



Prophecy in Perspective

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GOD'S ETERNAL LOVE AND PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL

I believe that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church, the Rapture, could happen at any time! We can look around and see how political and world events, growth of false religions and cults, geological, climactic and astronomical indicators and clearly unbiblical trends and teachings in the church show that we are nearing the time of the Lord's coming. Of all the indicators of the Lord's soon return, however, there is none more obvious than what God is doing through the regathering of Israel and the growing apostasy in the church. Let's look at some of God's plans for Israel as revealed in the prophetic book of Zechariah and current trends in Christianity to understand the unfolding of these latter days in which we live.

Israel, the Apple of God's Eye

6Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. 7Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye (2:6-8).

2:6 - Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: These prophetic realities are now set forth for the Jews, and today, the church, to know beyond all doubt that God will again establish Jerusalem as the capital of the earth. He is preparing for this even today. In the days of Zechariah, this promise is to encourage them to begin again to rebuild the temple in their time. God's prophetic plans for Israel are so clear and definite that the Jews can hear God calling them through the words of the prophet Zechariah: "Ho, ho, come forth...," or, "get up quickly, do not delay any longer!" Leave the places where you have been scattered around the world, "the land of the north," represented here as Babylon, but which is any place where the Jews have been taken or have fled for safety: "for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven." God is telling the Jews to come back to Israel from wherever they are and to settle there. These and many other prophecies show us that the Lord has not forgotten Israel and has great plans for the future of the Jews. Today, these prophecies assure you that God desires to call you back from wherever you have gone into "exile" in the bondage of stubbornness and sin. Trust in the Lord Jesus and yield your life to Him, and He will bring you back into His wonderful fellowship.

2:7- Deliver thyself, O Zion... The Jews would need to take the initiative and make the arrangements to somehow get from the far-away lands where they have lived for centuries and to make the journey to their Promised Land of Israel. They have dwelt "with the daughter of Babylon"; that is, not just in the literal land of Babylon, but in all the other lands that have been subjugated by the military and spiritual rule of Babylon. The

nation of the United States of America and the nations of Europe have in many ways been "daughters of Babylon." But God is even now calling the Jews back to the land of Israel. The regathering of the Jews to the land of Israel is clearly prophesied both here in Zechariah and in many other places in Scripture (See Ezekiel 34:11-31).

Jesus informed His disciples in Matthew 24:16-20 that when the Antichrist sets himself up in the temple in the Great Tribulation, they will need to "*flee into the mountains.*" In other words, Jesus is telling them to prepare to deliver themselves from the rule of the Antichrist. The Lord will give you power to deliver yourself from sin by His Holy Spirit. But you must make the decision to trust Him for salvation. Then you must follow through with a decision to "*flee these things,*" that are unscriptural and immoral (*1 Timothy 6:11*).

2:8 - ...for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For centuries, God has used the Gentile nations to rule over Israel for their protection as well as for their discipline. God will hold the Gentile nations accountable for how they have treated Israel and the Jews. The Lord had stated at the beginning of verse 8: "*After the glory He hath sent me unto the nations that spoiled you,*" meaning that after Jesus' return He will judge all the nations that have sought Israel's destruction. But, for now, the time has come when it is God's desire for the Jews to make their way back to their land in anticipation of Jesus' return and as a sign of it. Any nation that will not help Israel to return or who desires to do harm to the Jews or to Israel will be poking almighty God in the eye. The New King James Study Bible notes:

The word *touches* refers to a touch that produces harm. The *apple of His eye* refers to the pupil -this is an endearing expression, suggesting how enormously important the Hebrew people are to God because of His covenant with them. Just as we protect our eyes from even the smallest particles of dust, so God protects and cares for His people (Israel) (New King James Study Bible, p. 1886).

Regathering of Israel, God's Prophetic Super-sign of His Coming!

