

☆ ISRAEL ☆

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*"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall  
make you free" (Jn. 8:32)*

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The titles in this series on Internet are:

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*From darkness to the light*  
*The judgement seat of Christ*  
*The Antichrist*  
*Israel*  
*The rapture*  
*Revival*  
*Hell - what the Bible says about it*  
*Spiritual warfare*

## Calling

A large part of the Bible deals with Israel. In a very special sense they are the people of God. He called them to be a holy people and led them to the Promised Land; He then dispersed them among the nations because of their disobedience; and it is the same immutable covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who restores Israel to the land of their fathers in the end-time (Jer. 31:10).

The calling of Israel started with Abraham, who is the progenitor of Israel. God said to him:

“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (Gen. 13:14-15).

This promise of the land was later confirmed to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:3, 28:13).

The descendants of the founding fathers first stayed as strangers in Egypt for 400 years before they inherited the Promised Land (Gen. 15:13-14). They became the slaves of the Egyptians and earnestly called upon the Lord to save them from their misery.

After the sacrificial lamb was slaughtered and the first Passover celebrated, God led His people with a mighty arm out of Egypt. Through these events Israel learnt the lesson that they could not take possession of God's promises in their own strength. The sacrificial lamb also pointed to the Messiah as the true Lamb of God. By His sacrifice and the shedding of His blood He would redeem people from their spiritual bondage and lead them into the kingdom of God.

Israel had to discover the principle that they were first to become a people of God who observe His laws and statutes before they could live in the land that He promised to them. They were called to be a separated and dedicated people through whom God could reveal Himself to the world. Their calling to Canaan, therefore, also included a spiritual calling.

## Dispersion

The Lord set a spiritual standard to Israel for the privilege to be called a *people of God*. Should they continuously fail to meet this standard, they would invite the displeasure and even the anger of God over them. Extended periods of national disobedience resulted in the surrendering of Israel to their enemies by God. Through experiences such as this they learned the hard way what the consequences were of straying from God. After they humbled themselves before the Lord and confessed their sins, He again restored them to their land (Lev. 26; Deut. 28).

The warnings to Israel explicitly included the possibility of a long international dispersion, should they continue with their disobedience and rebellion against God:

“And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deut. 28:64).

“And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste” (Lev. 26:33).

The Babylonian captivity of Israel, which was confined to one area, was obviously not the international diaspora to all nations. The diaspora only occurred in the first century AD, and was finally announced by Jesus after He was rejected as Messiah by Israel. In His prophetic discourse (Mt. 23) He clearly told the apostate religious leaders that they are filling up the measure of their fathers' sins, and that Jerusalem would be destroyed as a result of it. In Luke 21 He indicated that the dispersion of Israel would continue for a long time and coincide with the times of the Gentiles:

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh... For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled... For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Je-

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:20-24).

The invasion of Israel and the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in AD 70, was the beginning of the long international dispersion of Israel that would continue until deep into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this time there were, at one stage or another, Jewish exiles in all the countries of the world.

## Restoration

Never in Israel's existence as a nation were there ever the slightest doubt in the validity of the unconditional promises that God made to the founding fathers of the nation. God Himself was, and still is, the guarantee of the Abrahamic, Canaanitic and Davidic covenants that ensure the eternal allocation of the land as well as the permanence of David's throne. Israel's exile from the land because of disobedience can't abrogate these covenants. Even if they were unfaithful, God remains a faithful covenant God who will again restore the nation to the land of their fathers. A solemn assurance to this effect was given long before the Babylonian captivity and the international diaspora:

“And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them: for I *am* the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I *am* the LORD” (Lev. 26:44-45).

The gathering of Israel from their international exile is a physical restoration to the land of their fathers, but the final objective with this process is their spiritual revival from the apostate condition into which they have lapsed:

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD... 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 I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgements, and do *them*. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God” (Ezek. 36:22-28).

A spiritual cleansing must occur after Israel has been restored to their land. It will coincide with great distress and tribulation. God says that He will gather them in Jerusalem and purge them in a furnace (Ezek. 22:19-20). Jeremiah also refers to this time when he says:

“Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: It *is* even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7).

This time of trouble is the coming great tribulation when Israel will call on God for mercy and help: “In their affliction they will seek Me early”, says the LORD (Hos. 5:15).

The restoration of Israel occurs progressively: they are first physically and politically restored as a nation, but in the same spiritually blinded state that prevailed during their dispersion. Back in the land, God will allow a great tribulation over them from which a remnant will be saved (Rom. 9:27).

The status of the city of Jerusalem is a very significant indication of the progressive restoration of Israel, *and* of the end of the times of the Gentiles. In Luke 21:24 the Lord said that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The end-time restoration of Jerusalem is therefore an important parameter for the reviving of the Jewish nation, while it also indicates the end of the church dispensation. It is not a sudden and quickly passing sign which leaves one no time to react to it, but a gradual process. The various phases of this process can be distinguished as follows:

In 1948, with the declaration of Israel as an independent Jewish state, they only controlled the new, western part of Jerusalem. The Old City and the Temple Mount were at the time still under Jordanian control.

