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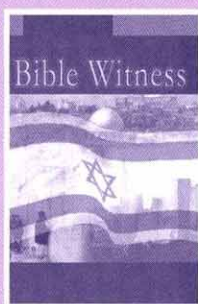
Volume 3 Issue 2

Bible Witness



Inside Articles:

Israel's Promised Land
Dispossession and Dispersal
Will Israel Survive As a Nation?
Will Israel Be Saved As a Nation?
Will There Be Peace in Israel?
Israel and the Church in Prophecy



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o other land on earth is like this land. A mere 140 miles by 45 miles, yet it is at the centre of a territorial dispute

which defies solution, and which may well spark off World War III. Most people know it as the Holy Land. Whose land is it? The Jews are in it and determined to stay. The Arabs want them out, and are planning, plotting and preparing for the next confrontation. Both Jews and Arabs claim the land as theirs: the Jews on the ground that God had promised it to their forefathers, the Arabs on the ground that the Palestinians had lived there until 1948 when the Jews took over. Now there are almost 2 million Palestinian refugees waiting to return.

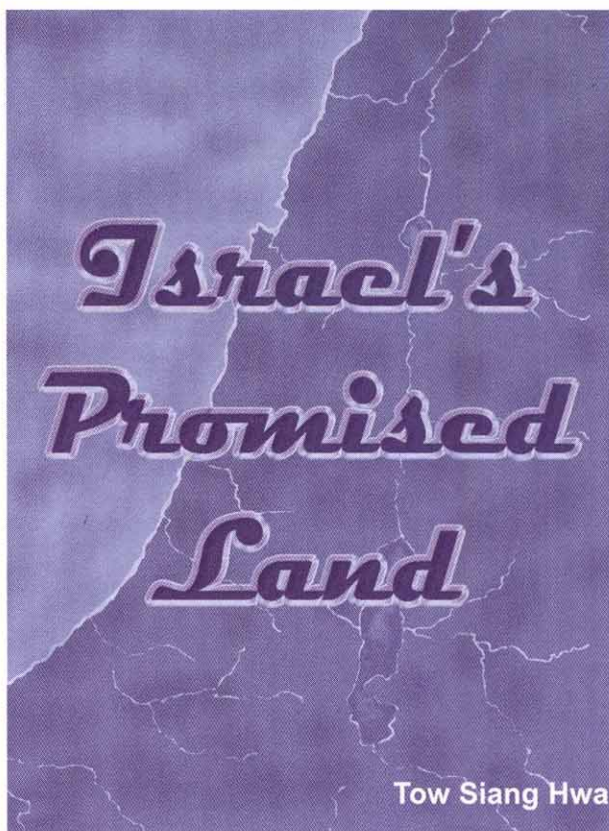
Did God really promise the land to the Jews? This would appear to be so, according to the Bible record. In the Book of Genesis we find that nearly 4,000 years ago, God appeared to Abraham and verbally promised the land to him and his seed on five different occasions.

Promises to Abraham

God first appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldeans and said, "Get thee out of thy country...unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1). Abraham obeyed, not knowing where God would lead him. That is faith! So Abraham uprooted his family and moved to Haran to the northwest, a journey of over 500 miles.

After the death of his father, Terah, Abraham travelled southwards to Sichem. There God spoke to him again, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Genesis 12:7). After that, Abraham moved further south to Hebron. The promise was repeated three more times: "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:15). "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18), and "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8).

These promises are all the more remarkable because they were made while Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were still childless. The Apostle Paul commenting on Abraham's faith said: "For what saith the scripture? Abraham



believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness... He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:3, 20, 21).

Promises to Isaac and Jacob

About 100 years after the call to Abraham, God confirmed the same promise to Isaac, the son of promise. "Unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father" (Genesis 26:3).

After some 70 years, God repeated the same promise to Isaac's son, Jacob: "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (Genesis 35:12).

Significance of the Promise

What was the meaning of the call to Abraham and the promise of land and blessing? We see in this action of God something of greatest significance. God was setting in motion His eternal plan of redemption for mankind. God was

looking for a man of faith, someone who was prepared to listen and obey His command. He found in Abraham such a man, and He chose him to be the father of the faithful. Then God chose the land of Canaan which is located at the centre of the earth to be the glorious land of promise, strategically situated for the future propagation of the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth.

