This mentality of Augustine – and many before him – was

completely embraced by the Roman Catholic Church, as it consolidated temporal power as the mainstream Church – believing it was their job to physically establish God’s kingdom on earth through military conquest and forcible suppression of theological opposition. Of course, the greatest of all villains in their minds, were the Jews who had “killed Jesus.”

It was this anti-Semitic and completely unbiblical mentality that led to the atrocities of the Middle Ages and following, as the Church embraced a view of allegorical eschatology rather than literalism. All of the unconditional promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament (most of which will be fulfilled in the Millennium), were denied by the Roman Church, which instead advocated the beliefs of Replacement Theology.

But let’s try to understand how the prevalent anti-Semitism melded with the state-run religious system to produce this deviant view of eschatology and the future of Israel. As Rome took over the Church, it became no longer acceptable to preach that Jesus would one day return to rid the world of its evil rulers. The current “evil rulers” of that era controlled the Church leaders as part of its state-run religion, presenting an obvious conflict of interest for the Church. This is one reason for the rising prominence of Augustine’s allegorical, amillennial view that Christ’s rule would only be symbolic – taking place in our hearts. And it was compatible with the Roman Church’s quest for earthly power, as they assumed the role of establishing God’s kingdom themselves – since under their view, they were not expecting Christ to actually return and do it Himself. It also allowed them to remove the Jews (whom they hated) from God’s plans.²⁴

But by embracing these views, they denied basically everything the Bible says about God’s prophetic plans for the future, concerning essentially everything – Israel, the Church, the Kingdom, the earth, and even the Eternal State. In this way, they distorted the message of the Word of God, which directly led to the atrocities and murders committed as a downstream result of this flawed method of interpretation. But further yet, they challenged the character and integrity of

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God Himself by the implication that He will not fulfill His Word by keeping His unconditional promises.

Before moving on to explore some of the historical downstream consequences of these false doctrines, let's take a moment to dispel the erroneous belief called amillennialism – the denial of a future physical Messianic Kingdom on earth.

In order for God to keep His promises to Israel and His covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:8-16; 23:5; Psalm 89:3-4), there must be a literal, physical kingdom on this earth. This Millennial Age is clearly spoken of throughout the prophetic corpus of scripture. As mentioned throughout this study, to doubt this is to call into question God's desire and/or ability to keep His promises – opening up a host of other theological problems. For example, if God could renege on His unconditional promises to Israel after proclaiming those promises to be “everlasting,” how could we be sure of anything He promises, including His promises of salvation given to believers in Jesus? The only solution is to take Him at His word and understand that His promises will be literally fulfilled – just as all prophecies have been historically throughout scripture.

The Bible clearly says that the kingdom will be a literal, physical, earthly kingdom. The following are just six of the many reasons that we can point to in order to establish this view.

1. Christ's feet will literally, actually, physically touch the Mount of Olives prior to the establishment of His Kingdom (Zechariah 14:4, 9). We are told that the wicked people of earth will physically see Him coming, and will mourn (Revelation 1:7). Christ's return is literal, contrary to the beliefs of the amillennialists.
2. During the Kingdom, the Messiah Himself will personally dwell on earth and execute justice and judgment on the earth (Jeremiah 23:5-8; Revelation 21:3; et al.). This describes a physical Kingdom on earth ruled by Christ who dwells among man throughout this period.

3. The Kingdom is described as being *under heaven* (Daniel 7:13-14, 27). In other words, a physical Kingdom on earth – not some sort of allegorized heavenly reign in men’s hearts.
4. The prophets foretold of dramatic earth-changes during the Kingdom Age (Acts 3:21; Isaiah 35:1-2; 11:6-9; 29:18; 65:20-22; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Amos 9:11-15). This describes a physical Kingdom on earth.
5. The chronological order of events in Revelation indicates the existence of an earthly Kingdom prior to the conclusion of world history and the beginning of the Eternal State (Revelation 20).
6. The literal duration of the Kingdom Age is told to us in scripture. Revelation 19 describes the return of Jesus Christ, coming in glory and power to take over the kingdoms of this world and to institute a new, just reign here on earth. He will put down rebellion, remove the last wicked human empire ruling on earth and institute the reign of the government of God. In Revelation 20:1-3, we are told twice that the kingdom will last one thousand years. We have no reason to believe that one thousand years means anything other than one thousand years. So, it is clear that the duration of the Kingdom will be for a literal Millennium.

The amillennial view comes from using one method of interpretation for unfulfilled prophecy and another method for non-prophetic scripture and fulfilled prophecy. Non-prophetic scripture and fulfilled prophecy are interpreted literally or normally. But, according to the amillennialist, unfulfilled prophecy is to be interpreted spiritually, or non-literally. Those who hold to amillennialism believe that a “spiritual” reading of unfulfilled prophecy is the normal reading of the texts. This is called a dual hermeneutic (hermeneutics meaning the study of the principles of Biblical interpretation). In other words, it’s an inconsistent method of interpretation. The amillennialist assumes that most of, or all unfulfilled prophecy is written in symbolic, figurative, spiritual language.

Therefore, the amillennialist will assign different meanings to those parts of scripture instead of the normal, contextual meanings of those words.

One of the main problems with interpreting unfulfilled prophecy in this manner is that this allows for a wide range of meanings, and allows you to concoct your own private interpretation. It doesn't hold you accountable to the actual text. But God, the ultimate Author of all scripture, did have a specific meaning in mind when He inspired the human authors to write. By allegorizing it, you're ignoring and changing what He intended to convey to us. You're putting your own interpretation above the intended meaning of scripture.

Like we've mentioned already, the fact that fulfilled prophecies were always fulfilled literally in the Bible is the best reason of all for assuming that yet-unfulfilled prophecies will also be fulfilled literally in the future. For example, the prophecies concerning Christ's First Coming were all fulfilled literally. Therefore, prophecies concerning Christ's Second Coming should also be expected to be fulfilled literally.