In 1967, in the Six Day War, Israel gained control over the entire Jerusalem, and also over the Westbank, the Golan Heights and other areas. At that stage, Jerusalem was physically restored and its Jewish population entered a phase of rapid increase.

In 1980, Jerusalem was declared the capital of Israel, and the prime minister, Mr. Begin, moved his office from Tel Aviv to *Yerushalayim*, the city of destiny. During the next two years, his entire cabinet were relocated. At that stage the constitutional restoration of the city was complete. Its physical and political trampling was now over.

After 1980, the spiritual treading down of Jerusalem still continued. Two Muslim mosques are on the Temple Mount, and this area is still under the control of an Islamic committee. According to Old Testament prophecies, the orthodox faith of Israel will strongly revive and the temple will also be rebuilt. This process will coincide with the continued rejection of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel.

The rebuilt temple will be desecrated by the false messiah. When Israel revoke their covenant with him, they will be driven out of the city. It will only be at the coming of the true Messiah on the Mount of Olives, that Jerusalem and the remnant of Israel will be spiritually restored. A number of important events will occur before this time, most of which will be part of the coming tribulation period of seven years.

## **The feasts of Israel**

The seven big feasts which are described in Leviticus 23, include God's plan of salvation for Israel and the nations. They are all Messianic feasts which find their final fulfilment in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:16-17). At the same time, the feasts reflect the chronological order of events in the divine plan of salvation, from the crucifixion to the coming of the kingdom:

## ‡ **The Passover**

The institution of the Passover during the exodus from Egypt coincided with the slaughtering of a lamb. The fulfilment of this feast was the crucifying of the spotless Lamb of God during the celebration of the Passover. Here, at the cross, is the starting point of God's plan of salvation for Israel and the nations (Jn. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

## ‡ **The feast of the unleavened bread**

The evening after the Passover is the beginning of the feast of the unleavened bread (Lev. 23:6). During this feast the people of Israel are only allowed to eat unleavened bread. They must also remove all leaven from their houses. The spiritual significance of the feast is that of self-examination and the cleansing of your life.

This feast was fulfilled during the burial of Jesus. He is the corn of wheat that fell in the ground and died, and to us became the unleavened (sinless) bread of life. We should also examine ourselves after the Passover and abandon all forms of the leaven of sin. This rule should be applied rigidly as a single sin can contaminate your whole life:

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven... for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with... the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

## ‡ **The feast of the firstfruits**

On a Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath (Lev. 23:11), the sheaf of the firstfruits of the new harvest season was brought as a wave-offering before the Lord in the temple. It had the momentous significance of making the people acceptable to God. This feast was fulfilled during the resurrection of Jesus on the Sunday morning after His crucifixion. He became the firstfruits of those that slept (1 Cor. 15:20). Through His death and resurrection He made all people who believe in Him acceptable to God.

### ‡ **The feast of Pentecost**

The 50<sup>th</sup> day after the wave-offering was the last day of the feast of firstfruits, i.e. the feast of Pentecost. It was also celebrated on the day after the Sabbath (Lev. 23:16). In the New Testament this feast was fulfilled on a Sunday morning when the orthodox Jews were busy with their Old Testament celebration (Acts 2). *Pentecost* means *the fiftieth day*. The 50 days that lapsed between the two traditional feasts account for the 40 days between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the 10 days in which the disciples waited on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the upper room.

The four feasts mentioned above, were all fulfilled during the events of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The last three feasts, which are always celebrated at the end of the harvest season in Israel, will be fulfilled at the end of the gathering of God's harvest on earth. Between the two groups of feasts there are four months in which the harvest is to be gathered (Jn. 4:35). We are at present labourers in the fields of God. When the harvest of souls has been gathered, a trumpet will sound...

### ‡ **The feast of trumpets**

This feast, which is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month on Israel's religious calendar, coincides with the New Year's day (*Rosh Hashanah*) on their secular calendar. It is celebrated for two days, and is followed by *the seven awful days* in which the nation has to humble themselves, confess their sins, and restore their broken relationships with God and man.

This feast will be fulfilled when the trumpet of God shall sound to gather the harvest of saved souls in the heavenly barn (1 Thes. 4:16-17). Then the *seven awful years* will expire on earth, when Israel and all people who remain behind will have a last chance to confess their sins and restore their broken relationship with God. No other matter will be more important than to settle their case with God.

## ✠ **The Day of Atonement**

The sacrifice of the Lamb of God during Passover opened the door for reconciliation to God for all people. However, Israel's national day of reconciliation with God through the atonement of Jesus on the cross, will only occur at the end of the great tribulation when He will appear on the Mount of Olives at His second coming (Zech. 3:9, 12:10, 13:1, 14:4-5). The remnant of Israel will then all be saved in one day, which to them will be a fulfilled Day of Atonement.