In calling Abraham, God was preparing to bless the nations through Abraham's seed, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Land of Many Names

It is interesting here to enumerate the names that have been given to this Land of Promise:

1. Land of Canaan (cf. Genesis 17:8)
2. Land of Jordan (cf. Psalm 42:6)
3. The Glorious Land (cf. Daniel 11:41)
4. Land of Israel (cf. Ezekiel 11:17)
5. Jehovah's Land (cf. Hosea 9:3; Joshua 1:15)
6. Land of the Jews (cf. Acts 10:39)
7. The Holy Land (cf. Zechariah 2:12)
8. Palestine (cf. Joel 3:4)
9. Immanuel's Land (cf. Isaiah 8:8)
10. Land of milk and honey (cf. Deuteronomy 27:3)

Eighteen times it was called the land of milk and honey. It was a good land of water brooks and sparkling fountains, a fruitful land of barley, wheat, vine, figs, pomegranate, olive and honey, with abundant mineral deposits of brass and iron (Deuteronomy 8:7-10). It was a land blessed with plenty. It was God's land.

That was the condition when the Israelites found it to possess it. But the long history of the land afterwards tells a different story.

Land of Sorrow and Strife

No land has seen sorrow and strife like the Promised Land. For 3,500 years, it has known little peace. Standing at the crossroads between north and south, east and west, it has been overrun by invading armies from every direction. With the rise and fall of empires, the land has repeatedly changed hands. The capital, Jerusalem, "city of peace," has known war more

than peace. Twenty-seven times it was besieged and destroyed, but each time it has risen from its ruins to be rebuilt again. No other spot on earth has seen such human misery and anguish.

The question naturally comes to mind: If this is the land of blessing for God's chosen people, why has it been allowed to suffer thus? Why have the Jews been so brutally and mercilessly persecuted, more than any other people in history?

The answer to this perplexing question, again, is to be found in the Bible. The conflict of the ages, the invisible warfare between God and Satan, has been focused on God's chosen people. In calling out Abraham and in the establishing of a nation, God had pronounced the beginning of the downfall and ultimate destruction of Satan. Is it any wonder that Satan's hate and venom have been outpoured on Israel? Beguiling the nations, Satan has used them as instruments to destroy Israel. The world calls this "Anti-Semitism."

Israel's extreme suffering, and preservation, can be adequately explained as a supernatural phenomenon. It is God's doing.

Look at it from another angle, Israel's suffering may be seen as a consequence of their disobedience to God. The blessing and enjoyment of the land were conditional on their obedience to God's commands. The conditions were spelt out in detail by God's servant, Moses, before the Israelites had even set foot on the land. Conditions for blessings and conditions for punishment were rehearsed with the people. Predictions of judgment were laid down.

All these came true in every detail over the course of 3,500 years. In three chapters (28-30) of Deuteronomy, Moses wrote the history of the Jews in advance! No other nation had such a unique pre-recording of things to come.



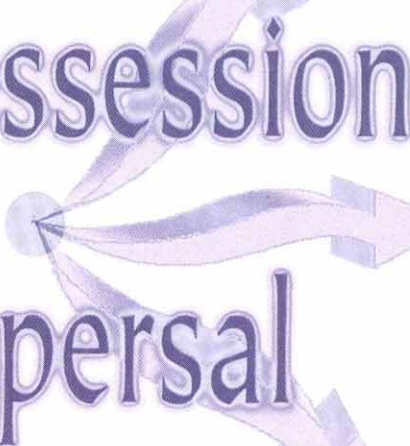
Israel's extreme suffering, and preservation, can be adequately explained as a supernatural phenomenon. It is God's doing.





he land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob came into Israel's possession substantially under Joshua, successor to Moses, but on condition of absolute obedience. In Deuteronomy 28:1, Moses said to Israel, "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth."

Dispossession and Dispersal



Timothy Tow

Dispossession and Dispersal Predicted

"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee (Deuteronomy 28:15).... And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it....and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in

doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see" (Deuteronomy 28:63-67).

Curse Repeated

This curse pronounced by Moses is repeated in Deuteronomy 31:27-29, "For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you;

and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."