⁹For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me. ¹⁰*Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.* ¹¹*And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.* ¹²*And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again (2:9-12).*

2:9 - For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them... This is an expression of how God will deal with any nation or people that seek the destruction of the Jews or hinder them from finding safety in their homeland. God will come down hard on those nations, as He will in the latter days, especially in the battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39) at the start of the Tribulation and in the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation. "*They shall be a spoil to their servants,*" I believe, could refer to how many people in those nations will actually arise to help the Jews when the leaders and their armies are destroyed by the Lord after they attack Israel. All those nations will know when Jesus appears that "*the Lord of Hosts, hath (had) sent me (Him).*" There will be no mistaking the true Jesus Christ at His second coming.

2:10 - ...for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee... The Lord tells Israel through the prophet Zechariah that they should "*sing and rejoice*" at the future reality of the coming of the Messiah. This will actually be God the Son Who will "*dwell in the midst*" of His people, Israel. Jesus will never abandon His people Israel. He will return to establish that land and people as His own, and He will live among them. Today, we are living in the church age. The church does not replace Israel. The Lord Jesus lives in His church which is made up

of both Jews and Gentiles. It is comforting to know that before He went to the cross, the Lord said He would send His Spirit to us so that He could dwell in us (John 14:17). Jesus said: "*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*" (John 14:18).

The Lord now dwells in the midst of His church within each believer. And He will do this until the Rapture of the church to heaven. The Spirit of the Lord is also overseeing the protection and provision of the Jews and of Israel. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for the church, and He will fulfill His purpose for Israel. These two distinct purposes of God in the world are revealed in the Scripture. After Jesus raptures the church to heaven, then God's prophetic time clock for Israel will start again to fulfill every word that God promised and purposed to His covenant people of Israel. Some Christians today are confusing these distinct purposes of God for Israel and the church through the confusion of Replacement Theology. We will look at this false teaching and its dangers in a section below.

2:11 - *And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day...* "*In that day*" places this prophecy in the latter days at the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to Israel. These "*nations*" will be the peoples of the nations who will survive the Beast and who will not have taken His mark. These people, from among the Gentiles, will believe on the Lord at His return and will enter the millennial kingdom to serve Him. This is the third time in this chapter that the promise is made by the Lord: "*I will dwell in the midst of thee.*" The truth of the Trinity is also shown in verse 11. In that future day, the assurance will be given by the Messiah that the saved Jews will "*know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.*" The Lord Jesus, Israel's Messiah, the Son of God, is the One spoken of as "*me*" who is "*sent*" unto the people of Israel. This will happen when Jesus Christ returns to the earth and to Israel upon a white horse along with the armies of heaven, including His church (Revelation 19:11-16).

2:12 - *And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land...* This is saying, as the New King James translates it: "*And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land.*" This is the only place in the Bible where this phrase "Holy Land" occurs. Israel will truly be God's "Holy Land" when the Lord God, Jesus, again dwells there as Messiah over His believing people of Israel. The Lord Jesus will have returned with His church and will set up His thousand year kingdom with Jerusalem as the world capital. This will be His land, His people, and His kingdom. This kingdom will be the kingdom of Jesus Christ! It will be worldwide and will be headquartered in and administrated from Jerusalem. It should be obvious, then, why Satan wants the destruction of the Jews and of Israel. Through Satan's instigation, the nations are arising today to keep Jesus from ever returning to take possession of His Holy Land. But they will fail!

¹³***Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation (2:13).***

2:13 - *Be silent, O all flesh...* These words are a serious warning to all the nations today to be very careful how they treat Israel. For example, there should be much more humility in America today in our considerations and deliberations toward Israel. When nations turn away from God, the men and women who are elected to offices of political leadership will be under the control of Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). They will soon begin to dislike and then even act antagonistically toward the Jews and Israel. History has repeatedly shown this to be true. In the nations of Europe: England, France, and Germany, there is an increasing anti-Semitic slant to philosophy and policy. Americas' public education and universities in large part support pro-abortion and anti-Israel sentiments.

In recent years, the United States was more friendly toward Israel's enemies than to the Jewish State itself. Here, in verse 13, almighty God accurately proclaims the future through Jesus Christ, the Spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). God here instructs the world to "*Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord.*" "*For,*" when God "...is raised up out of His holy habitation," then judgment is coming.

Recent developments in America's policy toward Israel have been encouraging! The initiative that President Donald Trump took to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem has been very positive, I believe, for America's continued existence in God's purpose for the furtherance of His prophetic plans for Israel.