## ✠ **The feast of tabernacles**

The gathering of the harvest is celebrated in Israel each year in the autumn. It is also a religious feast in which they reflect on the exodus from Egypt when they lived in tabernacles in the wilderness (Lev. 23:43). They take this opportunity annually to give renewed thanks to God for leading them to the Promised Land.

During the final harvest feast in heaven there will also be great rejoicing because the Lord has redeemed us from the 'bondage of Egypt' and brought us into His kingdom. We will reflect on the difficult days when we were pilgrims and strangers on earth, and give renewed glory and praise to the Lord for His great work of salvation done for us.

To the orthodox Jews who don't want to accept Jesus as Messiah, the feasts are restricted to their Old Testament significance and their secular value. They are mere shadows without their rich Messianic substance.

## **Rejection of the Triune God**

To have the right biblical perspective on the great tragedy of Israel's long diaspora, it must be understood against the background of the continuing apostasy and profound spiritual deadness of this nation. With only small exceptions of God-fearing men and women, Israel has during many years turned its back upon God. They were hiding behind a high wall of sin, agnosticism, and a lifeless form of orthodox worship in which there is still no room for the Messiah, Yeshua.

It is evident that Israel rejected the Triune God in three stages. First, they rejected the Father, then the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit. In the parable of the tenants (Mt. 21: 33-43) Jesus indicated to the Jewish leaders that they were the tenants who, up to that point, rejected the Husbandman (God) in two stages: first they rejected his servants, and then they also rejected and killed His Son.

## **A Rejection of the Father**

Israel is the people that was called and set apart by God. According to the parable they were to Him like a vineyard. He planted it, hedged it around and also built a tower. Israel were well cultivated and guarded, and had all opportunity to bear much fruit. In the persons of Moses and the prophets, God sent His servants to them to act as spiritual leaders so that His objectives with them could be achieved.

Under the provocation of evil kings and false prophets the nation rejected, ill-treated and killed the servants. In the time of Jesus this spirit of rebellion against God has for centuries been strongly established. Jesus warned them that God would soon hold the wicked tenants accountable for having killed His servants:

“Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify, and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Mt. 23:34-36).

The last prophet that God sent to gather a spiritual harvest among His people was John the Baptist. However, the leaders of the nation also rejected him and said nothing when Herod killed him. Jesus strongly denounced them for not having accepted and believed this great prophet (Mt.

21:25). But they also turned their backs on John and approved the wicked murder on him.

## **A Rejection of the Son**

Jesus is the Son who was, in the fullness of time, sent to Israel as Messiah to lead them as a flock into the kingdom of God. The leaders were even more hostile towards Him:

“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize his inheritance” (Mt. 21:38).

That is exactly what happened to Jesus:

“Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, at the palace of the high priest who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by [guile] and kill *Him*” (Mt. 26:3-4).

Through this treacherous act the leaders of Israel also rejected the second person in the Godhead, the Son. In this way they explicitly sided with their rebellious fathers who rejected the Father by killing His prophets:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, **and ye would not!** Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mt. 23:37-39).

The salute of acceptance (“Blessed *is* He that cometh in the name of the LORD” - Ps. 118:26), will only be uttered by the leaders of Israel on the day when Jesus sets His feet on the Mount of Olives after the dark days of the great tribulation. Despite His historical and present rejection, the true Messiah *will* be wholeheartedly accepted by a remnant of the Jewish nation after they have suffered the many afflictions known as the time of the trouble of Jacob! (Jer. 30:7). But for the present, their rebellion continues.

Because of rejecting and killing His Son, God severely punished the leaders of Israel and their misguided followers. Jesus knew that they have sealed their own fate, but He nevertheless took great pity on Jerusalem and its spiritually blinded inhabitants:

“And when He came near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Lk. 19:41-44).

## **A Rejection of the Holy Spirit**

In His patience and mercy, the Father was prepared to forgive the times of ignorance, and give Israel another opportunity after the crucifixion of His Son to accept Jesus as the Messiah and thus enter into His kingdom. This opportunity was offered to them during the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian church in Jerusalem. The final act of rejecting the renewed offer was the stoning of Stephen, who was the first martyr of the Church of the Messiah among the Jewish people.

In a long speech, Stephen reminded the leaders of the sins and rebellion of their forefathers (Acts 6:8-7:60). He classified those who killed the prophets with the leaders of his time who killed the Messiah, and also accused them of resisting and rejecting the Holy Spirit:

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost:** as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they have slain those who [foretold] the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51-52).

Stephen put the nation in the dock, accused them of repeated rebellion against God, found them guilty, and extradited them to rejection and punishment. In principle he put the seal on the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation that occurred in 70 AD. The impending tragedy had, by Israel's own doing, become unavoidable.

