

Israel



The Golden Gate

The place of Israel in God's plan is undeniable. It constitutes such a large amount of Scripture as to make it impossible to treat any more than a small sampling of texts in this doctrinal kernel.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion 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 fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Romans 11:26-29)

These are the Apostle Paul's words summarizing his sermon about Israel's experiences since the first advent of Jesus. Some Christians have erroneously thought that Israel was rejected at the first advent, never to be accepted again. The Scriptures nowhere teach such a thought. Israel's rejection was temporary. Paul explains that Israel, as a people, have not attained the choicest blessing —being the promised Seed of Abraham which would bless the entire world. (Galatians 3:29) They were, instead, “blinded.” (Romans 11:7-10) During this period of Israel's blindness, God has granted that Gentiles would be given the opportunity to be “the election”—the promised seed. But Paul cautions that Israel has not “stumbled that they should fall (irretrievably),” but that Israel's rejection allowed Gentiles the opportunity to become the “body of Christ.” (Romans 11:11) Clearly, however, Paul prophesies that Israel would again receive its “fullness”—be “grafted (back) into their own olive tree”—lose their blindness once all of the Gentiles have come in to the body of Christ. (Romans 11:12, 24, 25)

God's Kingdom will have two parts, earthly and heavenly. (Matthew 6:10) Spiritual Israel (the Church, Christ's body) will constitute the "New Jerusalem," the heavenly, invisible new government of earth. But fleshly Israel will be the nucleus of the earthly, visible part of Christ's Kingdom. (Isaiah 2:1-4; Zechariah 8:20-23) The "New Covenant" will be made with the people of Israel. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) "Gentiles will come to "the light which shines in Israel which will do away with the "gross darkness" which now covers the earth and its population. (Isaiah 60:1-5) The masses of humankind will "be converted" to Israel and experience incorporation into and blessings under the New Covenant.

In Zechariah 9 is a prophecy of the very date when God would begin the restoration work for the nation of Israel. God had known them only among all the nations of the earth (Amos 3:1-3), but punished them with a loss of exclusivity and favor when they rejected Messiah. (Matthew 23:34-39) In 33 A.D. (Zechariah 9:9) He rejected them in order to "speak peace unto the Gentiles" and until the time came for Christ's world-wide dominion. (Zechariah 9:10) Then, Israel will be released from the "pit wherein is no water"—the Diaspora, disfavor, the desert condition which Israel has experienced since the first advent. (Zechariah 9:11; Luke 16:23, 24) In Zechariah 9:12 God explains that Israel will eventually "turn to the strong hold" (Messiah), but that "today" (33 A.D. when Israel was cast off) he would "declare...double" to Israel. This word, "double," has the meaning of the same amount again.

Israel had enjoyed God's exclusive favor (Amos 3:2) since it became a 12-tribe nation at the death of its patriarch, Jacob, in 1813 B.C. It enjoyed that 1,845 years with God's exclusive guidance. Another 1,845 years (a "double") would be their punishment—a period of DISFAVOR or neglect. 1,845 years after 33 A.D. is 1878 A.D.—the very date when modern Israel had the beginnings of its rebirth with the establishment of its first kibbutz (Petah Tikvah) back in the Holy Land. Modern Jewish historians date Israel's rebirth from that early beginning. Since then, Israel has been the center of world interest and controversy—and will remain so until its convincing delivery and exultation as shown in Ezekiel 38 and 39. This gradual restoration is likened unto the awakening of a long-dead body, step-by-step, in the "dry bones" parable of Ezekiel 37.

Israel is symbolized in the Bible as a fig tree. (Jeremiah 24) Jesus expanded on this in his parable of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-34. He suggested to his disciples that they can know in which generation his kingdom will be established by watching Israel to see when it "putteth forth leaves." Leaves in the Bible symbolize "profession." Jesus seemed to say that when Israel professes to show life (1948—statehood), we would know that the "summer" of the kingdom is near.

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Because so much controversy and distress currently exists between Arabs and Jews regarding the Holy Land, it is important to note God's intentions. The Bible outlines in several places what the promised boundaries are for the land God intends for the Jews. (See, for example, Genesis 15:18-21.) Those boundaries make Israel larger, not smaller, than it currently is. Because God's promises are secure and irrevocable, all efforts to divide the land for "Palestinians" will be futile. **HOWEVER**, and this is an important "however," the "Palestinians" and other Arabs are specifically promised lands of their own. (See Deuteronomy 2:9, 19 for examples.) Arabs will have no part of the land promised to Israel. The Koran, itself, says that that land is for the Jews! And the Koran (quite unlike the Bible) never even makes mention of Jerusalem! But the Arabs, like all of humanity, are, and will be, dear to our God who will give to all rich blessings with all their needs supplied.