THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

Series: Israel or Palestine? Thinking Biblically About the Land of Israel

Selected Scriptures

David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, once said, "In Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles." He said this because as we talked about last week, there is no human explanation for the way that Israel has been preserved over the last 2,000 years with and the opposition, persecution, and genocide they've faced; not to mention being reestablished as a nation with their ancient language and becoming a global leader in many areas of society. No other people in the history of the world have done that. But the restoration isn't complete and neither are the miracles. Scripture points a fuller, future restoration of ethnic, national Israel. We've already talked some about their future naturally from the prophets, but we'll discuss it further today.

I. ISRAEL IN THE PRESENT. (Rom. 11)

A. God is active today preserving and protecting the Jewish people.

We talked about preservation last week. It's impossible to destroy the Jewish people. You'd have to pull the sun, moon, and stars out of the sky (Jer. 31:25-27).

B. God is presently saving a remnant of Jews.

A lot of people, even in Paul's day, wondered if God was done with the Jewish people since they had nationally rejected Christ and so many Jews were hostile to Christians and the Gospel. And in Romans 9-11 Paul addresses that. **Romans 11:1-5**, says, *"I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew."* So Paul, a Jew, presents himself as evidence that God is not done with the Jews. He says, "Look at me! I'm a Jew and I believe." He also mentions how God preserved 7,000 men in Elijah's day who hadn't bowed the knee to Baal and concludes, *"there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice."* The majority are hardened to the gospel but a remnant are coming to know Christ and always have been. Statistics say more Jews are coming to Christ than ever before.

In **Romans 11:11**, he says, *"I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?"* Has Israel fallen beyond recovery? His answer is *me genoito! "May it never be!"* that strongest negation in Greek. It's Paul's way of saying, "No way, José!" He says but if *"by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous"* and *"if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ... If their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"* Whenever I read that, I can't help but think of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones where he talks about the exiled "house of Israel" coming back together in the last days as a nation and

experience regeneration and entrance into the New Covenant. Paul speaks of their fulfillment of future acceptance. So yes, they stumbled but not in a way that it's impossible to rectify.

I'm going to do a lot of summarizing here for the sake of time but closer to the end of chapter (vv. 17-24) Paul speaks of their being grafted back into God's program. Right now, Israel has been set aside as the *primary means* of putting Himself on display and reaching the world with His Word. The Church is primarily being used today but that place of blessing is *not complete* or *permanent*. We might say that it's <u>not complete</u> because 1) Israel, even in her spiritual insensitivity, is still being used by God to put Himself on display. Through Israel's hardening and persecution, we see that exactly what God said would happen is happening (Deut. 28) and 2) their national reestablishment defies all odds or possibilities. As one of my professors said, "Her existence is manifest, deliberate, compelling evidence that God exists." I would also say it's <u>not permanent</u> because as Paul keeps hinting at there is going to be a regrafting (11:24), an acceptance (11:15), a getting back up (11:11), and a removal of the hardening (11:25). This is where we switch gears:

II. ISRAEL IN THE F<u>UTURE</u>. (Rom. 11:25-26; Zech. 12-14)

In verses 25-26 of Romans 11, he says, *"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."* He goes on to talk about how they will be shown mercy just as the Gentiles have been shown mercy. But Paul mentions a mystery: was is it? That Gentiles could be saved can't be the mystery. That Israel would be regathered and experience a spiritual regeneration wasn't a mystery either Both are in the OT. What is mysterious—even surprising—is that their acceptance would come *after* a time period of great Gentile salvation while Israel was hardened (11:25). I don't think people saw the Jewish rejection of Christ coming or the Church age we're in. So at the present time, God is primarily using the Gentiles, but we shouldn't get so proud as to think that we deserve this or that God is done with Israel. Their hardening against Messiah is **partial** (because God is saving a remnant now) and **temporary**—a *partial* hardening has happened *until* the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Paul quotes **Isaiah 59:20** here which talks about "the whole house of Israel" or "all Israel" being saved. This is an Old Testament expectation—this idea that there would be a great salvation of Jews when the Messiah comes to establish His kingdom on earth. You find this in Ezekiel 20:40 or 37:11 or 39:25 to name a few. **Ezekiel 20** says, *""As I live," declares the Lord God, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgement with you face to face… I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge the rebels and those who transgress against Me…. Later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer… there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land."*

Ezekiel 39:25-29 says that after the great Gog and Magog war of the end times where the nations gather against Israel (described in Ezek. 38-39), *"Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they have perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather then from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord God."* This is awesome to think about. There will be a regathering and regeneration of Israel. This is going to be one of the most God-glorifying moments in all of history. I think people are going to witness His physical and spiritual deliverance of Israel and say, "You've got to be kidding. He's that faithful?! After all this time? After how they rejected Him? Wow! What a God! He was doing the whole time." Ezekiel says He will magnify Himself in the sight of the nations through them (Ezek. 38:23; 39:21).

