

Israel

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Provocative Question: Has the church replaced Israel in the promises of God?

Jesus was Jewish and all of the writers of the Bible were Jewish so why don't we hear more about modern-day Israel from the pulpit?

- Research shows that 14 of the top 25 church denominations believe no Scriptural promises remain for the Jews.
- There is an erroneous view in the church today that God has replaced Israel with the church
- Most religious leaders don't think there is a connection between modern day Israel and the Israel of Scripture
- The Israeli – Palestinian conflict has become so politicized that most preachers seek to avoid the controversy.

Why is it important to have a correct view of Israel?

- Over 83% of God's Word concerns Israel in some fashion, so that is a lot of Scripture to mishandle or set aside.
- God is not done with Israel. The promises He made to them will be fulfilled.
- Israel is God's prophetic clock. The stage is being set for God to start working through Israel again as His representatives on earth. Watching Israel reveals how close we are to the end of the Age.

How do we know that the church has not replaced Israel in the plans of God?

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

(Romans 11:25)

God has made separate promises to Israel and the church so He is not done working through Israel as a nation. The role of the Jews did not end with the founding of the Church, it was suspended until the Church is completed. The Church Age will end at the rapture and God will again work through the Jews.

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed (Revelation 7:4)

The Jews as a nation will return to being God's people during the Tribulation as represented by 144,000 or 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes who go out preaching that Jesus is the Messiah. This is God working through the nation of Israel again to help people to know Him. A great multitude of people will respond to these Jewish evangelists because supernatural fulfillment of prophecy will be a regular occurrence during the Tribulation.

If someone asked you to prove that the Bible was true, what would you say?

Fredric II, King of Prussia (1740-1786) asked Joachim von Zieten, General of the Hussars, a Christian known to be well grounded in his faith to, "Give me proof for the truth of the Bible in two words!" General von Zeiten replied, "Your majesty, the Jews!" Indeed, God has blessed and preserved the nation of Israel as no other nation on earth.

How is Israel is the most important and obvious sign of the times?

The most prolific prophecy in the Old Testament is about Israel returning to the land prior to the Messiah coming to establish His Millennial Kingdom. For example...

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.
(Ezekiel 36:24)

This prophecy of the return of the Jews refers to a re-gathering from multiple nations; it cannot refer to a return from captivity of the single nation of Babylon. The context here makes it clear that the Jews are returning to the land of Israel in unbelief. This is exactly what has been occurring; Israel is essentially a secular nation in the model of Europe and the United States.

How do we know that God will not boot Israel from the land yet again so their return this time is not a fulfillment of prophecy?

Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever (Ezekiel 37:25)

Once the Jews return to the land from all the nations in the world, they are there from now on. God will not allow all the threats to their existence to uproot them from the land of Israel. Why would an Omnipotent God who is in control allow Israel to again be uprooted from the land He gave

them before they have had an opportunity to fulfill His purpose for them? It is not God's pattern to prematurely end restoration before they turn back to Him. The Jews are in Israel to stay...

Amos 9:14-15 – I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” Says the Lord your God.

How can Christians be so dismissive that modern-day Israel is fulfilling Bible prophecy?

Preterits claim all the prophecies about the Jews returning to the land have been fulfilled in history by the Jews returning from captivity in Babylon. But the context and a literal reading of these texts make it clear that most of these prophecies actually refer to the time just preceding the return of Christ.

How are the Jews unique among the nations of the earth?

The LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people. (Deuteronomy 26:18)

The Lord ordained that the Jews would be a special people, unique in all the world. God revealed Himself to us through the Hebrew prophets, disciples and Jesus Christ. It is clear that God has a special place in His heart for Jews blessing them with greater achievements than any other people groups. Jews are leaders in all fields; a higher percentage of Nobel prizes have gone to Jews than any other race of people. Jews tend to be wealthier than their peers which has stirred up jealousies rising to anti-Semitism.

What does God think of the Jews?