The prophetic significance of the three critical murders committed by Israel are discussed by Warren B. Wiersbe in *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, 1989, p. 433). He also confirms that the death of Stephen meant judgement to Israel. It was their third murder directly related to rejecting the Triune God. They **allowed** the murder of John the Baptist who was sent by the Father; they **asked** that Jesus as the Son of God be crucified; while they **killed** Stephen **themselves**, thereby rejecting the Holy Spirit who spoke to them through the apostles and the early Messianic church.

As a result of these events, the commission to be the representatives and witnesses of God in the world, was taken away from Israel and given to the rejected disciples. From their ministries emerged the church of Christ among all nations.

Despite all these grave errors and misjudgements, the spiritual restoration of Israel *as a nation* will definitely occur. In a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit they will realise and confess their sins of rejecting God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit:

“I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced” (Zech. 12:10).

“...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” (Zech. 13:9).

Under the strong conviction of the Holy Spirit Israel will, as a nation, be reconciled to God through the Messiah!

## The temple

Although Israel is alienated from God because they rejected the Messiah, many of them have a great zeal for Him but without knowledge. In their stereotyped, blinded way the orthodox Jews continue to observe certain laws in the belief that they will thereby ensure the benevolence of God towards them. That there is no temple where they can bring sacrifices to God is a source of tremendous grief to them.

An ideal that lives in the hearts of many Israelis is the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. After their restoration and the regaining of control over the Old City this ideal has come much closer to realisation. However, one of the major problems is the high profile of Islam on the Temple Mount where two of their mosques have been built – the Al Aqsa and the famous Dome of the Rock. The Muslims allege that Mohammed ascended to heaven from the rock over which the Dome of the Rock has been built. To them, it is the third holiest place on earth after Mecca and Medina.

Islam recently renovated the Dome of Rock at a very high cost and also replaced the golden sheeting of the roof. That is an indication that they don't intend leaving this area. The popular idea was always entertained that the Dome of the Rock is standing on the exact spot where the temple of Israel is to be built. Archaeological excavations on the site indicate that this is not the case. The Jewish temple can be rebuilt just north of the Dome of the Rock, with three or four metres separating the two buildings.

In view of the Antichrist's deceptive philosophy that he is the common messiah of all faiths, it is not a far-fetched idea that during his reign the temple and the mosque will co-exist on the Temple Mount. Islam and Judaism will then be sister religions for 3½ years, and also associate with the other world religions on the false premise that they all worship the same God. The great crisis will occur when the false Messiah declares himself as God in the rebuilt temple (2 Thes. 2: 4). Israel will then break their covenant with him.

There are a number of Israeli groups who endeavour to promote the rebuilding of the temple. One of the best known ones is Temple Mount Faithful that was established after the Six Day War in 1967. Their objective is to liberate the Temple Mount from what they call *Arab occupation*. After the capturing of the Old City in 1967 the former minister of defence, Moshe Dayan, transferred the civil administration of the 35 acres of the Temple Mount to a Muslim council called the *Waqf*. The leader of the Temple Mount Faithful, Gehrson Solomon, regarded this move as a great shock. During the past 30 years Solomon's group made various attempts to gain control over the Temple Mount. Although it is still a Muslim stronghold, he believes that the Jewish temple will soon be rebuilt here.

In 1990, his group drew the attention of the international media on them when they asked permission to lay a cornerstone of 4½ ton where the temple is to be rebuilt. Although permission was not granted to them and the Muslim authorities on the Temple Mount were informed about the denial, rioting nevertheless erupted. The Muslims threw stones at the Jewish pilgrims who came to pray at the Western Wall. Israeli soldiers fired at the rioters and in the ensuing fighting 17 of them were killed.

Not all the religious groups in Israel are prepared to use violent means to obtain rights on the Temple Mount. Rabbi Yehuda Getz, the chief rabbi of the Western Wall, says that the decision does not lie with human beings to grant Israel their rights over this sacred piece of land where the temple is to be built – it is a matter for God.

Getz says that there are also other problems that have to be overcome before the temple can be rebuilt. One of them is the exact location of the temple. He says that a prophet of God must first appear on the scene and indicate the place of the altar. Nobody can start with the building before this prophet has come. In the meantime there is a strong sense of expectation. "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided" (Gen. 22:14), is generally believed.

Despite all these stumbling-blocks, the Temple Institute in Jerusalem proceeds with its preparations for the re-institution of the temple service. They oversee the manufacture of golden and silver objects as well as ceremonial pitchers and other containers that will be used in the rebuilt temple. Various items are on exhibition at the Institute, such as the linen garments of the priests, the coif of the high priest, harps, trumpets, fire pans, etc.

Chaim Richman, the Institute's director of public relations, says that his organisation do their work in obedience to the Lord. The Institute does not see itself as a political pressure group, they don't negotiate with the Muslims and won't try to drive them from the Temple Mount. Their task is purely religious within the context of the religious laws of the Jews. In this way they make their contribution to the rebuilding of the temple.

