

## **The Jews As They Relate To The Second Coming Of The Lord**

### ***Background***

First of all we need an understanding of what has happened to the Children of Israel in the past before we can have an understanding of what may or may not happen to them in our time and the future. The first Hebrew was Abraham or Abram as he was called at that time. Abram means “a high father;” Abraham means “father of a multitude.” He lived about 2000 years before Christ, and was located in a city called Ur in the land that at that time was called Chaldea. It was located at the head of the Persian Gulf where all the turmoil between Iraq and Iran has been taking place. God called on Abraham to leave the land where his home was and come into a “land which I will shew thee.” It must have taken a great deal of trust in God to leave a secure comfortable home for an unknown destination. Abraham journeyed up the Euphrates River valley and stopped for some time in the area of Haran where his father Terah died. After mourning his death Abraham and all his family and servants arrived in the land that God was to show him. There is some rather solid evidence that Abraham was a caravan operator in these parts. At any rate he did not seem to be particularly interested in settling down as a farmer or even as a herdsman. It seems that the consuming desire of his life was to have a son. For a time he left Canaan and lived in Egypt but returned to Canaan. When he was 86 years old Ishmael was born to Abraham and his handmaid whose name was Hagar. All this was with the approval—and at least in some measure—the instigation of his wife Sarah who could not have children. But when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 the promised son Isaac was born.

Isaac married Rebecca and to them twin boys were born, Jacob and Esau. Because he cheated his brother of his father’s blessing Jacob had to flee for his life to escape the wrath of Esau. He went back to Haran where he married Rachel and Leah. After some years he felt compelled because of his circumstances to return to Canaan. On the way Jacob wrestled with an angel all night and was given a new name, Israel, Thus the children of Jacob and their descendents are called the Children of Israel. When a severe famine came they all (70) left Canaan and went to live in Egypt where Joseph had risen to a place of prominence in the Egyptian government and was in a position to grant great favors to his brethren. They stayed in this land for 430 years. During that time they multiplied until at the time of the Exodus, in 1446 BC, they numbered 600,000 men of military age. Their stay in Egypt was apparently a very happy one until 1580 BC, when there came a change in Egyptian rulers. The Hyksos kings who had favored the Israelites were driven out and the old Egyptian rulers who had learned to fight with horses and chariots came back into power and enslaved the Israelites who posed a threat to the national security of Egypt. Any enemy who might invade through Canaan might be joined by the Israelites and greatly strengthen the hand of the enemy. So they were converted into a huge slave labor camp. Moses was sent by God to lead them out. On their way they were given the law recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers and after wandering in the desert for 40 years they came into the “Promised Land.”

They neglected to drive out all the Canaanites as God had instructed them and they were constantly harassed by these local tribes. The Philistines were particularly vexing to them. After living under a government of judges for over 300 years, they asked for a king. Saul was

appointed their first king. He reigned 40 years and was followed by David, who completed the conquest of that land. After David came Solomon, who also reigned 40 years. Then in 930 BC the 10 northern tribes revolted because of high taxes and formed their own government under Jeroboam and made Samaria their capital city. The two remaining southern tribes called themselves the kingdom of Judah and their capital remained at Jerusalem. Rehoboam ruled over them. Most of the Kings of the northern tribes, Israel, were evil and led the people into immoral idol worship of Baal. As punishment, God sent Assyria down from the north to conquer this land and Shalmanezar carried these ten tribes off where they were dispersed among the lands of Assyria. Intermarriage thinned their bloodlines to the point where they *ceased to exist as a distinguishable people and nation any longer*. (Emphasis added.) Today, they are referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

The two southern tribes had their bad rulers but there were more godly men among them than in Israel. Consequently they lasted another 100 years before retribution from God came upon them. In 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and drove them off as captives into Babylon where they languished for 70 years. At the end of that 70-year period the land of Babylon fell to the invading Persians, who, under Cyrus, liberated the Jews, as they were called, and allowed and even encouraged them to return to their homeland to rebuild it. They did this under the guidance of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. Alexander the Great swept over this land but was rather kind to the Jews, who were scattered over much of the western part of his empire by this time. Upon the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, the Jews were ruled over by Egypt. The family name of these rulers was the Ptolomey's. This lasted until the Syrians swept down from just above Canaan and took over the Jews. When the Jews could no longer tolerate the desecration of their temple and their religious heritage they revolted under a family called the "Maccabees." This revolt was remarkably successful and for a time the Jews governed themselves. Inner strife and intrigue opened the door to the Romans, who under Pompey, took over the country in 63 BC. Such was the political state of affairs when Jesus was born.