For these reasons, an allegorical interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy should be rejected and a literal/grammatical/historical, or normal and plain interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy should be adopted. Dr. David L. Cooper described this literal method of interpretation in the following way.

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.²⁵

Some opponents of the future, literal fulfillment of prophecy attempt to argue against it by noting that prophecy often employs the use of symbols and figures of speech. This is faulty logic. Obviously, prophecy can sometimes involve the use of strategic symbolism, but that doesn't mean that the prophecy won't be fulfilled literally in

history. Literal interpreters have always recognized the Biblical use of symbols and figures of speech. Dr. Charles Ryrie explains this clearly.

Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.²⁶

For example, early in Christ's ministry, John the Baptist said of Jesus as He approached him: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John used a symbol – the "Lamb" – to designate Jesus as the Lamb of God because it was prophetically descriptive of Him in some incredible ways. Yet, just because a symbol was used, it does not mean that Jesus did not literally die as a sacrificial Lamb for man's sin. Rather, John's use of a symbolic reference to Christ complimented the point that Jesus came to "take away the sin of the world" through His actual, sacrificial death. This prediction was fulfilled literally in history.

In a similar way, the Bible uses the term "beast" throughout Daniel and Revelation as a symbol for the character that is often called the Antichrist. Because the term "beast" is used – which is symbolic, opponents of literalism may advocate that it simply represents the "personification of evil in the world" instead of being a real individual. This is not the case, as scripture makes very clear. Rather, the symbol of a beast was apparently chosen by God to designate the beastly and voracious nature of the Antichrist. This does not mean that the beast won't be a literal person. Although a symbol is used to describe this still-future being, it simply means that the Antichrist will display ungodly character traits as a real historical person. This prophecy will be fulfilled literally, just as Christ's death as the Lamb of God.

We should not be surprised to find that the Bible uses rhetorical devices to get its points across to a wide audience in a way they can

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identify with and relate to. God plainly tells us as much in Hosea 12:10.

I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used **similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.**

-Hosea 12:10

A similitude is defined as a likening or comparison in the form of a simile, parable, or allegory.²⁷ It may be that symbols and figures of speech are used in giving those prophecies, but just as they did not affect their literal fulfillments in the past, neither will they prevent literal fulfillments in the future. Sir Robert Anderson has said it well.

There is not a single prophecy, of which the fulfillment is recorded in Scripture, that was not realized with absolute accuracy, and in every detail; and it is wholly unjustifiable to assume that a new system of fulfillment was inaugurated after the sacred canon closed ... Literalness of fulfillment may therefore be accepted as an axiom to guide us in the study of prophecy.²⁸

If anything, symbolism and figures of speech are meant to convey meaning to us regarding these literal people and events. Prophecy about the future will be fulfilled literally, just as prophecy has in the past. Biblical prophecy should always be interpreted literally and a literal fulfillment should always be expected.

So, we should take the text seriously by allowing it to interpret itself through the plain use of language. Amillennialism fails in that it uses faulty and inconsistent hermeneutics – failing to take the plain meanings, and interpreting unfulfilled prophecy differently from fulfilled prophecy.

We should recognize that the early Christian view (in line with the eschatological views of ancient Jews) was always Premillennialism. These early Christians believed (as the Jews did) in a future literal Millennium, or Messianic Kingdom. The writings of the early Christian apologist Justin Martyr attest to this.

I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.²⁹

Justin, who was born in 100 AD, records that the orthodox view at his time was that which we today would call Premillennialism. Although Justin himself got caught up in the deception that the Church replaces Israel, he does record the fact that at his time, the common view of eschatology had not yet been poisoned by it. But like we said, as time passed, the allegorism/amillennialism of Augustine was embraced by the mainstream and became a systematic interpretive method that supported the anti-Semitic views of Replacement Theology.

And so, we see in summary that the allegorical view of the scriptures is a form of anti-Semitism in which Church leaders have tried to rip the promises of God away from Israel. We've seen that early Christian leaders have a long history of advocating that the "Jews killed Jesus," and that "the Church has replaced Israel," etc. We have already seen some of the results of this in some of the anti-Semitic edicts of the Church councils that we've looked at. And throughout the Medieval era, the Jews were viewed as a cursed race, becoming fodder for robbery, murder, abuse, and every kind of hatred and humiliation.

But let's recognize a few of the specific historical consequences of Replacement Theology. The Roman Popes were at the center of this worldview, as a result of the amillennial worldview. The following were some of the unfortunate outcomes.

On November 1, 1478, Pope Sixtus IV issued the papal bull (a public decree) "Exegit Sincere Devotionis Affectus" at the request of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, granting them the right to establish an organized judicial interrogation system to root out Jews suspected of remaining faithful to Judaism (which was outlawed). Many Jews were burned at the stake by order of the Spanish Inquisition.³⁰ In 1492, King Ferdinand decided that all

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Spanish Jews should be banned from Spain. Approximately 150,000 Jews were forced to leave Spain.³¹

Similar persecutions, pogroms, evictions, and abuses were leveled at the Jewish communities throughout Europe and the Middle East throughout Christian history. This example of the Spanish Inquisition is just one of a seemingly endless list – most of which were committed by so-called Christians and the so-called Church, all under the banner of Christ. If you doubt this, do a simple online search of the history of anti-Semitism. You will be amazed at the abuse and persecution the Jews have had to put up with throughout Christian history. In fact, the way so-called Christians have treated Israel throughout history makes the Muslim treatment of Israel look friendly.³² With this in mind, it's easy to understand the Jews' animosity towards Christianity after dealing with this kind of treatment for two thousand years. But this treatment was not limited to the Roman Catholic Church.