History of Dispossession and Dispersal

That Israel would turn away from their God happened too soon! As an all-conquering army under Joshua, it began to disintegrate after Joshua and his generation of elders passed from the scene. The book of Judges which follows the book of Joshua tells the story of utter defeat before the enemy. What a contrast between the two books! How true is the saying, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Without the sustaining grace of God, this is the way of all flesh. Here is a lesson for Singapore. By God's mercies we have prospered under the good government of Lee Kuan Yew. Can we continue to prosper after he is gone?

Nevertheless, the Lord had mercy on His chosen people. He raised them judges, like Gideon, Deborah, Jephthae, Samson (Hebrews 11:32). He gave them Samuel to revive the people and lead them into the new age of the monarchy. This was in accordance with the Constitution given them by the hand of Moses in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. The monarchy, however, was to be God-appointed, but the people snatched the prerogative to make Saul king. Democracy versus theocracy! This led to Saul's rejection and substitution by David. David was the Lord's choice, for he was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14).

With the rejection of Saul and divine choosing of David, the land that was promised to Abraham, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, was occupied at last (2 Samuel 8:9-10; 1 Chronicles 18, 19). The power and might of the Davidic Kingdom reached its zenith in the illustrious accession of Solomon, all of which heralded the future millennial Kingdom of Christ, David's Greater Son.

But, alas! Solomon departed from God in his old age so that when his son Rehoboam came to the throne, his kingdom was split in two. The kingdom founded by the great king David was broken into the ten northern tribes of Israel and the two southern tribes under Judah. Does this not reflect on our own situation, the separation between Malaysia and Singapore? And does this not reflect on China and Taiwan, North Korea and South

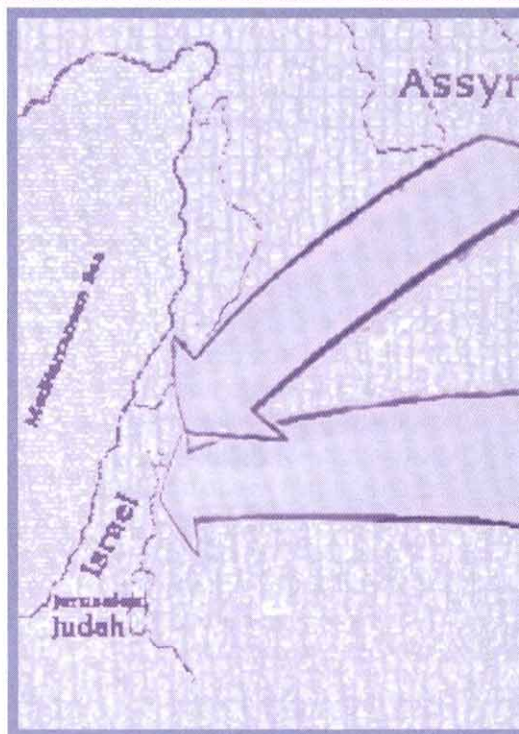
Korea, all because of sinful strife?

The Kingdom Divided: The Dispersal of the Northern Kingdom

Henceforth the fortunes of the divided kingdoms began to slide. The Northern Kingdom departed from the true religion by Jeroboam's introduction of gold calf worship. This was followed by Baal worship under wicked King Ahab which necessitated the polemical ministry of Elijah, followed by the healing work of Elisha. We call these two action prophets, "The Prophets of Fire and Water."

In spite of further reformation efforts by Jehu, the nation plunged into graver sins of idolatry and immorality. God had to judge His wayward people. He raised the Assyrian kings to invade Israel time and time again until she was taken into captivity in 722 B.C. The warning by Moses of dispossession and dispersal first took effect in the Northern Kingdom. The northern tribes became the lost tribes.

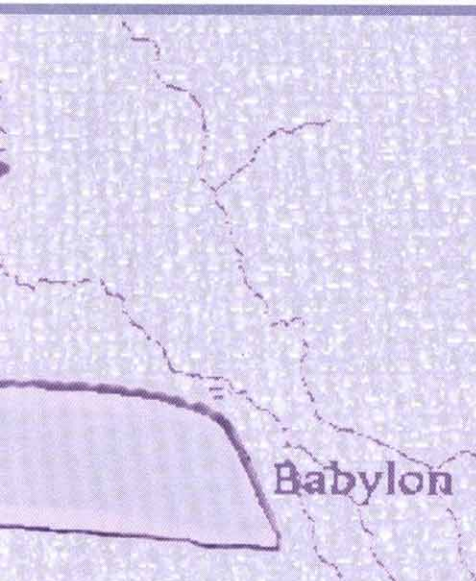
What happens on the national level, happens first to clans and families. How many an illustrious man in the good old days of Singapore has sunk in oblivion today! Yea, even the names of British kings and queens (or British monarchs) who ruled Singapore before World War II, and the names of invading Japanese militarists - the way of all flesh!