Church Apostasy, Another Sign of the Lord's Return

The world we are living in today is running "full speed ahead" away from the Bible and the God of the Bible. Even Christian ministries are getting on the anti-Israel bandwagon by joining with those who teach Replacement Theology. Replacement Theology teaches that the church replaces Israel. Those who teach this tend to be dismissive of the teaching of Bible prophecy. They tend to ignore God's plans so they can promote their own agendas such as world peace, human rights, gender equality and neutrality, environmentalism, Palestinian rights, etc.

Actually, the teachings of Replacement Theology are very dangerous because they marginalize the Jews and often relegate them to the "trash bin" of history. There are growing numbers of big names that are becoming associated with Replacement Theology's anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian stance. Among the growing proponents of Replacement Theology is Lynne Hybels. Brian Schrauger said about Lynne: "Lynne Hybels is named as "co-founder" of the U.S. evangelical megachurch, Willowcreek Community Church. Its senior pastor is Lynne's husband, Bill Hybels. Lynne has been actively immersed in pro-Palestinian—and essentially anti-Israel—activities for several years."

In the following article, David Regan, a prophecy teacher, states the dangers of Replacement Theology and its result, anti-Semitism:

A good example of the new form of anti-Semitism can be found in a document issued by James Kennedy's Knox Theological Seminary in 2002. It was entitled, "An Open Letter to Evangelicals Concerning Israel." It has since been endorsed by hundreds of theologians and pastors, including such luminaries as R. C. Sproul.

The document begins by denouncing those who teach that the Bible's promises concerning the land of Israel are being fulfilled today "in a special region or 'Holy Land,' perpetually set apart by God for one ethnic group alone." It then proceeds to proclaim that the promises made to Abraham "do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the Church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel" (emphasis added). The document then specifically denies the Jew's claim on any land in the Middle East by asserting: "The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the 'Holy Land' cannot be supported by Scripture." Then, incredibly, the document asserts that "In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua."

Adding salt to the wounds, the document concludes with the following observation: The present secular state of Israel...is not an authentic or prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in 'the land,' by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices.

Despite these statements, when the anti-Zionists are accused of being anti-Semitic, they deny the accusation vehemently. Here's how Dennis Prager, radio host and political commentator, has replied to their denials in his book, Why the Jews?:

The contention that anti-Zionists are not enemies of Jews, despite the advocacy of policies that would lead to the mass murder of Jews, is, to put it as generously as possible, disingenuous. If anti-Zionism realized its goal, another Jewish holocaust would take place...Therefore attempts to draw distinctions between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism are simply meant to fool the naive. (See http://www.lamblion.com/articles/articles_jewishlife8.php)

We are living in perilous times when growing numbers of ministries are promoting Replacement Theology so as to exalt their own ministries as though they are the sole inheritors of God's covenant promises to Abraham. Are many preachers/teachers avoiding the subject of prophecy because they are afraid of their own empires coming to an end?

In downplaying the importance of the Second Coming of Christ, these teachers ultimately diminish His first coming and then begin to neglect teaching on the cross. They talk less and less about crucified living and promote a pop-culture Christianity full of self and empty of sacrifice. Wanting to sound spiritual and religious, yet acceptable to humanist and globalist social engineers, they are promoting world peace and social salvation according to their own human powered "purpose driven" plan.

Catchy slogans and buzz words replace the Savior and the Word of God. Substance is exchanged for shadows, true worship and teaching is exchanged for false, and few notice that God's real glory has departed. Man produced glory remains and most people are not biblically discerning enough even to notice.

But God has another plan empowered and directed by His Holy Spirit and founded upon the unchanging Word of God. The Lord Jesus is going to return! The church of Babel that man is building up now will one day fall, and fall hard! (Revelation 17-18)

So, to sum up: In chapter two of the prophet Zechariah, we can see how the vision of the "***man with a measuring line in his hand***" coming to measure Jerusalem is significant for us today as we witness the regathering of the Jews, the rebuilding of Israel and the apostasy of the church.

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

1 Thessalonians 5:6

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