An unfortunate reality is that while much good was done during the Protestant Reformation to attempt to reform the Church back to its Biblical roots, the Reformers failed in many key areas. Relevant to our study here, is their failure to re-examine the long-held allegorical method of interpretation and amillennial eschatology, which went hand-in-hand with Replacement Theology. The main leaders of the Protestant Reformation – men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin – while doing much good, were also, unfortunately, some of the most vehement anti-Semites in history.

In 1543, Luther published *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he revealed his deep anti-Semitism.

- He said that the Jews are a “base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth.”³³
- He said they are full of the “devil’s feces ... which they wallow in like swine.”³⁴

- He said the synagogue was a “defiled bride, yes, an incorrigible whore and an evil slut.”³⁵
- He argued that their synagogues and schools be set on fire, their prayer books destroyed, rabbis forbidden to preach, homes razed, and property and money confiscated.³⁶
- He said they should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection, and these “poisonous envenomed worms” should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time.³⁷
- He also seemed to advocate their murder, writing “[w]e are at fault in not slaying them.”³⁸

According to the acclaimed Reformation scholar and theologian Heiko Oberman:

The basis of Luther’s anti-Judaism was the conviction that ever since Christ’s appearance on earth, the Jews have had no more future as Jews.³⁹

In other words, from this quote, we can clearly see how the root of Luther’s anti-Semitism was Replacement Theology – the view that Israel no longer has a future in God’s plan. Unfortunately, this did not end in the centuries surrounding the Middle Ages and the Reformation. Instead, it set the foundation for the later anti-Semitism that fueled the Nazi persecutions of the Jews in the 1900s. In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, William L. Shirer wrote:

It is difficult to understand the behavior of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews.

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Luther's advice was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering and Himmler.⁴⁰

So, it was the failure of the Reformers such as Martin Luther to re-examine the eschatology of the Medieval Church that led to the silent pulpits in Nazi-era Germany and the atrocities of the Holocaust that followed. Chuck Missler summarized it well.

When we replace Israel with the Church and reject Christ's literal millennial reign, we can trace a path from Augustine to Auschwitz. Replacement Theology specifically denies Israel's role in God's program, directly contradicting a long list of Scriptures that God has laid out in both the Old and New Testaments.⁴¹

So, we should recognize that there are real-life downstream consequences of the belief in Replacement Theology and the failure to embrace a sound Biblically-based attitude towards Israel.

As we have seen, it is impossible for one to read the Bible literally and plainly, and still come to the conclusion that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan. If you come to this conclusion, it is only through embracing a flawed system of Bible interpretation in which you allegorize away the plain and obvious meanings of what the Bible says. You end up inserting and exalting your own personal interpretations instead of allowing the text to speak for itself.

The out-workings of this kind of skewed system of interpretation are deeply flawed views such as Replacement Theology, which often end in anti-Semitism, which places oneself contrary to the mind of God and makes it impossible to accurately understand the Bible. It blocks your ability to accurately understand your purpose as a Christian, since it blocks your ability to understand the purpose of the Church as a whole. It is why we can firmly state that Replacement Theology is a dangerous error that's based on an inaccurate understanding of the Bible. That should be obvious, as it is in direct contradiction to everything we have learned from the scriptures earlier in this study.

Now that we've spent a good deal of time exploring the wrong and unbiblical mindset a Christian could have towards Israel, let's explore the correct and Bible-based mindset. We will do this by looking into the New Testament and exploring the writings of the apostle Paul. He writes to the churches concerning this exact subject of the current and future relevance of the nation of Israel, and the proper attitude and mindset the Church should have towards them in alignment with God's plans for their future redemption.

An Evaluation of the Proper Biblical Attitude

In our last subsection, we conducted an in-depth examination of the wrong or the unbiblical attitude concerning Israel – this being the view called Replacement Theology. Under this view, the nation of Israel is removed from having any current or future significance in God's plan. Instead, because of Israel's unbelief, the prophecies and promises of God which were originally given to her are seen as being fulfilled through the Church.

Adherents to this view would have us to believe that God is liable to default on His unconditional promises to Israel despite all of what we've learned from the scriptures earlier in this study. We've seen how God's promises to Israel through the Abrahamic Covenant did not depend upon her doing anything. They were not dependent upon Israel's performance.

God later begins to speak through the writings of the prophets, confirming Israel's future as a nation. We are given clear statements such as the one recorded by Jeremiah, in which God essentially says, "as long as the sun, moon, and stars exist, Israel will never be permanently cast off based upon her spiritual failures." Even at the high point of her apostasy, God begins to give Israel prophecies regarding a future New Covenant He would make with a remnant that would be redeemed at a future time.

In fact, the prophetic content we examined throughout the Old Testament all takes for granted that Israel *would* be in unbelief. We are shown that Israel would first be regathered while in this state of unbe-

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lief (the First Regathering), demonstrating how the modern-day State of Israel is unquestionably prophetic. Through this regathering, they would be placed into a preparatory position in which they will then be brought to faith through a period of unparalleled distress called the Tribulation, or Daniel's seventieth week. We are then shown that this righteous remnant of Israel will be regathered in faith in preparation for receiving God's New Covenant blessings in the Millennial Kingdom (the Second and Final Regathering). During the Kingdom Age, God will then fulfill all of His remaining promises to Israel.

This is prophetically revealed as God's plan consistently all throughout the Old and New Testaments – and it involves Israel initially being in unbelief. Israel's current state of unbelief is not grounds for rejecting the prophetic relevance of modern-day Israel. As we can clearly see from Bible prophecy, this current state is in preparation for their future conversion. If you take the plain and literal meanings of the Biblical text seriously, this is an inescapable conclusion. It's only through embracing an allegorical interpretation of Bible prophecy that you can possibly arrive at the conclusion that Israel is no longer relevant, and that the Church can be substituted into all of the prophecies concerning Israel.