The Old Testament history closed in 430 BC, and from that time on, and especially just prior to the coming of Christ, the Jews' attention was focused on a political leader who would restore their national liberty. When Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and did not propose to establish an earthly kingdom, the Jews rejected Him as an imposter and killed Him. Even the apostles asked just before Jesus ascended, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

Then in 70 AD, the doom that Jesus had predicted when the temple was to be destroyed came to pass and Jerusalem was completely destroyed. Over a million Jews were killed or died in the siege. In the years that followed when the Jews continued to resist they were desolated by the Roman armies. Hundreds of cities and villages were destroyed and the population was scattered. In the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, Arabs took over the land. The Crusaders came in to free the land, but in 1187, the French were defeated by Saladin. In 1517, the Turks took control of the land, and for 300 years it remained under their control. It was not until 1917, at the close of World War I, that Lord Allenby defeated the Turks and the United Nations made Palestine a mandate of England.

## **Re-Establishment of Israel In 1948**

A plan to reestablish the Jews as a nation became known as the “Zionist Movement.” This began about 100 years ago. At that time there was no Jewish colony in the entire land. In 1897, Theodo Herzl revealed the ‘Zionist Movement,’ whose aim was “To reclaim Palestine as the home of the Jews and to make it secure by public law.” When World War I broke out, the Jews in Palestine had grown from 25,000 (who entered the land in 1881) to 60,000 in 1914. The “Balfour Declaration” of the British Parliament in November 1917 gave the Zionists great hope. This declaration said, “His majesty’s government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” But for fear of incurring the wrath of the Arabs this was not carried out at that time. During World War II, the British issued a declaration setting forth the conditions for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. By this time there were about one half million Jews living in Palestine. There was still considerable resistance by the Arabs but Hitler’s treatment of the Jews in Germany swung public sympathy in favor of the Jews and the Arabs were forced to agree to allow the establishment of a Jewish state. However, they at once formed the League of Arab States in 1945 to control the expansion of the Jewish state into their territories. The British government turned the problem over to the UN. On May 14, 1948, Israel proclaimed itself a state, whereupon war broke out between Israel and the Arabs. The Jews defended themselves remarkably well. On January 7, 1949, the UN arranged a cease fire, and an armistice was signed, which permitted Israel to keep the land she had conquered. Since that time there have been numerous skirmishes. Since the Six-Day war on June 5-10 in 1967, the Arabs have been cautious of provoking Israel into open warfare. The “Camp David accord” and other measures have been employed as a continuing attempt to soothe these still troubled waters.

Normally this would have nothing to do with a study of the book of Revelation. But pre-millennialists still cling to the same Messianic misconception that the Jews of Jesus’ day had. Instead of accepting the fact that the promises to Abraham as to the land he was to possess was fulfilled, they maintain that Israel will in some manner conquer the Middle-East and control the land presently occupied by the Arabs. It is no wonder that the Arab nations are wary of what goes on in the politics of the western world, especially when Jewish money has such great lobbying power. Moreover, this is the key to the Second Coming of Christ. The “generation that sees the fig tree bud will not pass until all these things have come to pass.” (Matt. 24) A generation is 40 years. Thus, on May 14, 1988, the rapture was supposed to have taken place. You read of some who were awaiting this event. In his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsay affirms this date. Unfortunately, the rapture turned into a rupture, and many could not ascend at the appointed time. How slow men are to accept that “no man knoweth the day nor the hour when the Lord returns, not even the Son.”

## **Abraham’s Promise Fulfilled**

There are some scriptures that need to be understood lest we be beguiled into the camp of the Anglo Israelites or the Armstrong followers or even the pre-millennial camp. First of all, Genesis 15:18 is the first promise that was made to Abraham:

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the ruler Euphrates."