"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:15-18).

The Captivity of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, plodded on. Two reformations were forged by good kings Hezekiah and Josiah, but also to no avail. Judah followed Ephraim (Northern Kingdom) to practise every kind of idolatry and immorality. Thus, Isaiah, prophet to Hezekiah, after condemning Ephraim (Northern Kingdom) denounced Judah (Southern Kingdom) as well:



Israel's Conquest by Assyrians and Babylonians

"Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (Isaiah 28:14-18).

Thus, by the words of the prophet Jeremiah who stood with King Josiah against apostate Judah (Jeremiah 2:5-18), she was doomed to destruction. This was fulfilled in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, destroyed Jerusalem and burnt down the Temple, and carried the third and final batch of Jews to Babylon (Now, ancient Babylonia is modern Iraq!).

Though Judah was taken captivity into Babylon, God had mercy upon this remnant people because of His covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:15, 16). God promised through Jeremiah the prophet that He would bring them back to Judah

after 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10). To enable the Jews to return to their homeland, God raised up the great Persian king Cyrus. By his hand the empire of Babylon was subdued.

From the Return from Babylon to the Birth of the Saviour

The Jews were not only allowed to return to Judah but were given every assistance by Cyrus' decree. This was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, "Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the

counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isaiah 44:24-28).

Led by their governor Zerubbabel, the Jews returned in 536 B.C., and the temple was rebuilt. Under Ezra the scribe, the law of Moses was re-established (458 B.C.). Last but not least, Nehemiah rebuilt the broken wall of Jerusalem in 445 B.C.

After the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, arose the prophet Malachi, but he was the last. Then reigned a silent interlude of 400 years. "But when the fulness of the time was come," says the apostle Paul, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). Jesus, David's Greater Son, was born in Bethlehem according to the prophet Micah (Micah 5:2).

"The power and might of the Davidic Kingdom reached its zenith in the illustrious accession of Solomon, all of which heralded the future millennial Kingdom of Christ, David's Greater Son."

Will Israel Survive as a Nation?

Koa Keng Woo

The question of whether Israel can survive is on the minds of so many people in the world today, particularly the Christians.

Suicide bombers are on the increase and news of bombing, stone throwing and shooting by the militant Palestinians can be seen daily on TV as well as in newspapers. It appears that if this should carry on despite curfews and the retaliation of the Israeli Army, it will lower the people's morale and affect the economic stability of the nation of Israel. Will Israel be able to survive with so many problems in the country?

To know the answer, it is best to trace biblical history and the history of the State of Israel.

At the time of the Exodus, when the Israelites increased abundantly and multiplied (Exodus 1:7), they were oppressed and suppressed by the new Pharaoh of Egypt who knew not Joseph. Pharaoh enforced hard labour upon them. Suffering, they cried unto the Almighty God who used Moses to redeem and lead them out of Egypt after the ten plagues. God saved them on the bank of the Red Sea while the Egyptian army was pursuing them. He caused the Sea to part and made dry land so that they were able to cross while the pursuing Egyptians

were later drowned. Such was the mighty act and hand of God, which rescued His people and preserved them. Even with Pharaoh's intention to suppress and exterminate the Israelites, the latter were able to continue to grow.

Why was this possible? It was because God had made a covenant with Abram in Genesis 12:2-3 saying: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." God in Genesis 15:5, 7 reiterated that the seed of Abram would be like the stars of heaven and that He would give this land, the land of Canaan, to Abram. The same covenant was again repeated in Genesis 17:2-6 when God told Abram that the Israelites would multiply and the land would be given to them for an inheritance. God not only promised Abram but later also promised the same to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-14.