Throughout history, we're able to witness God's divine protection of Israel. We spent an entire section of our study deeply delving into this principle of the Abrahamic Covenant at work – those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed.

Furthermore, we also examined the angelic conflict as expressed in scripture – specifically in Revelation 12. In this passage, we see how Satan has been at work attempting to thwart the plans of God since the beginning. When it becomes clear that God will execute His plans for humanity through the nation of Israel, we see how Satan constantly worked in history to oppose and eradicate them as a nation – revealing himself as the ultimate culprit behind the prevalent anti-Semitism we see throughout history. We are shown a prophetic glimpse in this chapter of the coming time of Tribulation for Israel in which Satan's attempts against the nation come to a climax, only to be foiled by the Second Coming of Christ.

And so, knowing all of this, it's difficult to imagine how any Bible-believing Christian could possibly embrace an antagonistic attitude towards Israel. Throughout this study, we have more than adequately demonstrated that Israel has not been erased from God's plan – and never can be. Because we recognize this, it is clear then what our attitude should be towards them. If we embrace a hostility towards Israel, how can we not also be embracing a hostility towards God and His plan? By taking sides against Israel, you are joining yourself to the wrong side of the supernatural conflict.

In this subsection, we will now begin to look even more deeply into this, and examine what the New Testament has to say about our attitudes towards Israel. The apostle Paul addresses this subject in detail in his letter to the church at Rome, confirming exactly what we've been advocating throughout this study. In fact, you will see that he lays out the answer so clearly, that to embrace any deviant view is to ignore the clear instruction of scripture and to directly oppose the plans and mindset of God. The Bible does not leave this issue open to interpretation. There's no leeway for personal interpretation or conviction when it comes to this. With that said, let's begin.

The best place to begin our deeper exploration of this topic is Paul's epistle to the Romans, in which he clearly answers this issue. In the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul begins by laying down a discourse on a number of major doctrines – including the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and glorification. But he then takes a break from the teaching of his doctrine, and beginning with Chapter 9, he parenthetically inserts three chapters discussing the condition of the Jews (or national Israel). In these three chapters, Paul helps us understand where and how Israel as a distinct entity fits into the future plans and purposes of God – and what our mindset should be towards them as a nation.

In Chapter 9, he deals primarily with Israel's **past** (as God's chosen covenant nation). In Chapter 10, he deals primarily with Israel's **present** (as a nation which has refused to submit to Christ's gospel). And in Chapter 11, he deals primarily with Israel's **future** (as a nation which he says someday will be saved and will enjoy the fulfillment of

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the New Covenant promises as a nation). As I'm sure you can already see, if Romans 11 really does say what we just claimed, then just based on that chapter alone, the legitimacy of Replacement Theology is completely shattered. So, let's begin to investigate this chapter.

In Romans 11, Paul begins by establishing the context of the chapter as being specifically about the Jewish people – the nation of Israel – and what will become of them in the future. The question he was answering was essentially, “if the Gentiles have received the New Covenant promise after the Jews as a nation had rejected it, then what future relevance does Israel still have? Does Israel still have a future in God's program?”

Paul tells us the answer in this chapter, completely obliterating the false doctrine of Replacement Theology. He begins the chapter by asking the basic question we just asked. He then promptly answers it.

I say then, **Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.** For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.

-Romans 11:1-2a

Paul makes it clear that God is **not** finished with the Jewish people – He still has a unique plan for them. Before continuing with Chapter 11, we first need to pause in order to further frame our context. In order to understand the relevance of this question for Paul's first century audience, we need to try to put ourselves in the shoes of those who lived at that time and to try to understand this question they were having regarding the problem of “what is now the purpose of Israel?”

Let's recognize four key facts that will help us understand this issue they were having.

- **Fact #1** – The Israelites are God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Romans 11:28).

- **Fact #2** – God promised His chosen people that they would enjoy a glorious kingdom under their Messiah (Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Jeremiah 23:5-8; 31:31-37; 33:14-16; Luke 1:32-33).
- **Fact #3** – The nation Israel (at least the great majority of the nation, as well as their leadership) rejected their Messiah when He came to earth (John 1:11; Matthew 12:22-24; 21:33-46; 27:22-25; John 19:15; Acts 22:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15).
- **Fact #4** – When the Church first began it was made up entirely of Jewish believers, but gradually this changed. As the years went by, the Church was comprised of more and more Gentiles, and less and less Jews.

Are you beginning to see the problem? To a first century Christian without access to a full New Testament, Facts #1 and #2 seem to be contradicted by Facts #3 and #4. What's happened to the promise of the earthly Messianic Kingdom? What's happened to all the unconditional promises that God had given to Israel in the Old Testament that remain unfulfilled? God's program for the present (the Church) involves primarily the Gentiles and not the Jews. Why is this so? Has God cast away His people? Is God through with the nation of Israel? Does the nation have any future in God's program at all?

To the Jewish mind, based on the Old Testament, they always connected the King (or the Messiah) with the earthly kingdom (or the Messianic Kingdom). So then, the question to Paul was also, "if Jesus is the King, then where is the kingdom? And why aren't the Old Testament promises of the Kingdom Age being fulfilled?" God has given us Romans Chapters 9-11 (and especially Chapter 11) to answer these questions.

As we continue, let's also recognize that these same questions we asked also frame the context which Jesus addresses in His Olivet Discourse concerning the future prophetic end-times destiny of Israel,

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recorded most famously in Matthew 24. But let's continue here with Romans 11.

So, we started out by seeing that in Verses 1 and 2, Paul makes it clear that God is *not* finished with the Jewish people – He still has a unique plan for them as a nation. Dropping down to Verse 7, he then continues.