The fulfillment of this began when Moses said to the people,

"Turn and set your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and in the Negev and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them." (Deut 1:7-8)

When Moses died, Joshua received the same promise. (Joshua 1:3-4) Now the important verse in this matter is found in Joshua 21:43-45:

So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it...Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass. (Emphasis added)

A similar statement is made by Nehemiah:

You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanite, of the Hittite and the Amorite, of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite—to give it to his descendants. And You have fulfilled Your promise, for You are righteous...So their sons entered and possessed the land. (Emphasis added) And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and You gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, to do with them as they desired. (Neh 9:7, 8, 24)

Jeremiah confirms the same fact:

You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror; and gave them this land, which You swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. They came in and took possession of it... (Jer 32:21-23)

Modern false prophets have made a great deal of hoopla concerning the River Euphrates and the Book of Revelation, saying that Israel will once again occupy Iran and Iraq. David's border was at the river Euphrates. 2 Samuel 8:3 confirms this, as does 1 Kings 4:21 and 24. Do not miss the fact that this promise was fulfilled to Abraham. There is nothing in the Bible to teach us that Israel will someday rule Iraq and Iran. That is not to say that it could not happen. It is simply to say that the Bible does not *prophesy* that it will happen. The promise is fulfilled and the prophecy specialists who are attracting so much attention are teaching error.

## **Romans 11**

Is there a promise that just before, or at the time of the Second Coming, there will be a great gathering of the Jews to Christianity? Or that during the millennium, they will be converted to the Lord as a nation? This is confidently affirmed by many today and the scripture used in a great

measure is Romans 11, which speaks of the wild olive branch being grafted into the natural root stock which is the Jewish stock. Romans 11:25-26 speaks of the fullness of the Gentiles when all Israel will be saved. The common understanding of the passage says that at the end of time the Gentiles will no longer be open to receive the gospel and at that time the Jews will turn to the Lord in droves and every Jew will be converted to the Lord. This is tied in with the idea of a millennial reign of the Lord in Jerusalem when the “kingdom shall be established,” etc. To understand this passage we need to put it in its context, which starts in chapter nine.

Paul begins in verses 1-9 expressing his concern over his people. But he points out that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile so far as the seed of Abraham is concerned. (See verses 6 and following.) He says, “they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” That is, the children of God are not the children of the flesh. In other words, it takes more than just being a descendent of Abraham to be a child of God. Children of the promise are counted as God’s children. He then goes on to tell the story of Isaac’s birth, who was chosen as the ancestor of Christ. The point is, anyone who is of spiritual Israel is a child of God and not just those who are born of Abraham, In fact, not all born of Abraham are children. Jesus even called some of them “children of the Devil.” (John 8:44) “All Israel” does not include just Jews; Gentile Christians are also a part of this number.

He then proceeds to show the sovereignty of God. God did not have to work through the first born of Abraham, who was Ishmael. Neither did he have to work through the firstborn of Isaac, who was Esau. Instead he chose Jacob. Likewise he can choose Jew or Gentiles (9:24). This is just as predicted by Hosea: “You are not my people; there shall then be called the children of the Living God.” (meaning the Gentiles) However, we Jews are to blame because we did not properly keep the Mosaic Law.

Chapter 10 continues in the same vein. He is deeply concerned for the salvation of the Jews but though they were zealous they had missed the righteousness found in Christ. Then note what he repeats in 10:12: “There is no difference between a Jew and a Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” But Israel did not hear. Chapter 11 begins then by asking what good is it to be a Jew if they are rejected? Paul’s response is that you are not rejected. “I’m a Jew and I’m not rejected.” He then proceeds to explain that the Jews did not all reject God and therefore God did not reject all Jews. Even now there is a remnant who is Christian, not by works of the law but rather by grace. (11:5-6) As we are confronted by the gospel, some are hardened and others are responsive.

After elaborating on this he uses an illustration of grafting in a wild olive branch into tame root stock. One does not graft an inferior branch on superior root stock. Gentiles are not inferior to Jews; all are the same. Not all the branches were broken off, only “some,” and we Gentiles were grafted in and have no room to count ourselves superior to the old root stock. If God wants to graft the broken branches back in, He can, but no one can afford to be wise in their own conceit thinking that being either Jew or Gentile makes them superior. The mystery referred to is the same as he spoke of to the Ephesians 3:6, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs of the promise.

Paul just said that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; that the seed of Abraham

is “spiritual Israel.” It is contradictory that Paul would return to what he has just refuted and make a distinction between the conversion of Jew and Gentile in verses 25 and 26. Paul is saying that through the ages, while the gospel is being preached among the nations, that this partial hardness or blindness will continue. That is, not all Jews will be saved, but as this gospel is spread out into all the world, filling up or overflowing into all “ethnic” nations, Israel will be saved in the same manner as anyone else. In other words, they will turn to the Deliverer who comes out of Zion, who takes away the sin of Jacob. To teach that there is still a distinction between Jew and Gentile and that God has a certain number of Gentiles who are elected to be saved and when that number is completed he will put a stop to any more Gentiles becoming Christians and then every Jew will become receptive to the gospel and that they will all be converted to the Lord, is not in keeping with the rest of the Bible.