He who touches you touches the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8)

God has chosen the Jewish nation to reveal Himself through and thus be a blessing to all people (Genesis 12:2). So when people mess with God's chosen vessel Israel, they are really messing with the Almighty. While God has used nations to punish Israel for their infidelity to Him, He has always preserved a remnant of faithful followers.

What prophecies of Israel have been fulfilled?

“The Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other...” (Deut 28:64)

Dispersion — The Jews were warned repeatedly that they would be dispersed worldwide if they were not faithful to their covenant with God.

“And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot;

but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul” (Deuteronomy 28:65).

Persecution — The Lord also warned the Jews that they would be persecuted wherever they went. This has certainly been the case from Haman's murderous plan in the book of Esther to Antiochus Epiphanes rages, the medieval crusades, Spanish Inquisition, Russian pogroms in the 1800's, Hitler's holocaust, and Islam's fanaticism.

“the foreigner who comes from a distant land...will say, ‘All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it’” (Deuteronomy 29:22-23).

Desolation — God promised that after their dispersion, their land would become “desolate” and their cities would become “waste”...

Leviticus 26:33 – ‘You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.

For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. (Malachi 3:6)

Preservation of Jewish Cultural Identity — The uniqueness of the Jews has been preserved despite the Diaspora, the worldwide dispersion of the Jews that happened soon after the Romans sacked Jerusalem in 70AD. While most Jews are not religious, they have maintained their cultural heritage wherever they have gone. The Jews not being assimilated into local cultures for multiple centuries is unprecedented in history.

Isaiah 66:22 – For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,” declares the Lord, So your offspring and your name will endure.

What prophecies of Israel are currently being fulfilled?

Isaiah 11:10-12 – ¹⁰And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious. ¹¹It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea.

¹²He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Regathering — The Old Testament prophets promise repeatedly that the day will come when God will regather the Jews to Palestine. Some things to note:

- Root of Jesse banner to the people & nations – The flag of modern-day Israel uses the Star of David

- Second time – the second (and, by implication, final) time God regathers Israel from multiple nations of the world would be in belief (His people)
- Remnant who are left – from the Tribulation

The remarkable regathering of the Jews from the four corners of the earth has occurred in our life time.

- World War I prepared the land for the people as the control of Palestine was transferred from a nation that hated the Jews (the Turks) to a nation that was sympathetic to their return (Britain).
- The Holocaust of World War II prepared the people for the land by motivating them to return.

Isaiah 66:7-8 – Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.

Nationhood — The prophets stated that when the people were regathered, the nation of Israel would be re-established. This occurred on May 14, 1948.

This is the cornerstone prophetic event of our age. It is an event that prophetic scholars have pointed to for 400 years amid much scoffing and ridicule by those who did not believe that Israel would ever exist again as a nation.

Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” (Ezekiel 37:12)

Israel is Israel – It is significant that the land of Israel will be called Israel when the Jews return. The land of Israel could have been called Palestine, Galilee, Samaria, or Judah but it now known by its biblical name, Israel.

Isaiah 35:1 – The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose

Restoration of the Land of Israel – Mark Twain visited the land of Israel in 1867 and published what he saw in his book, “Innocents Abroad.” He described the land as being a barren wasteland, devoid of both vegetation and human population. All that has changed with the Jews returning to the land. God has made the desert bloom increasing the rainfall over 450% since 1900. And He has even restored the forests with over 400 million trees since the Jews have returned to the land.

Isaiah 27:6 – Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

Today, Israel is one of the few nations on earth that exports more food than it imports. God has blessed Israel with

technology enabling them to make good use of the water they have pioneering innovative irrigation in their arid land; see also Amos 9:13.

Zephaniah 3:9 – For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language

Restoration of the Hebrew Language – A pure language that was lost will be restored in the end times; Hebrew is the only language lost for everyday use that has ever been restored. There are fewer languages in the world than there once were and some have been effectively lost as a commonly spoken language like Latin. Languages and dialects are consolidating as the world seeks to work together more thus attempting to reverse what happened at the Tower of Babel.