What then? **Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for;** but the election hath obtained it, **and the rest were blinded.**

(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

-Romans 11:7-8

Here, Paul refers to Jesus' proclamation of the curse of blindness upon the unbelieving Jewish people, recorded in Luke 19. Jesus had said:

If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! **but now they are hid from thine eyes.**

-Luke 19:42

But Paul tells us in the passage we just read that this curse of blindness was not a novel idea – but rather, “according as it is written”. In other words, this had already been prophesied long before, in multiple places in the Old Testament. Paul was essentially quoting the following two prophetic Old Testament passages.

For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

-Isaiah 29:10

Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.

-Deuteronomy 29:4

Continuing in his discourse in Romans 11, Paul then goes on to describe how the Gentiles were grafted into the promise of salvation after Israel had rejected it through unbelief. As we continue on with this chapter, there is an important question we must address, as Paul begins to give us understanding on how the Church relates to the spiritual promises God had originally given to Israel. The question is: “is it true that in a sense, the Church is the spiritual version or fulfillment of Israel, in that the Church has received that which the Old Covenant pointed towards?”

The answer is a clear, “absolutely!” Scripture is clear that the essence of being a true “son of Abraham” is not achieved just by being a genetic descendant of Abraham, but rather, is achieved through genuine faith in God. This chapter in Romans discusses this concept of the Church (comprised of mostly Gentiles) being “grafted in” to the spiritual promises given to Israel. This is a somewhat lengthy passage, but necessary to read through in order to understand this concept. Let’s pick up with Verse 17.

And if some of the branches [meaning unbelieving Israel] be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree [meaning the Gentile Church], wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree [meaning the spiritual promises of God through Israel];

Boast not against the branches [meaning don’t be antagonistic towards Israel]. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which

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fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

-Romans 11:17-24

Paul starts out by telling us that the natural branches (or “unbelieving Israel”) have been broken off the tree, and the Gentile Church has been grafted into their spiritual promises of salvation through the New Covenant. This has the effect and purpose of making the Jews “jealous,” and so to draw them to faith in Christ, in order that they might again be “grafted back in” to receive their original promised inheritance. The “natural branches” (or Israel) are still distinct from the “wild branches” (or the Church), so that God’s covenants with His people will still be literally fulfilled. And in line with this understanding, let’s also keep in mind that **the Church does not receive the unconditional promises made specifically to Israel as a nation** (the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, etc.) – **the Church simply receives the spiritual promises of New Covenant salvation.** Let’s not be confused on that key distinction!

But Paul also tells us that our attitude toward Israel should not be hostile. He tells us not to “boast against the branches” – meaning that we should not be antagonistic towards the natural branches, or Israel. He says that if God is able to graft in the Gentile believers, or the wild, unnatural branches, how much more is He able to then, at a later point, graft back in the natural branches?

Continuing on starting with Verse 25, Paul then hits us with some incredible passages, describing this whole subject as a “mystery” – which in Greek, means something previously hidden or not understood, but something God was now using him to reveal. And he then tells us not to be ignorant of this mystery – that this *will* in fact

happen! Israel, the natural branches, *will* be grafted back in! He even tells us *when* this will happen – after “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” And he tells us that “all Israel will be saved,” a deliverance that obviously has not yet taken place. Let’s see this as we continue reading in Romans 11:25.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; **that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

For **this is my covenant unto them**, when I shall take away their sins.

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father’s sakes.

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

-Romans 11:25-29

In this passage, Paul quoted yet another Old Testament prophecy – this one found in Isaiah 59:20-21 – that describes Israel being delivered after their transgression.

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

As for me, **this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.**

-Isaiah 59:20-21

So, Paul is quoting an Old Testament passage that records God’s unending commitment to His everlasting, unconditional covenant promises given to Israel. We need to look deeper into Paul’s phrase about blindness in part happening to Israel until the fullness of the

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Gentiles be come in. But before taking a deeper dive into that, let's first make sure we caught Paul's important statements that we read in Verses 28 and 29. In these key verses, Paul continued to drill home the exact point we've made throughout this study – that God's promises to Israel are immutable.

As concerning the gospel, they [Israel, or the Jews as a nation] are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

-Romans 11:28-29

In his Bible commentary, Adam Clarke summarized Paul's message here as follows.

The unbelieving Jews, with regard to the Gospel which they have rejected, are at present enemies to God, and aliens from his kingdom, under his Son Jesus Christ, on account of that extensive grace which has overturned their peculiarity, by admitting the Gentiles into his Church and family: but with regard to the original purpose of election, whereby they were chosen and separated from all the people of the earth to be the peculiar people of God, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; he has still favour in store for them on account of their forefathers the patriarchs.⁴²

In Verse 29, Paul said that the gifts and calling of God are **without repentance**. This means that God cannot repent, or change His mind regarding this. It is fixed. In other words, **Israel did not and cannot lose her place in God's plan** despite the fact that they're currently in a state of spiritual blindness. He's telling us that **God does have a future plan for Israel** – perfectly in alignment with and fulfillment of the numerous Old Testament prophecies he keeps quoting! He's telling us that their national blindness is *temporary*, and when it's removed, **they will be saved as a nation!** God's election of Israel as His chosen nation is immutable – and He will get her back.

Like we said, Paul even tells us *when* their blindness will end. The answer is found in the unique phrase, “the fulness of the Gentiles” in Verse 25 – (“blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles* be come in”). Remember, Paul declared that this was a hidden mystery that he was now revealing. This mystery is a foundational key to being able to recognize the distinction between Israel and the Church – since the Church was an unknown entity in Old Testament prophecy (the Church being another mystery God used Paul to reveal, elsewhere in his writings).