Referring to Genesis 13:15, we can see that God had promised Abram not only to multiply the people of the nation, but also "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

The nation of Israel, since the time of Abram, has gone through many conquests by foreign nations. At the time of Saul and David, the Philistines attacked Israel. At the time of the Divided Kingdom, the Assyrians conquered the Northern nation Israel in 722 B.C. So was the Southern Kingdom Judah when the Babylonian took Judah in 586 B.C. Since then, the nation of Israel has been ruled consecutively by several nations such as the Hellenistic kingdom, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Mamelukes, the Turks and finally, the British. Israel was without a country for about 2,000 years and her people dispersed unto the four corners of the earth.

On the 14th of March 1938, Adolf Hitler hailed as the Nazi took Austria. Following this, Hitler's army took Czechoslovakia on 15th of March 1939 and invaded Poland on 30th September 1939. Britain and France on the same day declared war on Germany. Hitler's army continued to invade Scandinavia, Belgium and Holland and finally, Paris fell into German hands.

Meanwhile, the Jews in Europe were rounded up into "Ghettos" and many were forced to be at the "Warsaw Ghetto." As Adolf

Hitler was anti-Semitic, he ordered his henchman, Adolf Eichmann, a high-ranking officer of the SS (Gestapo) to be responsible for the extermination of the Jews. Jews were gathered throughout Europe and sent to Auschwitz, Buchenwald and other concentration camps. Some camps like Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka were used as extermination camps where Jews were sent into gas chambers and buried in mass graves.

At the time of the Exodus, Pharaoh was trying to exterminate the Israelites but God had sustained and preserved His people. Similarly, at the time of World War II, Adolf Hitler was trying to exterminate God's people, the Jews.

According to the census, the Jewish population of the world prior to World War II was between 14 and 15 million. It was estimated that between 5 and 7 million Jews were exterminated by Eichmann (some said 6 million) during the Holocaust reducing the population to 10 million after the Holocaust. Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics published a total population of 6.592 million as on 7th of September 2002. Out of this, 77.2% were Jews, meaning that there are now 5 million or more than 5 million Jews living in Israel. According to the BBC News, the population of Jews in Israel accounts for one third of the world Jewish population, which means that there are 10 million Jews worldwide outside of Israel.

From the Bible and from world history, the saying "Man

proposes but God disposes" is true. Though Pharaoh tried to exterminate the people of God, God sustained and preserved them. Adolf Hitler tried to exterminate God's people; the Jewish population did not decrease. Why was it so? It was because God had promised the Patriarchs that their descendants would multiply like the stars of heaven and the sand along the seashore.

God not only promised the Patriarchs that their descendants would multiply but also the land would be given to them forever.

On the 14th of May 1948, Israel was declared independent as a State. Many Jews returned to their homeland promised by God.

In the Six-Day War of June 1967, Israel scored victories over Egypt and took the Sinai Peninsular, over Jordan capturing the Old Jerusalem and the West Bank, and from Syria, the Golan Heights. Israel's Defence Minister, Moshe Dayan, at that time said: "We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to depart from it again." Mordechai Hod, Air force commander of Israel, boasted that the Israeli pilots were the best in the world.

Israel met another surprise attack by Egypt and Syria in the middle of the Yom Kippur in October 1973 but was able to defeat the two nations pushing them back to the 1967 cease-fire lines.

Why was Israel able to retake the land, which was formerly owned by their forefathers? Was it because they had well-

trained armed forces and pilots and better weapons? Not so. It was because God kept His promises of regathering the people and giving them the land forever.

Today, many militant Arab Muslims confront Israel. She is facing suicide bombers day after day. Israel is experiencing so many riots everywhere.

It seems that the country is in chaos and in a hopeless situation with extreme Arab countries against Israel. During the 1990 Gulf War, the Iraqis shot Scud missiles into Israel and even during the recent "Operation Iraqi Freedom," Israel feared that Iraq would attack her with the same missiles.

In a situation like this, will Israel survive as a nation? According to the Bible, the answer is yes. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness" (Zechariah 8:4-8).





Will Israel Be Saved As a Nation?

Ephrem Chiracho Ouchula



The nation of Israel is the heart of biblical history. Throughout the Holy Scriptures, Israel is seen as God's chosen people through whom the Redeemer would come to save fallen mankind (Genesis 3:15; 12:3). Moreover, Israel was the cradle of Christianity, for it was Jewish Christians who formed the first New Testament church (Acts). Since then, they have preached the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, both to the Jews and Gentiles.