During the dispersion of Israel, Hebrew as a spoken language was all but lost; only biblical scholars could read it. The Hebrew language was corrupted with others; Ladino was an amalgamation of Hebrew and Spanish, Yiddish combined Hebrew with German. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda dedicated his life to reviving the pure Hebrew language inventing thousands of new words needed by modern society based on Hebrew root words. Today Hebrew is the language that binds Israelis together despite their coming from different nations. Israelis can now read original biblical scrolls without translation. You can't say the same thing about English; Old English is almost unintelligible to us today.

Is the restoration of the Hebrew language self-fulfilling prophecy by zealous Zionists?

Bible skeptics dismiss this that way. But why would a secular people feel the need to fulfill Bible prophecy just to prove it to be true? It would have been much easier for the Jews to consolidate their nation around a language that was already in use. English is the worldwide language of commerce, science and technology. It would have been a whole lot less trouble to just use English rather than resurrect and update Hebrew, but God ordained that Hebrew would be spoken in Israel when the Jews returned. This is powerful evidence that God is not done with Israel.

Luke 21:24 – They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (NIV)

Restoration of Jerusalem – The fulfillment of this prophecy has been foreshadowed by Israel re-taking possession of Jerusalem as part of the 6-Day War in 1967 for the first time since they were dispersed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Since 70 A.D., Jerusalem has been under the governments of the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamlukes, Turks, British, and Jordanians. Israel is in control of Jerusalem today but they allowed the Islamists to retain control of the temple mount. So, the heart of

Jerusalem is still being trampled on by Gentiles but that day will end by the return of the Messiah. Israel will control the temple mount during the Tribulation because they have to build a Jewish temple there in order for the "abomination of desolation" to take place.

Ezekiel 37:21-22 – Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

Israel Re-united – End times Israel will no longer be a divided country as they were in the days of their kings. This is certainly the case today.

Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west, I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 43:5-6)

Order of Jews Returning – When biblical prophecy is fulfilled, it is exact in every detail. Even the order of the Jews returning to the land of Israel was prophesied. Their return began in the Middle East from Syria, Iraq, and Jordan in 1930-1940. Then the Jews returned from Western Europe after WWII due to the holocaust. They returned from Russia which is north of Israel starting in 1988 and finally from Ethiopia to the south as part of Operation Solomon, in the summer of 1991. The Jews are officially back in their land!

It shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. (Zechariah 12:3)

Jerusalem in the News – Ever wonder why there is always something about Jerusalem in the news? Jerusalem is the hardest nut to crack in the pursuit of world peace. So, the peace of Jerusalem stands in the way of world peace. If we can resolve the conflict over Jerusalem then there is no conflict in the world that we cannot resolve. Eventually all nations will oppose Israel. This has already begun with most of the United Nations resolutions being in opposition to Israel.

The governors of Judah shall say in their heart, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God." (Zechariah 12:5)

Democracy in the Middle East – The end times government of Israel will differ from ancient times. They will have governors rather than kings. Israel will be ruled by a democracy rather than a monarchy. Indeed, they are

the only truly functioning democracy in the Middle East. Some of the nations around Israel have tried but they just can't make it work. Also note here that the leaders of Israel during this time will be secular because they refer to the Lord as "their God" rather than "our God."

In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left. (Zech 12:6)

Israel's Military Prowess – Israeli forces have won against superior forces in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1981. Today the Israeli Defense Force is the most powerful in the region and Israel is currently the only nation in the Middle East with nuclear weapons. God has protected Israel from its inception and has enabled them to build a military capability that has brought them security and stability.

They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more." (Psalm 83:4)

Israel's Enemies – The stage is being set for Israel to devour the enemies who surround them. Most of the Middle East Muslim nations want to push Israel into the sea and are preparing for war. Every previous attack made on Israel has resulted in Israel taking more land. The next war will likely do the same thing and resolve the Palestinian problem once and for all.