The key word in this verse is “until” (“*until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”). It’s an interesting study to track down all of the “untils” in the Bible. You will find that many of them are keys or markers of some kind. In other words, they act as boundary conditions that say, “this won’t happen until that.” These boundary conditions help us sharply isolate and define certain events, groups, times, and subjects in scripture. If you look closely here, you see that the term “fulness of the Gentiles” is a strategic label for the end of the Church Age, and it’s juxtaposed with the removal of the blindness from Israel. So, as a nation, Israel will receive spiritual sight after the Church Age is complete.

But let’s backtrack for a moment and understand more background on why Jesus pronounced corporate blindness upon the Jewish nation. The answer is given to us two verses after Jesus’ declaration of blindness in Luke 19:42, which we read earlier – **“because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”** In other words, they didn’t receive their Messiah when He came. They rejected Him at His coming. But let’s take a moment to set the stage in order to fully recognize what was happening here...

The setting of this was Jerusalem in 33 AD. It was the week that would end with Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus was approaching the city while being showered with a chorus of “hosannas” from the frenzied Jewish onlookers (a Messianic exclamation meaning, “save now”). They threw palm branches down before Him as He approached riding a donkey. They sang the prophetic Messianic song from Psalm 118,

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which anticipated the Messianic King entering Jerusalem. This was the fulfillment of a very special day!

What day exactly? The day prophesied of in Daniel 9:25 – the culminating day of Daniel’s sixty-nine week “countdown to the Messiah,” the prophecy given by the angel Gabriel to Daniel half a millennium earlier. This was “the day” also spoken of in Psalm 118:24-26 (“this is the day which the Lord hath made ...”) and anticipated in detail in Zechariah 9:9 (“thy King cometh unto thee ...”).

This culminating day – known to Christians as the Triumphal Entry – was supposed to be a day of great joy, and so far, it had been. But something was about to change. Jesus Christ, as He was being hailed as a Messianic King entering Jerusalem on that day, suddenly began to weep. Let’s read Luke’s recording of this event.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Saying, **If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.**

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.**

-Luke 19:41-44

So, we see the answer to our question of why Jesus pronounced corporate blindness upon Israel – because they knew not the time of their Messianic visitation. And Jesus wept over this. He had offered them the promises of the Messianic Kingdom (which had been promised in prophetic detail throughout the Old Testament), but they would not receive Him as their King Messiah. All of their scriptures and prophets were given to lead them to the acceptance of Him as Messiah, but as a nation, they blew it. He wept because they blew it, despite the fact that He had gone to such lengths ahead of time to

prepare them ahead to receive Him. Although many were hailing Him on this day, Jesus knew that just a few days later, these same onlookers would be part of the mob shouting “crucify Him!” The leadership of the nation had already turned on Jesus, going as far as to attribute His miracles to Satan – and the populace would soon follow.

Because of that, Jesus (speaking to the unbelieving nation of Israel) said, “the things which belong unto thy peace” are hidden from you. He announced corporate blindness upon the Jewish nation specifically because they did not truly recognize this day, and because they rejected their prophesied Messiah! In other words, as a nation, because of this rejection, God’s program for Israel’s kingdom would go into postponement and He would instead introduce His interim program called the Church. But this postponement would be temporary – not permanent (as Paul tells us). God’s seventy-week prophetic time-clock for Israel (described in Daniel 9:24-27) was paused on this day in 33 AD as the sixty-ninth Week was completed and the Church’s time-clock would soon start on the Day of Pentecost.

Going back to Paul’s discourse in Romans 11, we now can fully understand what he meant by “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” The fulness of the Gentiles refers to the Gentiles that are gathered in to make up this interim program called the Church – and blindness in part will continue among Israel as a nation until the end of this intervening Church Age period that began on Pentecost.

The Church Age ends with the physical removal of the Church from the earth at the event called the Rapture – the supernatural catching away of the Church to heaven. The point is that God will begin primarily dealing with Israel as a nation again until the Church is removed – until the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Everything taking place right now regarding Israel being in the land, etc., is preparatory for this final week. Following the “fullness of the Gentiles” (or the completion of the Church Age program on earth which terminates with the Rapture) God’s program for Israel will again commence and their time-clock will begin, as their seventieth week (or the Tribulation) begins.

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Note: If this concept of Daniel's seventy weeks is new to you, feel free to look further into it by consulting two of our companion studies. The first is entitled, "The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline For The Arrival Of The Messiah". The second is entitled, Understanding The Distinction Between Israel And The Church. These two studies will give you a firm basis of understanding concerning this concept.

So, God's program and prophetic time-clock for Israel will again resume as the Tribulation – the final week – begins. After the Tribulation, although the seventy weeks will be complete, God's plans for Israel will still continue into the Millennial Kingdom, in which He'll fulfill all of His remaining promises, as Israel will be the centerpiece nation on earth during this period.

So, the Old Testament promises and unconditional covenants will still be fulfilled for Israel, but are currently in a state of postponement due to their unbelief and rejection of Him as their Messiah. This is an important point: **postponement does not mean cancellation**. Like we mentioned, God's program for Israel will restart in the Tribulation after the Church has been removed. Because of their unbelief, national Israel will be thrust into the discipline of the Tribulation, ultimately using this time of unparalleled distress to draw a righteous remnant of Israel to repentance.

The details of this deliverance for national Israel are prophesied of in many places throughout the Bible, such as Zechariah Chapters 8-14, which speaks of end-times Israel at Christ's return. A key verse describing the future remnant of Israel coming to faith in their true Messiah is Zechariah 12:10.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

-Zechariah 12:10

This occurs at the end of the seventieth week, or Tribulation period prophesied of in Daniel 9:24-27. Understanding this is foundational as to why a literal reading of the Bible will always force one to the conclusion that the Church has not replaced Israel. The Bible clearly and repeatedly describes a repentant remnant of Israel coming to faith at the end of this future final week.

Before returning back to our examination of Romans 11, let's take one more small detour to examine another incredible prophecy of this, which we haven't yet examined in full – found in Deuteronomy Chapter 4. In an earlier section of our study, we looked at Deuteronomy 4:31. But let's now look at Verses 25-31 in order to better understand the fuller context of what God is saying here.