There are also two schools for the training of Levitical priests in Jerusalem. Should the temple be rebuilt on short notice, well trained priests must be available. It is accepted that Jews with the surnames of Cohen and Kaplan are descended from the tribe of Levi, and may therefore be trained as priests. To become an expert in Jewish law, knowledge must be gained about 625 laws in the Torah, as well as a considerable number of rabbinical rules in the Talmud. According to orthodox Jews these laws and traditions will all be re-instated and observed in the Messianic era when the temple has been rebuilt.

## Messianic Jews

Although still a very small percentage, there are increasing numbers of Jews who accept Jesus as Messiah. They are called Messianic Jews. The term *Messiah* is derived from *Mashiach* which is the Hebrew term for *The Anointed One*, while *Christ* is the Grecised version of this term. *Jesus* is referred to as *Yeshua* (*Y'shua* or *Yashua*) in Hebrew, and the name *Jesus Christ* is rendered *Yeshua Ha Mashiach*.

For obvious reasons, the Messianic Jews are regarded

with hatred and suspicion by the orthodox Jews. As in the first century, they are viewed as heretics who defected from the God of their fathers. As the number of Messianic Jews increase, the spiritual polarisation among the two groups is deepening. The climate is already set for a time of intensifying persecution of Messianic Jews.

The orthodox Jews now have 25% representation in the Knesset (Israel's parliament). Members of this group also control the departments of Religious Affairs and Interior Affairs. They therefore have the necessary power bases to achieve their objective of prohibiting missionary work and persecuting Messianic believers. Although not widespread yet, the campaign against Messianic groups in Israel has already begun and is gradually intensifying. The Messiah has warned against these developments and also indicated that it will take effect before the start of the great tribulation:

“And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. **But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons...** And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and *some* of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated by all *men* for My name's sake” (Lk. 21:11-17).

“Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me” (Jn. 16:2-3).

A repetition will occur of the first century persecution of Messianic believers. The same fear that prevailed during that time in respect of the orthodox religious leaders is beginning to be evident again:

“His parents spoke these things because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed that He was Christ [*i.e. that Jesus is the Messiah*] he should be

put out of the synagogue” (Jn. 9:22).

It is our duty to pray earnestly for the young Messianic congregations in Israel, that they should be strong in the Lord during these difficult times. The resistance and hostility that they experience will increase in the near future, and they must be well prepared not to compromise their position of faith in *Yeshua Ha Mashiach*.

Evangelical Christianity, world-wide, is facing the same animosity because of its uncompromising nature. It is increasingly pressurised to conform to the interfaith practice of joining hands with other religions. This body of false religions will, in time to come, all accept the Antichrist as their common Messiah. Among them will also be the orthodox Jews who will worship the coming universal Messiah and obtain from him the right to rebuild their temple. Against this wrong judgement the Lord Jesus has seriously warned their forefathers almost 2000 years ago:

“I have come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (Jn. 5:43).

A very tense polarisation between the followers of the true Messiah and the false messiah will occur in future. In a certain sense it has already begun.

## **Anti-Semitism**

Despite the religious formalism and deadness of the Jewish people, there is no justification at all to wage a campaign of hatred against them. This would be one of the most harmful and self-destructing things on earth to do! To act against the declared will and commandments of God is to pierce yourself with many sorrows. Consider what happened to Israel because of rejecting God as a nation. The same God warns the enemies of Israel, but bless their friends, when He says to Abraham: “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee” (Gen. 12:3).

Nations, groups and individuals who oppress Israel are

subjecting themselves to God's wrath. They are digging a pit in which they will fall themselves. Big world empires such as the once mighty Babylonians, Assyrians, and the Roman empire, have proved the devastating consequences of trying to annihilate Israel.

Among the most fanatical haters of Jews are the Islamic Arab nations in the Middle East. The Bible refers to the ancient enemies of Judah in Psalm 83 and emphasises the fact that they are waging a religious war against Israel as well as the God of Israel. One of their main aims is Jerusalem and the sacred site of the Temple Mount which has been allocated to the building of the House of the Lord: "[They] said, Let us take for ourselves the houses of God in possession" (Ps. 83:12).

The modern Arab nations, including the Palestinians, are descended from the ancient enemies of Judah. Many of them have, on various occasions, openly declared their intention to destroy Israel and to appropriate the house of God (the Temple Mount) as an exclusive Islamic sanctuary. Since 1948 they have often in vain tried to destroy Israel, and now they pursue a strategy of negotiations to induce Israel to share the land and the city of Jerusalem with them. Depending on the progress they make, military means will again be resorted to in the conflict.

In Ezekiel 38 and 39 the Bible also refers to a great Russian invasion of Israel. In its war against Israel, Magog (modern Russia) will be joined by many nations. The following of Russia's allies are explicitly mentioned: Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (Germany) and Togarmah (Turkey). Referring to the prince of Magog, God says: "And thou shalt come up against My people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days" (Ezek. 38:16). God will intervene and destroy the enemy forces (Ezek 39:1-13).