Jews are in no way to be despised. We are to appreciate our heritage that we have from them. It has been a wonder to behold and a privilege to study, but they now are in the same position that we are because the “middle wall of partition has been broken down and he is our peace who has made us both one.” (Eph 2:14) Jews were God’s chosen people to bring Christ into the world and had a special covenant by which His coming was implemented. That covenant is gone and so is the distinction, so that Jews have no more or less promise in the gospel than does anyone else. The manner of their salvation is identical with that of any other Christian. We may watch the events of the Middle East with interest and concern, but let’s not have false prophets rob us of the hope that we have in Christ.

### ***The Budding Of The Fig Tree***

There is another aspect of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerusalem or their restoration as a nation that needs to be dealt with at least briefly. That is the reference that Jesus made to the budding of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-34. This is also recorded by Mark in 13:29 and in Luke 21:29-31. When the disciples saw the fig tree budding they were to know that the coming of the Lord is at hand. The fig tree is said to be a symbol of Israel and the establishment of Israel as a nation is the budding of the fig tree. According to Hal Lindsay and his cronies, we are at the brink of the “rapture, tribulation and the millennium.” The Zionist movement to establish Israel as a legal home for all Jews is hailed as the fulfillment of this “budding of the fig tree.” Consequently, we are living in “the last days.” Again this makes for exciting reading but there are a few facts that need to be taken into consideration.

Fig trees are certainly not uncommon in Biblical lands and records, Fig leaves were the clothing of Adam and Eve in the garden. They were used as food and even as medicine in the Old Testament records. In 2 Kings 20:7 they were used as a poultice for Hezekiah’s boil. But nowhere in the Old Testament is a fig tree used as a symbol of Israel. Its use in the New Testament does not in any way support the pre-millennial concept set forth by Darby, Schofield and their followers. In Matthew 21:18—22, Jesus came to a fig tree looking for fruit and found only leaves. He cursed it, and it withered. Jesus said, “Let no fruit grow on thee from henceforth.” If that is a picture of Israel, there would be no Jewish Christians now or in the “Millennium.” In Luke 13:6-9 is the story of another unproductive fig tree, which, after 3 years of care, was ordered to be cut down. This carries no suggestion of a glorious day for Israel if the

fig tree is a symbol of the Jews. Luke's account presents further problems for the pre-millennial position. Luke 21:39 includes *any* tree that buds. Verse 31 says that when the trees bud you know that summer is near, meaning that the kingdom of God is at hand. "So likewise, ye, when ye see these things come to pass know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." It was the kingdom of God that was at hand, not the Second Coming of Christ. Compare this with Luke 9:27: "I tell you a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God is the church and it is not a political restoration of the Jews to a position when Jesus will reign in Jerusalem as a worldly political king. The church is no stop gap measure, or fill-in institution that will disappear in eternity and never be heard of again. We are living in the kingdom of heaven now and are subjects of him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords now.

Lest there is any doubt as to the present position of Christ, read Acts 2:29-36. Jesus is raised from the dead and he is sitting on the Throne of David. When Jesus was brought before Pilate, He was accused of saying that He was a king. It was therefore implied that Jesus was a threat to Pilate's throne. Pilate questioned Jesus saying, "Are you King of the Jews?" Jesus explained to Pilate that he was no threat to Pilate because, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36-37) Pilate's conclusion was, "I find no fault in this man." If pagan Pilate could understand that Jesus was not intending to set up an earthly kingdom and rule from a throne in Jerusalem, it is strange that men of intelligence today cannot understand the same.

May our expectations and hope be higher than a materialistic, political anticipation. What we have exceeds anything any earthly kingdom can offer. We have a Savior who is Prophet, Priest and King. We have the remission of our sins and a heavenly advocate. We have the Holy Spirit living within us and are standing on Mt. Zion. We are fellow-citizens with the heirs of God and are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. We are awaiting the day when "exchange these mortal bodies for new ones likened unto the glorified body of our risen Lord. Even if we gained all the blessings a material kingdom could offer, none of these could begin to equal what we now enjoy in our millennium. Please do not let men turn your eyes aside from our blessed hope, which, according to Revelation 4, is the tabernacle of God with men. "He will dwell with them and will be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. (Rev 21:3) No wonder John said, "Even so come Lord Jesus." May it be so.

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