Amazingly, before Israel even entered the Promised Land, God gave Moses a prophetic portrait of their entire future history as a nation – detailing their eventual apostasy, exile, scattering among the nations, suffering during the Tribulation, **and then ultimate spiritual restoration in fulfillment of God's covenant promises.** This prophetic panorama of Israel's history is clearly foretold all the way back in Deuteronomy 4.

When you father children and children's children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, so as to provoke him to anger,

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed.

And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.

And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon

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you in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice.

For the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

-Deuteronomy 4:25-31 (ESV)

So, if you simply allow the Biblical text to speak for itself (without imposing your own interpretation onto it), you'll find that it's impossible to cut Israel out of God's plans. Israel's entire future was prophetically detailed here, summarizing everything we've learned in this study and everything that was later spoken throughout the prophets and the New Testament. It all agrees perfectly as one harmonious whole: Israel will apostatize, will be scattered among the nations, will face the Tribulation, but will ultimately return to the Lord and experience the fulfillments of God's covenants during the Millennium. You can't deny this plain reality without denying the Word of God itself.

With the deep dive into the "fulness of the Gentiles" as well as this detour into Deuteronomy now complete, let's again refocus our attention back to Romans 11. Let's do one final review of this key passage (Verses 25-29), while keeping in mind the prophetic understandings we just discussed.

Verse 25:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**

In other words, Israel rejected her Messiah and her kingdom program was placed into a period of postponement until God's interim program – the Church Age – is ended at the Rapture.

Verse 26:

And so **all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

In other words, after the Church Age is complete, God will again begin to deal primarily with Israel. He will use the Tribulation to purge the unbelief from Israel and draw them to repentance. He will then return at the end of the Tribulation to save the righteous remnant that turns and cries out to Him.

Verse 27:

For **this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.**

In other words, God will then bring the righteous remnant of Israel into the Messianic or Millennial Kingdom, in which they'll be spiritually and physically restored and all of God's promises will be fulfilled – exactly as we're told throughout the scriptures.

Verse 28:

As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: **but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.**

In other words, while in their current state of spiritual unbelief, the Jews are hostile towards the idea of Jesus being their Messiah, making them God's enemies for the time. But this has worked together to bless the Gentiles, as our privileges of receiving New Covenant salvation were made available to us after Israel rejected this gift. But their state of unbelief does not revoke God's love, His promises, and His covenants concerning Israel. He will fulfill all that He promised to their forefathers.

Verse 29:

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For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

In other words, God cannot and will not go back on His promises to Israel. Israel is still a chosen and distinct entity that God will deal with separately. Israel as a nation still has a purpose and a destiny in God's playbook.

So, after studying just a sampling of what the Bible communicates about this, we hope you recognize that you can't "get rid" of Israel (as Replacement Theologians attempt to do), and at the same time think you're taking God's Word seriously. If Paul tells us that Israel is still beloved in God's eyes and still has a future in God's plan, then we should also embrace a love for Israel in spite of her unbelief. The mentality of the Christian towards Israel is similar to that of a parent watching a rebellious child reap the consequences of their bad decisions. The parent loves and pities the child, and roots for the child to get it right the next time, despite their stumbles. That should be our attitude towards Israel. Israel got it wrong at the Messiah's First Coming, and has been suffering the consequences ever since. But scripture tells us that she will get it right the second time, at the Messiah's Second Coming. It should be a joyful idea to us to know that Israel will finally come to faith. If we know that this is the heart of God, then it should give us joy to see His plan come to pass.

Of course, that doesn't mean we have to support everything Israel does, or everything any particular Jewish person might do. As a nation in sin and in open rebellion against God, we in fact should expect the same sinful activity to be in Israel that we also witness in other nations. And of course, we should always do our best to spread the gospel to them. But we need to embrace a mentality that aligns with God's thinking concerning Israel as a nation – He yearns to graft them back into His spiritual promises, and He will! And furthermore, we should certainly acknowledge and support Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation, as we saw earlier that their present-day regathering is unquestionably prophetically significant.

Let's also point out that earlier, in Romans 3, Paul also wrote concerning the similar question many Hebrew Christians had at that

time – the question of “if the Gentiles are now grafted into the promises of God, what good are God’s promises to Abraham? What good was God’s choice of the nation Israel?” We will see that Paul replies (in Verse 2) by essentially saying, “Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the Word of God.”

That leads to a second question many had (in Verse 3) which essentially was: “Does Jewish unbelief negate God’s promises?” In Verse 4, Paul responds strongly to the thought that God might be unfaithful, essentially saying: “May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.” In other words, he agrees with us that Replacement Theology makes God out to be a liar! Let’s read through this passage.

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;

-Romans 3:1-4

Paul explains that Israel’s unbelief would not nullify God’s promises concerning them. This passage makes it clear that the notion that God could be unfaithful to His promises made to Israel is to call God a liar.

So, we constantly see this same theme in Biblical prophecy – a remnant of Israel will repent and turn to her true Messiah at the end of the Tribulation, prompting His return to restore them physically and spiritually, and then inaugurate His Millennial Kingdom. This is Israel’s future in God’s plan. Although Israel is currently in a state of rebellion, God will get her back, but it will take the unparalleled distress of the Tribulation period to do it. God is not finished with Israel! This can further be summarized in the following passage from Isaiah 54, speaking of the end-time restoration of Israel.

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For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

-Isaiah 54:5-8

We see from this the entire panorama of Israel's history, which was prophetically given hundreds of years before Christ's First Coming. God prophetically laid out how He would for a time turn His attention away from Israel after the nation's rejection of Him as Messiah, and they would be forced to endure a period of wrath. But He makes clear that at the end of it all, He would regather them in kindness and mercy.