So right now, a remnant is being saved. In the future, near the Lord's return, Israel is going to experience a great salvation. But what about between now and then? Well, we don't have time to address it in every detail, but I broke it down into a few elements that we'll touch on:

A. The Prophetic Clock: 7 years of T<u>ribulation</u> for Israel.

The Bible talks about a future time of global tribulation where God pours out His wrath on an unbelieving, Christ-rejecting world. It's an unprecedented time period of judgment. And when you read about it, it's very Jewish in nature. Events center around Israel and Jerusalem. 144,000 Jews get saved at the beginning of this Tribulation period (Rev. 7:1-8). They're called the firstfruits (14:15). We shouldn't be surprised by the Jewish nature of it all because Jeremiah 30:7 calls this "the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble." It's a doctrine for another time, but this is just one of the main reasons why I believe in a pretribulation rapture. He resumes His program with Israel during that time.

Daniel 9:24-27 is the backbone of Bible prophecy. It reveals that there are 7 years left on Israel's prophetic clock. Antichrist is going to make a covenant with the Jewish people for 7 years and the Jews will rebuild the temple and get it running again. And this is what the Jews have longed for since AD 70 when the temple was destroyed. However, there is this Dome of the Rock Mosque sitting right where it will be built so they can't make that move politically right now. But this global, satanically inspired, end-times ruler is very likely the one who is going to allow the Jews to rebuild the temple. He's going to pretend to be their hero. Interestingly, there is a group in Israel today called *The Temple Institute* who are just waiting for the word—the go-ahead—to build that temple. They have the menorah, priestly clothes, blueprints, etc. They're just waiting. Their website says, "The Temple Institute is dedicated to all aspects of the Divine commandment for Israel to build a house for G-d's presence, the Holy Temple, on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem… Our goal is firstly, to restore Temple consciousness and reactivate these "forgotten" commandments.

We hope that by doing our part, we can participate in the process that will lead to the Holy Temple becoming a reality once more... If 1/3 of all the Torah's commandments center on the Temple, it would seem that Biblical observance in the Temple's absence is but a skeleton of what G-d had intended it to be." They can get that thing up and going in no time with modern construction.

B. Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel halfway through the 7 years.

In the middle of this time period, 3 ½ years or 1290 days, he will break this covenant and desecrate the temple by demanding worship of himself in it (Dan. 11:31). He claims to be God and demands worship of himself in the Jewish temple. Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 talk about this. In **Matthew 24:15**, Jesus said, *"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains…. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will."* So halfway through the Tribulation things escalate rapidly, especially for the Jews whom Antichrist seeks to destroy. And it's going to be déjà vu for them because in 167 BC Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Greek ruler whose name means "God manifest," set up an alter to Zeus in the second temple (after the return from exile) and sacrificed a pig on the altar. He also slaughtered a great number of Jews, sold them into slavery, and forbid Jewish practices. According to Jesus, Antiochus was just a precursor the Antichrist—the ultimate abomination that causes desolation.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 describes the Antichrist as the *"man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself to be God"* and that Christ will come and slay him at the second coming without so much as having to lift a finger (2:8-9). I want to remind us at this point that none of these prophecies make sense without 1) a literal, straightforward (non-allegorical/non-spiritualizing) hermeneutic (or method of interpretation), or 2) without a restored national Israel in the land, including a temple.[1]

C. Increasing antisemitism.

One of the main purposes for the Tribulation period is to bring Israel to her knees in repentance so that she looks to Christ to save her. Much of this it seems is going to come through persecution. The Tribulation then is like a terrible kindness designed to return their hearts to the Lord. They will face unprecedented persecution during this time. Zechariah 13:8-9 predicts 2/3's of the Jews will perish during the Tribulation period. Revelation 12 talks about how Satan, who realizes he's running out of time, is going to turn his aggression against the woman "Israel" (cf. Rev. 12:1 with Gen. 37:9-10) and Israel will flee to the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that she would be nourished for 1260 days.[2]

This is getting into even finer details, but there are more than a handful of texts that talk about Israel being saved in the wilderness, conveying the idea that they have fled Jerusalem to the desert, to the south and east (cloud rider in Egypt-Isa. 19:1; desert prophecies of Ezek. 25:31; their call for repentance in Hosea 6:1, 3; Hab. 3:3-4; possibly Deut. 33:2). You have more in your notes but I'll mention a few: **Ezekiel 20:35** said Israel will come face to face with God in the wilderness (Ezek. 20:35-36). **Jeremiah 31:2** says, *"The people who survived the sword found grace in the*

wilderness." **Isaiah 34:6, 8** say the Lord will satiate His sword with blood in the area of Bozrah and Edom. **Micah 2:12-13** mentioned the gathering of the remnant of Israel in Bozrah. **Zechariah 9** talks about the Lord protecting them and making the nations drunk and He marches in the storm winds of the south (vv. 14-17). **Isaiah 63** says, *"Who is this who comes from Edom, with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." 2 Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? 3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. 5 "I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. 6 "I trod down the peoples in My anger and made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."*

This passage is a great cross reference for Revelation 19:13. Jesus comes, and His garments are stained in blood, but it's not His own blood. This is the warrior Messiah of the Second Coming, not the suffering Messiah of the First Coming. Reconciling these desert passages with Zechariah 14, which says Jesus' feet will stand on the Mt. of Olives, it appears that He comes indirectly to the Mt. of Olives from the wilderness in the south after saving Israel by Himself because there is no one left to save them but Him—not even the United States. That's letter D.