The pressure on Israel will be maintained until the great battle of Armageddon at the end of the great tribulation. Then God will finally deal with the enemies of Israel who incessantly endeavoured to take the land and deprive them

of their right of existence. It is obvious that by that time, all the nations will have turned against Israel and sided with their enemies. The future multi-national military force that will be deployed against Israel, will be destroyed by God.

“For behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and [enter into judgement against] them there for My people and *for* My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and they [divided] My land” (Joel 3:1-2).

The sword of God's wrath is hanging over the enemies of Israel, and through their hostility they are expediting their own destruction. The nations of the world who take sides with the evil-doers and encourage them in their wicked plans to divide or take over the land of Israel, are also digging their own graves. In vivid terms Zechariah 14 describes the judgements of God which will befall the nations that are foolish enough to fight against Jerusalem. Hatred of the Jews will be one of the major ideologies of the Antichrist. Stay clear of it!

## **Bless them**

To ensure the blessings of the Lord on ourselves we must bless Israel. Don't be in a hurry to condemn them because they rejected and crucified Jesus. It was indeed a manifestation of unbelief, but it was part of God's plan of salvation for Israel *and* the nations. If the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus did not occur, you and I would not have been able to become Christians.

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall *is* the riches of the world, and their diminishing the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?” (Rom. 11:11-12).

Because Israel has rejected and crucified their Messiah,

redemption has been offered to the non-Jewish peoples of the world. In their fallen state Israel is, therefore, a blessing to the entire world as their spiritual inheritance is offered to all people! In Romans 11:12 the Lord says that in their spiritually restored state in future, Israel will even be a greater blessing to the world.

Viewed from any angle, all of us only owe recognition, blessing, intercession, and support to Israel. We must make them jealous by the way in which we worship and serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through the Messiah, Yeshua. We must also pray for the peace of Jerusalem if we wish to live in peace in our own country (Ps. 122:6).

The reason why all believers should in a very serious and dedicated way intercede for Jerusalem, is because it is the City of the Great King. This is the city where our Lord revealed Himself as King, died on the cross to propitiate for our sins, rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended to heaven. Ten days after He went to heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out over 120 faithful and praying disciples, resulting in the birth of the Christian church in Jerusalem. From here, the message of salvation was proclaimed to the uttermost parts of the world.

It is to the city of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, that the Messiah will return at the end of the tribulation period to save the remnant of Israel, to judge His enemies, and to establish His kingdom on earth. In answer to the many prayers of the saints, and in accordance with His divine will, the Lord will transform Jerusalem to the world capital, the wonderful City of the Great King, and rule the millennial world from the restored throne of David:

“I have set watchman upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *who* shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Is. 62:6-7).

## Wrong concepts of Israel

For thousands of years Satan has been waging a wicked campaign of deception, hatred and attempted destruction against Israel in all spheres of their existence. One of the many methods used by him in this struggle is to deprive Israel of their identity by assigning it to other groups.

Many churches are the victims of the confusion sown by the devil in this regard. They think that they have all of a sudden become the Israel of the New Testament, and that the twelve apostles are their founding fathers. This form of deception arises from the practice of replacement theology (or *substitution theology*). Certain theologians replace Israel with the church, and consequently deny the real people of Israel their biblical identity and position.

The argument is often raised that the church is the *spiritual Israel* or the *true Israel*. One of the verses cited in support of this position is Romans 9:6 where Paul says: "For they *are* not all Israel, who are of Israel." The fact here referred to is that not all the members of the people of Israel are indeed members of the people of God because, spiritually speaking, their hearts are not circumcised. The distinction made here is between saved and unsaved Jews. It has nothing to do with the church as such.

There are also other groups who wrongly apply Israel's identity and biblical position to themselves. Among them is the British-Israel movement and a host of related groups that are all based on the same idea. They regard the European nations as the descendants of the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel who were taken captive by Assyria in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin are not accepted as part of 'Israel' as they have, according to this distorted theory, mixed with the Edomites and lost their citizenship of Israel. British-Israel groups despise the Jews and do not support their present restoration to the land. Jerusalem is only of historical importance to them as they naively see the British monarchy as the throne of David!

## The 70<sup>th</sup> year-week of Daniel

The prophet Daniel describes the last 70 year-weeks (490 prophetic years of 360 days each) that will pass in the history of Israel before they will enter the time of everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24-27). Of this period, 69 year-weeks (483 years) have passed between the decree by Xerxes in the year 445 BC that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt (Neh. 2:1-8), and the death of Jesus on the cross in AD 33. Then the clock stopped ticking for Israel as a nation in the divine plan of God, and the time for the evangelisation of the non-Jewish world began. That meant that Israel would temporarily lose its position as a special servant and mouthpiece of God, and that all the people on earth, including the dispersed Israelites, would be given the chance to accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and enter the kingdom of God.

With the present restoration of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, we are now nearing the end of the times of the Gentiles: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). We are living in the period of the progressive restoration of Jerusalem, consequently the last year-week of Israel's divine history can start at any time. At the end of that period the remnant of Israel will accept Jesus in one day (Zech. 3:9).