Recall the earlier passage we looked at that records Jesus' lament in Matthew 23:37 – declaring His desire to gather them as a nation back then at His First Coming, but they wouldn't have Him. They failed the test at His First Coming. Yet, hundreds of years earlier here in Isaiah (and many other places), He was already declaring His intention to ultimately regather them in the end, as through the wrath of the Tribulation, they will finally receive Him at His Second Coming.

A few verses later in Isaiah 54, God says:

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

-Isaiah 54:10

So, we see the same everlasting nature of God's unconditional covenant promises to Israel shown here. God tells Israel that the

mountains and hills will be removed from the earth before His covenant with Israel could ever be removed. God then finishes out this chapter by declaring the everlasting principle of His preservation of Israel.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

-Isaiah 54:17

This entire idea of God keeping his covenant promises to Israel is one of the major reasons for Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. John, in his apocalyptic vision in Revelation, describes this event.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called **Faithful** and **True**, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

-Revelation 19:11

Why is Christ called "Faithful and True?" Because this is Him coming back to save the Jewish remnant that had turned to Him, in order to keep His covenants with Israel. He is Faithful and True to His unconditional covenant promises – in agreement with what Paul had said in Romans 3:1-4 ("let God be *true*, but every man a liar").

Jesus in Matthew 24 had told us that if He didn't return, no flesh would be saved. In other words, if this time period of Tribulation was allowed to continue past its allotted time, all people on earth – and certainly the Jewish remnant – would be destroyed (Matthew 24:22). And if there is no Jewish remnant remaining, then God couldn't fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. So, in order to fulfill His promises, His Second Coming is necessary. This Faithful and True covenant-keeping God will return as a Conquering King to save this remnant

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and then bring them into the Millennial Kingdom, in which all of His promises will be kept.

And so, throughout this section of our study, we've strengthened our perceptions of the Biblical attitude a Bible-believing Christian should have concerning Israel. As we've seen, the Bible is not silent or indecisive about this. The apostle Paul answers all of these question with precise detail, in perfect alignment with the rest of the Bible, helping us to recognize that Israel definitely has a future in God's plan!

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

As we bring our study to a close, let's recap what we've learned. In the Old Testament, God selected Israel as a chosen nation from among the heathens that were all steeped in the Babylonian system of idolatry. He chose them to be a separate and holy nation – one through which God could disclose His Word, His Messiah, and His ultimate salvation for all of humanity.

God then made a number of unconditional covenants with Israel, promising things like, “those that bless you will be blessed, and those that curse you will be cursed.” He promised a land inheritance for them (one that still has never been completely fulfilled). He promised a future Messianic Kingdom ruled by a King Messiah who would come as one of their descendants.

And even as the nation failed to live up to their calling of being a beacon of God's light unto the nations, God would reaffirm His unconditional covenants with them, even beginning to disclose a promise of a future New Covenant and time in which they would walk in His ways. The prophets would reveal that Israel will be restored both spiritually and physically, and will actually be the headline nation on earth at the time when they would begin to receive this covenant. Even at the height of their apostasy, God speaks through the writings

of the prophets, declaring that as long as the heavenly bodies themselves remain in existence, Israel as a nation will also remain.

And so, as literal interpreters of the Bible, we can understand that Israel still has a place in God's future program for humanity – despite their past failures and current state of unbelief as a nation. So, if God did not cast off His original covenant people, neither should we. If we understand their future significance in God's plan, we should not espouse an attitude of antagonism or hatred towards them. If we claim to sincerely love God, we must also love the Jewish people, whom He loves. Biblically speaking, the Jews are the chosen people of God – and Paul told us that this calling and election of God is given to them “without repentance” – or in other words, it's irrevocable.

But we don't just read about this in scripture – we actually witness it being active throughout the record of history. Even more incredibly, we clearly see this pattern at work in our modern times. For instance, the principle of “those who bless you will be blessed, and those who curse you will be cursed” from the Abrahamic Covenant is evident throughout history, as we've seen. Our jog through history, beginning with the Assyrian Empire and extending throughout our modern times has shown that nations rise and fall based upon their treatment of God's chosen people. We even saw how Bible prophecy states that this trend will continue into the future, and that God will exact His vengeance upon those nations that gather against Jerusalem and conspire to divide His land that He promised to Israel.

We also examined the big picture of the angelic conflict at work throughout history. Satan's agenda is always to destroy Israel in order to thwart God's plan (since he knows Israel as a nation is the instrument through which God intends to administer this plan). And so, the question remains, “on which side of this supernatural conflict do you want to be? Do you want to be on Satan's side or on God's side?”

We also demonstrated how clear Bible prophecy is regarding Israel's future in God's plan. As we showed, we can understand that the creation of the modern State of Israel in 1948 has the prophetic significance of beginning the process of regathering the people of Israel from the nations (in unbelief) in preparation for being brought

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to faith through the discipline of the Tribulation. This will be followed by a further regathering (in faith) after the Tribulation in preparation for blessing and restoration in the Millennial Kingdom. So, through a literal and plain reading of the Bible, God's program for Israel becomes clear, and helps us to recognize His hand at work today, setting the stage for what is to come after the Church Age is completed.

Christian believers should embrace a mindset that falls in line with all of these facts. While we of course do not have to support everything Israel might do as a nation, if we're committed to a Biblically-based mindset, then we must support their right to exist as a sovereign nation, as we've shown it to be unquestionably prophetic. And so, while some Christians who look through the misguided lenses of allegorical Bible interpretation might think that God has abandoned Israel, and that they've been replaced by the Church, we can understand the opposite to be true. God will surely fulfill His promises and covenants with Israel – exactly as His Word says He will. God still has a plan for them, and our attitudes as Bible-believing Christians should reflect this clear Scriptural teaching.

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