D. A salvation of Israel by <u>Christ</u> alone.

To finish this series, I want to walk us briefly through some of Zechariah 12-14. Zechariah 12 says, *"The burden of the word of the Lord concerning Israel."* That's an interesting introduction to a prophecy, isn't it? It's a **burdensome** prophecy—a weighty revelation—concerning Israel. This is history before it happens. First, we see **1) the global <u>assault</u> on Israel**.

"Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him, 2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. 3 It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. 4 In that day," declares the Lord, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5 Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the Lord of hosts, their God.' 6 "In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem."

So you see a global force turning against Israel and coming to attack Jerusalem and wipe out its inhabitants. Like Hitler, they offer a "final solution" to the Jewish problem. But the text says they're going to get "severely injured" in trying to do so. Jerusalem is like a cup that makes them

stagger. God frustrates their plans like so many of Israel's enemies in the past. If you touch Jerusalem, the Lord says you will get burned—consumed by it—like sheaves nearing a torch. We see **2) the <u>physical</u> salvation of Israel**

"7 The Lord also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah. 8 In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them."

So basically, God's going to deliver the small and the great in the land and in the city and no one can say they did it by their own power. They realize God is doing this and the feeblest Jerusalemite will be empowered to fight like King David against Goliath. They will be like the power of God unto their enemies and God Himself will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The reference to the angel of the Lord there may very well be a reference to Christ who is active. Now we see **3) the <u>spiritual</u> salvation of Israel**. So they experience a double deliverance—spiritual and physical.

"9 And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Do you remember when Jesus said, *"You will not see Me again until you* [Israel] *say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"?* Well, here it is. They finally welcome Jesus as their Messiah. Today many don't think much of the modern state of Israel because they are a mostly secular state with many secular Jews. But if all of these prophecies are true, it's significant in that they must back to the land to experience these end times events (Ezek. 36:24-26). And that's the significance of the modern state. When will these things take place? We don't know. And we shouldn't set dates. But in my mind, it's a sign of the times are drawing near and the attacks on Israel like we saw in October 2023 are just a precursor of all of that. If anything, it ought to keep us sensitive and on our toes, looking for the Savior. One of my Bible teachers said since He could come at any time, we need to be ready at all times—and be about His business. Verse 11 continues:

11 In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; 13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; 14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves." 13:1 "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."

A fountain will be opened: this is a spiritual fountain of cleansing poured out on Israel through the Spirit. They call on Him whom they have pierced, with great contrition, to save them. One of my favorite chapters in the Bible, Zechariah 14, which you'll have to read on your own, speaks of

Christ coming and defeating the nations gathered against Jerusalem. He stands on the Mount of Olives splitting it in two and establishes His rule from Jerusalem. **Zechariah 14:9** says, *"And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one."* He will be the King of kings and his saints rule and reign with Him (Rev. 20).

This is when we see **4) the full restoration of Israel to a place of prominence among the nations.** The land is raised up and transformed (vv. 10-11); the nations who attacked Jerusalem are judged with plague and panic (vv. 12-15); and the nations who do not go up from year to year to worship Christ during that age to come will, as a form of punishment, experience a lack of rain (vv. 16-19). Israel is secure, never to be uprooted again and the nations (not just individuals among the nations) are blessed with them (Isa. 19:16-25). Ezekiel 40-48 speaks of a future temple in incredible detail, with a new worship calendar and a river bringing the Dead Sea to life, and a specific allotment of land for the tribes. Remember when God's shekinah glory departed the temple at the first exile (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22-23)? Ezekiel 43:1-6 and 44:4 say that glory returns to the millennial temple after Christ's return. Jerusalem is no longer trampled underfoot by Gentiles and the kingdom is restored. Christ fulfills everything through His first and second coming.

In conclusion, I can't help but think that Israel's story is our story.[3] Israel is not perfect. They have stumbled and fumbled more times than we can count. But you know, so do you and I. None of us are perfect. None of us have arrived. We too are all prone to leave the God we love. But just like Israel, a bellwether of God's faithfulness, God is covenantally faithful to us, showing mercy and grace we don't deserve. And at the end of the day, we stand assured that He doesn't leave us or forsake us. He is a promise-keeping God.

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[1] Peter Goeman, "Does the Bible Say There Will Be a Future Temple in Israel?" *The Bible Sojourner* website, https://petergoeman.com/does-the-bible-say-there-will-be-a-future-temple-in-israel/

[2] Tommy Ice has a great chapter on this in his book *The Case for Zionism*.

[3] Christopher J. Katulka, *Israel Always* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2022), 247.