During the 70<sup>th</sup> year-week Israel will enter into a covenant with the false messiah (the Antichrist). In Daniel 9:27 we read: "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week." The false messiah will appear on the scene as a diplomat and prince of peace. It is very likely that he will reveal himself at the height of a Russo-Arab invasion of Israel. Ezekiel 38 and 39 explains that God will defeat the invaders on the mountains of Israel, but it is possible that the false messiah will use the opportunity to claim that *he* was the one who saved Israel.

The false messiah will be endowed with all of Satan's powers, as he will even be able to make fire come down from heaven. He will use his supernatural powers to perform

astounding signs and wonders to deceive Israel and the nations into concluding a covenant with him. His success as peace-maker in the Middle East will form the basis from where he will rise to power in the Mediterranean alliance of the revived Roman Empire.

All countries will eventually become signatories of the peace treaties of the false messiah, and he will use the Mediterranean alliance to become the undisputed leader of the world. His success and diplomatic skills will deceive everyone. At that stage, very few people will dare to state that he is involved in the greatest deception of all times, and that he will in a few years time become the worst dictator in the entire history of the world!

Most of the Jews will be influenced by these highly dramatic events and will be quick to accept this man as their messiah. He will probably use a false genealogy, which will lead them to believe that he is indeed a descendant of King David and a member of the tribe of Judah. The world-wide peace and unity introduced by him, together with the fact that he will encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple, will render him a national hero in Israel. Soon he will also become the hero of all the nations of the world.

During the mind-boggling revelation of the Evil One as an internationally accepted angel of light at the beginning of the seven year period, there will be a revival in Israel in which 144 000 Jews will accept Jesus, the true Messiah. They will openly declare that the man officially recognised as the Messiah by the Israeli government is a false messiah. This revelation will cause severe tension and immediately lead to the persecution of all those who refuse to worship the *universal messiah*.

Halfway through the seven year period, the whole world will be shocked out of its false sense of peace that it enjoyed for three and a half years: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thes. 5:3).

Israel will be greatly disillusioned when they realise that they have been worshipping a false messiah, and immediately terminate their covenant with him. The false messiah will then forbid them to sacrifice in the name of God, and erect a statue of himself in the Holy of holies in the newly built temple in Jerusalem:

“...and in the midst of the week he shall cause *the* sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing of abominations *shall come* one who makes desolate; until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator” (Dan. 9:27 Amplified Bible).

As in World War II, genocide will be perpetrated against the Jews during the second half of the tribulation – in that 3½ year period known as *the great tribulation* or *the time of Jacob's trouble*. The true Messiah described this time of terror in His prophetic discourse:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever readeth, let him understand): then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains: let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe to those who 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. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened” (Mt. 24: 15-22).

Daniel also refers to the dark days of the coming tribulation period in his prophecies about the end-time. Some of the Jews will support the false messiah because they will hope to gain peace, security, and economic benefits from an agreement with him; but others will oppose him and be violently persecuted:

“And [forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile] the sanctuary [fortress], and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, *many* days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall [join] them with [hypocrisy]. And *some* of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, *even* to the time of the end: because *it is* yet for the appointed time” (Dan. 11:31-35).

After the accord with Israel has been broken and the false messiah declared himself as God, another 42 months (1 260 days) will pass before the true Messiah will make His appearance on the Mount of Olives. When the appointed time draws near, the surviving Jews will return from their place of refuge to Jerusalem. They will be determined to be at the Mount of Olives on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). It will be an extremely dangerous time for them, as the false messiah will still endeavour to kill all the Jews he can find. At that stage there will be a powerful multi-national force in Israel. They will be under the command of the false messiah, and based between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea (Dan. 11:45).

The Jews who return to Jerusalem to await the Messiah will need to be strongly convinced about His coming, as their journey and approach to the city will be fraught with dangers. The enemy will be all around them, and a heavily armed strike force will be closing in upon them with every passing minute. Many houses will be plundered in Jerusalem as the invaders start demolishing the city. People will flee to the Mount of Olives in panic. Some will even lose hope completely and say: “Our hope is lost: we are cut off” (Ezek. 37: 11).

## The battle of Armageddon

Just as the false messiah is about to annihilate the remnant of Israel, the dramatic event of the second coming of the Lord, as described in Zechariah 14, will occur:

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go into captivity, and the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 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. And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal: Yes, ye shall flee as ye fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with Thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth... And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold everyone on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour” (Zech. 14:2-7, 9, 12-13).

The moment when the true Messiah arrives on planet earth, the Mount of Olives will be cleaved and the darkness

of God's judgement will become physically manifest, just as it happened almost 2 000 years ago when God's judgement for the sins of the world were carried by Jesus on a cross outside Jerusalem. Now, during His second coming, grief and sorrow will overcome those who rejected the substitutionary death of Jesus and worshipped false gods and a false messiah who can't offer any sacrifice and remission for their sins.

