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WHY IS ISRAEL THE CENTRE OF THE PROPHETIC EARTH??

By Rev Ivan Foster



The simple answer to this question is: God has placed it there. The course of events in this world have been predetermined by the Lord, as the following verses demonstrate. "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done," Acts 4:28. "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation," Acts 17:26. (See also Ephesians 1:11, 3:11). Therefore when we see Israel at the centre of God's dealings with mankind in the past, it is because He placed her there.

That Israel is at the centre of the prophetic world is clear, when we give consideration to the following truth.

I. GOD'S DEALINGS IN MERCY WITH MANKIND CAME THROUGH ISRAEL

The Redeemer of men, the Lord Jesus Christ was, according to the flesh, an Israelite, of the tribe of Judah and of the royal house of David. The stream of grace from which sinners must partake if they are to be saved is traced to the nation of Israel.

1. The divine plan of redemption began to manifest itself with the call of Abraham. "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.

Notice that the blessing of God would come on all the families of the earth through Abraham, the man to whom God promised the land of Israel. The gospel was revealed to Abraham. He saw the day of Christ with its bright sunshine of gospel mercy in the promises that God made to him. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad," John 8:56. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham," Galatians 3:8-9. (See also verses 14 and 29).

2. The terms of the gospel were elaborated to Israel. The Law and the ceremonies contained types and shadows which gave a preview of the outworkings of God's mercy at the cross. The Scriptures of the Old Testament bear witness to Christ. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me," John 5:39. "To him (Christ) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts 10:43.

Much of our Bible is composed of divinely inspired utterances, spoken and recorded by Israelites in the land of Israel.

3. The redemption of sinners was wrought out on a Roman gibbet outside the city of Jerusalem. You may still visit the site and with confidence gaze upon the very place where the Son of God gave Himself for His elect. It is not the place festooned with the trappings of Babylonian and Romish superstition and known to the ill-informed tourist as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Rather, it is a place just north west of Jerusalem and outside the city walls, at a place long called Jeremiah's grotto. It is known as Gordon's Calvary for it is the site identified by and associated with the British Army officer, General Charles George Gordon. General Gordon, a Christian, was able to employ men in the excavation of a site long believed to be the true Calvary. At the base of the limestone outcropping, most aptly fitting the description of Golgotha, the place of a skull, his workmen uncovered the remains of a garden and found a tomb in 1881. It fitted the



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statement found in John 19:41. "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid," John 19:41. If you would visit the place where the Son of God gave Himself a ransom for the many and endured the wrath of God for sinners you must go to Israel.

4. The last place that the Son of God was seen of men was in Israel. The Saviour took bodily leave of this world near to Bethany. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," Luke 24:50-51. In Acts 1:9-11, we have a parallel account.

5. The good news of salvation was first preached to the world by Israelites. Jewish messengers started at Jerusalem and went forth to preach a message of salvation to the Gentile world, Matthew 28:16-20. Our hope for heaven is wonderfully linked to events in Israel.

II. THE NATION OF ISRAEL THOUGH PRESENTLY CAST OFF IS NOT CAST OFF FOREVER

There is a future for the nation of Israel.

1. It is seen in their preservation from destruction. Hated by all nations and, at times brought near to utter destruction. AD 70 under the Roman armies is one example and again in recent history, the most dreadful 'Holocaust' orchestrated by Hitler's Nazis in the 1940s.

2. It is seen in their recovery to the land of Israel. Despite the improbability of their hopes, in 1948 the name of ISRAEL appeared on the world map for the first time since 70 AD. That event testified to the fact that God has not yet finished with His people nor has He forgotten His Covenant with them.

3. It is seen in Holy Scripture. "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," Ezekiel 36:24-27. None can successfully show that these verses have been completely fulfilled. They refer to the return of Israel to her native land and to the conversion of the nation in its land. The return has taken place but not the conversion.

A careful reading of Romans 11:11-12, 15, 23-24 reveals that God has not cast off Israel forever. Their present and future states are seen in Hosea 3:4-5. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

III. THE EVENTS THAT WILL HERALD THE END OF THIS AGE WILL HAVE SPECIAL LINKS WITH ISRAEL

1. There is great apostasy to take place at the end of the age. This falling away or apostasy, must take place before the Saviour's return. "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition," 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3. Out of this apostasy will come the Antichrist. He is the 'man of sin' that is to be revealed.

2. The Man of Sin, the Antichrist will be revealed and he will have links with Israel. Read carefully Daniel 11:36-38, 41, 45. He shall set up his image in Jerusalem, Dan 12:11; Rev 13:1-18. The setting up of this image, 'the abomination of desolation', signals the near return of Christ. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop



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not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. . . . 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 24:15-21, 29-31. (See also Mark 13:14).

This event, the erecting of 'the abomination of desolation' in the temple at Jerusalem, which is yet to be built, will identify the Antichrist. As Christ was presented in the temple at Jerusalem and first proclaimed as the Christ so it will be with Antichrist. There will be, as the devil is apt to do, an attempt to duplicate that which is associated with the Saviour. The act of setting up the image in the re-built temple will show to those who are watching and waiting that the time of Christ's return is at hand. Notice the sequence of events in Matthew 24:15-21, 29-31. According to Revelation 13:5 and other Scriptures, this tribulation will last 42 months or three and a half years or 1260 days, all terms used by the Holy Spirit to emphasise the exact period of time of this terrible time of persecution, chiefly of the Jews in Jerusalem.

3. The Lord's purpose in bringing Antichrist to Jerusalem is to destroy him and his armies. "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. 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 12:2-3. The time of Jacob's trouble is this time of persecution and trial under Antichrist. "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 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. It just precedes the return of Christ. It is just when Antichrist will be poised to destroy Jerusalem finally, that Christ returns to destroy him and deliver His ancient people, as already quoted from Matthew 24:29-30. Paul taught the same truth. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," 2 Thessalonians 2:8. See also Revelation 19:11-16, 20-21. "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. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. . . . And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

The Old Testament prophet. Zechariah was privileged to reveal many wonderful things about the return of Christ. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. . . .," 14:3-4. Christ will return to the very spot from which He left the earth. The words of the angel to the apostles will be literally fulfilled. "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts 1:11.



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While at this moment, we do not know the day nor the hour of the Saviour's return, as that day and hour draw nearer we shall be able to read the signs and know when Christ will return. There will come a moment when we shall literally know to look up. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh," Luke 21:28.

From this study we may learn:—

1. The Word of God is true in every sense of the word.
2. We should heed all that is contained in it.
3. We should especially heed its message on the matter of our soul's salvation.

As God has appointed the events in the wider world, so He has appointed the course of our lives. One thing is appointed for us all. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Hebs 9:27. In the light of that appointment, it is essential that each one gives due and proper attention to the need of the soul. "Today is the appointed day of mercy and opportunity of closing with Christ by faith. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," II Corinthians 6:2.

For you to be saved you need to sincerely repent of your sin and cast yourself upon Christ. Heed His call today. "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Hebrews 4:7.

May God grant you obedience to His blessed word of salvation!