



# 1948 - 2008 ISRAEL AT 60

## PART 3 OF 4: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JEWS' RETURN TO ISRAEL

May 14th 2008 marked 60 years since the state of Israel declared its independence. In this four part series, we are looking at Israel and why they are such a significant nation. Having spent the first two parts of the series looking at the background and history of Israel and the Jews, we are now going to look at why the Jews' return to their land in 1948 is such a significant event, and worthy of consideration in this way.

### - Two important principles

Before proceeding any further, we need to reiterate the two key principles of the series made in part one (see that fact sheet for more information):

- Everything put forward is based on one source - the Bible, which is the Word of God (2 Pet 1:19-21, 2 Tim 3:14-17). This makes it 100% accurate and reliable.
- This consideration of Israel is not a celebration of the nation's achievements, for they are far from perfect.

### - Recap

If you have been following this series, you will already have seen much of significance. In part one we saw how God told a man called Abraham to leave his homeland and travel to the land of Israel. He also made a number of promises to him and his descendants, including the possession of the land of Israel for ever:

Genesis 13:14-17 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: 15. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. 17. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

Significantly, these promises have not yet been fulfilled - Abraham is dead, and the Jews were later expelled from the land in AD 70, although... they have since returned to the land, significantly - this reiterates the other key point from part one, that God never breaks his promises:

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

### - The Jews - God's true witnesses

In part two we saw how God chose the Jews, Abraham's descendants, to be his special people. He told them he would never allow them to be destroyed:

Isaiah 43:10-12 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen... 12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange [other] god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.

Jeremiah 30:11 For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

God also made a number of prophecies concerning events that would befall them throughout their history. For example, he said that (amongst other things):

- They would spend 400 years as strangers in a foreign land – they did, in Egypt!
- They would be taken into captivity by Babylon – they were, at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar!
- They would again be overthrown, but this time scattered across all countries of the world – exactly what happened when the Romans overthrew them in AD 70!

Not all such prophecies were made and fulfilled hundreds of years ago however. For example:

Jeremiah 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD... He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

Jeremiah 32:37 Behold, I will gather them [Israel] out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

Israel's declaration of independence on May 14th 1948 was in keeping with this prophecy – within living memory!

### - The significance of May 14th 1948

So we have already seen several reasons why the return of the Jews to Israel in 1948 is significant:

- It is a fulfilment of God's prophecy that he would regather the Jews into their land - further evidence that the Bible is God's Word that we can witness ourselves.
- It reiterates how the Jew's are God's witnesses; despite 1900 years scattered around the world:
  - They didn't lose their identity or their homeland.
  - They provide evidence of God's promise to ensure they were never destroyed.
- And most importantly, it allows for the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

### - A closer look at prophecy

Whilst most of the series so far has reflected on Israel's past, the real significance of Israel today concerns the future. To appreciate this, a closer look at prophecy is required. Consider the passage from Jeremiah 32 mentioned previously:

Jeremiah 32:37 ... I will cause them to dwell safely:

Note the reference to 'dwelling safely' - Ezekiel 34 is another chapter which speaks of Israel's regathering by God. The whole chapter is worth reading, but in particular:

Ezekiel 34:25-28 And I will make with them [Israel] a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.. 28. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.

- The Jews' regathering was prophesied to result in everlasting peace, an end to all their troubles - this clearly cannot be said of Israel today!

Israel has had periods of peace, but nothing lasting, and the threat of future oppression has certainly never gone away. So God's prophecy is only partially fulfilled therefore - there must be more to come!

## - God's coming kingdom

A key point made in part one of this series has not yet been reiterated - namely that the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham involve a kingdom being established in Israel, with dominion over the whole world and Christ as its king:

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Luke 1:31-33 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Passages such as Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:1-9 and Revelation 21:2-4 amongst others describe how this kingdom will be a time of peace and great blessings. It can be said therefore, that the peace and safety Israel has been promised will come at the time the kingdom of God is re-established by Christ in Israel in the future.

## - When will Christ return?

We do not know:

Acts 1:6-7 When they [Jesus' disciples] therefore were come together, they asked of him [Jesus], saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

We are however told that the return of Christ will be preceded by signs pointing towards it:

Luke 21:25-28 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

The Bible commonly uses the sun, moon and stars ('the heavens') to refer to political activity. So these signs can be found in the political activity of certain nations. More information on this can be found in a number of scriptural passages, most notably Ezekiel 38 - worthy of a separate study on its own. The following is just an excerpt from this chapter - a full explanation of which is available upon request:

Ezekiel 38:1-8 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him... 8. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

The passage speaks of a confederacy of nations with a leader known as 'Gog' who will come down from the north and invade Israel. Gog can be identified as the leader of Russia - the phrase 'chief prince' is actually 'prince of Rosh' in the original Hebrew, Rosh being the ancient name of Russia. Not all the other nations mentioned in the chapter can be identified as precisely, but we can be fairly certain of many of them - for example, verse 5 speaks of 'Persia' being one of Gog's allies; Persia is the former name of Iran, a nation which is closely allied with Russia today. So it is clear then that Russia, with the support of her allies, is going to invade Israel in the future!

The chapter goes on to describe how other nations will oppose Russia's actions, but will not succeed, leaving Israel in dire straits with nowhere to turn and no apparent way of escape - a scenario which will trigger the return of Christ, as other passages make abundantly clear. For example, Joel 3, 2 Thessalonians 2 and Zechariah 14:

Zechariah 14:1-3 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

So in these of these signs of Christ's return, we can say that:

- We cannot identify all of the nations involved precisely, although a deeper study of the scripture gives us some pretty good ideas.
- We can be certain that Russia and her allies will invade Israel and be opposed by another group of nations.
- By observing Russia, and other nations' attitudes towards both Russia and Israel, we can see signs of these events coming to fruition.
- Israel will be a weak and defenceless nation by the time of Christ's return - we can also look for signs of their decline.

## - The significance of the Jews' return to Israel

So in conclusion, we can summarise the significance of the Jews' return to Israel as follows:

- Christ will not return until a time when Israel's backs are against the wall. This will involve an invasion from Russia and her allies.
- Russia could not invade Israel if the nation didn't exist.
- God's promises to Abraham (and others) can not be fulfilled without these events first taking place.
- Therefore, the return of the Jews to the land of Israel is the essential first step in a sequence of events culminating in the final fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham, and the establishing of his Kingdom.

## - A call to action

These significant scriptural teachings provide a call to action:

- These future events will be unlike anything ever experienced on the earth before.
- They will change the whole world for ever.
- That involves your future.
- The way in which our futures will be affected is determined by the choices we make now.

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT JUST SOMETHING OF ACADEMIC INTEREST. IT CONCERNS THE FUTURE OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US. GOD'S WORD DESERVES OUR FULL ATTENTION!**