I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. (Joel 3:2)

Land for Peace – God does not like the peace process imposed on Israel where they are expected to give up land for peace. Israel's enemies do not even recognize their right to exist and will not be happy until the State of Israel ceases to exist. God is the one who originally gave Israel their land and will make sure that all of it will be restored to them. Those opposing the will of God will suffer His wrath.

He shall... divide the land for gain (Daniel 11:39)

Spirit of Antichrist in Peace Process – The solution of the world to bring peace to Israel is to divide the land of Israel. The spirit of Antichrist is to oppose God and His plan. Those seeking to do that will have their day with devastating consequences during the Tribulation. We can already see this spirit of Antichrist in the world and it is getting more pervasive as we get closer to the Tribulation (1 John 4:3). Jesus said there would be birth pangs that foreshadow His coming (Matthew 24:8) and the spirit of Antichrist is among them.

Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:7)

Anti-Semitism – As we get closer to the Tribulation, we can expect to see more instances of anti-Semitism. This is why many thought that the holocaust during World War II heralded the Tribulation. But it was just a birth pang and we can expect to see more anti-Semitism birth pangs. The world irrationally supports Palestinian terrorists who will not rest until Israel ceases to exist. You would think that the world would support Israel as a viable working democracy trying to defend itself but that is not what is happening. Terrorist murderers are praised for their valiant struggle in resisting while Israel is condemned for responding.

Anti-Semitism is an irrational demonic sickness where hatred of the Jew has become hatred of the Jewish State. How a person regards God has a direct bearing on how they regard God's people Israel. Those who hate the Jews and Israel have opened up their mind to the god of this world. Anti-Semitism is growing in the spirit of Antichrist.

I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)

Judgment for Israel's enemies – Going against the will of God in opposing Israel is not a good policy, it invites God's wrath. There will be consequences when nations try to force Israel into something that is not in their best interest.

What prophecies of Israel are yet to be fulfilled?

And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. (Daniel 11:31)

Restoration of a Temple in Jerusalem – There has to be a Jewish temple in Jerusalem at the mid-point of the Tribulation in order for the abomination of desolation to take place as Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:15-16. This looks impossible today with an Islamic mosque on the temple mount. Muslims consider Jerusalem to be their third holiest site which is surprising since Jerusalem is not even mentioned in the Quran. But God said there would be a third temple in Jerusalem so there will be. Indeed, there is today a lot of interest in Israel for a temple because it is seen as being a key part of Israel's national identity.

Deuteronomy 4:30 – When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice

Tribulation — God will put the Jewish people through an unparalleled period of tribulation during which two-thirds of the Jews will perish. The purpose will be to soften the hearts of a remnant so that they will accept Jesus as their Messiah...

Zechariah 13:8-9 – It will come about in all the land, declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"

Zechariah 12:10 – And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn

Salvation — A remnant of the Jews will "look upon Him whom they have pierced" and will accept Him as Lord and Savior.

Deuteronomy 28:1 – Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

Primacy — God will then regather all the believing Jews to Israel where they will be established as the prime nation in the world during the millennial reign of Jesus...

Micah 4:1-7

¹Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the Lord's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;

And peoples shall flow to it.

²Many nations shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,

And we shall walk in His paths."

For out of Zion the law shall go forth,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

³He shall judge between many peoples,
And rebuke strong nations afar off;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁴But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid;

For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.
5 For all people walk each in the name of his god,
But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God
Forever and ever.
6 “In that day,” says the Lord, “I will assemble the lame,
I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted;
7 I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a
strong nation; so the Lord will reign over them in
Mount Zion from now on, even forever.

... (see also: Isaiah 60-62)

Ezekiel 37:24-25 – *David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.*

King David will again rule over Israel. Taken literally, this can only refer to a resurrected King David during the Millennial Kingdom. The millennial reign of Christ will have resurrected saints serving in positions of authority in the Lord’s government.

So What? What applications can we make from all this prophecy about Israel?

- It is hard not to recognize that the Bible has to be from God as we consider how prophecy has been fulfilled by Israel.
- As we see modern-day Israel fulfilling ancient prophecies, this should give us a sense of urgency to go on with what God is calling us to do.