At this critical moment when the wrath of God is poured out over a sinful world, mercy and grace will still be offered by Jesus to the remaining Jews who put their trust in Him and hope for His salvation. When the dark clouds of judgement engulf Jerusalem and its surroundings, the remaining Jews will flee into the place of refuge caused by the sudden cleaving of the mountain. There, literally at the feet of Jesus, they will be safe. Great confusion will prevail among their enemies and they will start killing one another.

Towards the evening it will become light again, for by then a decisive victory will have been gained. Jesus will reach out to His people in a gesture of blessing. They will become terrified when they see the marks in His hands, and their first words to Him will be:

"What *are* these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of My friends" (Zech. 13:6).

How do the Jews account for the fact that the Messiah will have wounds in His hands when He arrives on the Mount of Olives? Where were the wounds inflicted on Him? It could not have been in heaven! They will indeed look on Him whom they have pierced during His first coming.

It will be a dramatic reunion, mingled with joy and sorrow. The remnant of Israel will grieve for what they have done and the nation will accept Jesus as the Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14). Then all will be lost for the false messiah and his hordes on this last day of the tribulation when they face the One who has all power in heaven and on earth:

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who worked miracles before him, with which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast, and those who worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him who sat on the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of His mouth: and all the [birds] were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:19-21).

## Aftermath of His coming

When the Messiah has made His dramatic appearance on the Mount of Olives and revealed Himself as the One crucified by Israel during His first coming (Zech. 12:10), a time of great mourning will follow:

“In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family apart... All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 12:11-13:1).

The above period of mourning will probably last for 30 days, as was customary in Israel:

“And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days” (Num. 20:29).

“And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses were ended” (Deut. 34:8).

Zechariah likens the death of the Messiah to that of an *only son* and a *firstborn*. Mourning for an only son or a firstborn was particularly bitter and violent. With the death of an only son the light of a family was extinguished. With the

death of a firstborn the honour of a family, 'the first instalment of God's blessing', and therefore the most loved, was removed.

The mourning for the Messiah is also likened to the mourning for King Josiah. Professors Walvoord & Zuck (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1567) say:

"The future mourning of Israel over her Messiah is likened, in the second place, to the weeping on the day when godly King Josiah, the last hope of the fading Judean nation, was slain by Pharaoh Neco II, at Hadat Rimmon, traditionally identified as a village near Jezreel, in the plain of Megiddo (2 Chron. 35:20-27). Thus the greatness of the mourning at this final outpouring of the Holy Spirit can be compared only to the weeping of a most extreme individual (Zech. 12:10) and to corporate catastrophes of the nation."

Rev. Isaac Jennings (*The Imperial Bible Dictionary*, Vol. IV, p. 302) says:

"The great mourning of the last days described by Zechariah, when *the whole land* shall mourn, and every family *apart* unite in the act, refers to the repentance of the Jewish people, and their deep contrition in view of their past unbelief, when, convinced of the sin of rejecting the Messiah, they shall *look on Him whom they have pierced*, and *shall mourn*, and find cleansing in the *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*; and *so all Israel shall be saved* (Rom. 11:26). *Blessed are those who mourn* thus (Mt. 5:4), *for they shall be comforted*, through the pardoning mercy of our God freely remitting all their sins, and imparting peace to their souls."

In his statement Daniel provides, among others, for the 30 days of mourning after the great tribulation and the coming of the Messiah:

"...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered... And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desola-

tion is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days” (Dan. 12:1, 11-12).

The following is clear from these verses:

**A** From the time when the false messiah abandons the sacrificial service and profanes the sanctuary by placing an image of himself in the Holy of holies, 1 260 days will expire until the coming of the Messiah on the Mount of Olives (Dan. 9:27; Rev 13:5). After a further thirty days of mourning, the spiritual reconciliation between the Messiah and the remnant of Israel will be completed. By then, 1 290 days will have expired since the false messiah’s self-deification in the temple.

**A** Another 45 days will be taken up by the marriage feast of the Lamb, the restoration of the throne of David and the judgement of the nations (Rev. 19:7-9, Acts 15:16-17, Mt. 25:31-32). By then, 1 335 very dramatic days will have expired since that very evil day when the false messiah declared himself as God in the temple and instituted his satanic reign of terror. After 1 335 days, the Son of the living God will have crushed the evil powers and established His kingdom of peace. Jews who survive this terrible onslaught will, after 1 260 days of great tribulation, see the Messiah return. After 1 290 days they will be spiritually restored, and after 1 335 days they will enter the promised kingdom of the Messiah.

End-time events for Israel have been very clearly scheduled between the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel and the establishing of the Messiah’s reign on earth. Of particular significance to the Jews is the strong challenge to be able to distinguish between the seducing powers of the kingdom of darkness, and the voice of the Holy Spirit who calls them to repentance on the strength of the Lamb of God – the One who has the wounds in His hands.