However, during and after the Lord Jesus' ministry, only a remnant of Israel believed in Him for salvation. The majority of the nation rejected Him and is still in unbelief, and hence, died without hope of eternal life.

Now, how can we reconcile Israel's rejection in the light of many Old Testament promises given to the nation as God's covenant people? What is God's response to their rejection both now and at the end of the world? Has God cast away the nation of Israel beyond recovery? Is there any hope of a future restoration for Israel as God's covenant people? Is the Abrahamic covenant still valid (cf. Genesis 12:3; 15:1-21)? Will the Messiah sit upon the throne of David and rule over the house of Jacob (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7; Zechariah 14:8-11; Luke 1:31-33)? In Romans 9-11, Paul answers these crucial questions and he concludes his argument by affirming "all Israel shall be saved" (11:26).

The Validity of the Abrahamic Covenant

Israel's salvation and restoration are based on the Abrahamic covenant. God entered into a unilateral covenant with Abraham to be God to him and to his seed and to give them the land of Canaan (Genesis 15). This covenant is still

valid. Firstly, though Israel is seen as an enemy because of her rejection of the Gospel of Christ, in God's eyes, she is still beloved because of this covenant God made with her fathers (Romans 11:28). Paul argues that since the first-fruit is holy, so is the mass represented by it (Romans 11:16a). Israel, through her patriarchs, has been consecrated to God and has been accepted by a unilateral covenant. The first-fruit principle ensures the eternal acceptance of the nation as God's people because her position as God's covenant people cannot be reversed as much as the state of a first-fruit cannot be reversed (Leviticus 27:28). Therefore, Israel has an irreversible position in God's redemptive plan.

Secondly, the church did not replace Israel. Some church fathers and reformers thought that "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 refers to the spiritual Israel composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles and not ethnic Israel since the New Testament church has replaced the nation of Israel as God's covenant people. But the Scripture says Gentiles are engrafted onto the root, i.e., the Abrahamic covenant, not replacing it. The root is not destroyed but is still carrying the church. The church is not carrying the root. If the church has replaced Israel, then she must be the root that carries the New Testament church.

Moreover, the term "Israel" occurs eleven times in Romans 9-11 referring to the Jews and not to Gentiles (9:4; 9:6 [twice]; 9:27; 9:31; 10:19; 10:21; 11:1; 11:2; 11:17; and 11:25). Thus, there is no objective reason why the "Israel" in Romans 11:26 has another meaning than ethnic Israel. Also, Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 is concerned with the relevance of the Gospel message to the Israelites who were temporarily rejected and partially hardened. And Paul has been contrasting the Gentile Christians with the present state of the partially hardened or

unbelieving Israelites (Romans 11:12-25). Therefore, there is no reason to erase this distinction between ethnic Israel and Gentile Christians and merge the two in Romans 11:26. The term "Israel" in verse 25 and verse 26 refers to the same group of people, i.e., ethnic Israel who is partially hardened and is said to be finally restored after the fulness of Gentiles come in.

Some scholars argued that "all Israel" here can only mean all remnants saved out of Israel throughout salvation history. But, this interpretation does not have support from this context. Paul used the word "Israel" in contrast with the "remnant" twice (Romans 9:27; 11:5), others who remained in the root (Romans 11:17), and who were not hardened (Romans 11:25). Moreover, since the remnant is already saved and has been part of the covenant people alongside the Gentile converts, Paul has no reason to argue about their salvation as if it is in the future (11:1-5). Romans 9-11 concern the nation, not the remnant.

Thirdly, the root is still holy unto the Lord and so are the branches. If God unconditionally loved the root (the patriarchs) and sanctified them to Himself, their branches (ethnic Israel) will also be accepted unconditionally (Romans 11:16b, 28-29). And the omnipotent and faithful God will graft them back to their root so that they will enjoy the blessings of the root through faith in the Messiah (Romans 11:23-24, 31-32).

The Continuity of the Abrahamic Covenant

There are at least three major facts that point to the continuity of the Abrahamic covenant. Firstly, Israel's rejection is partial, not total. There has been a remnant of Israel throughout the history of redemption, even today (Romans 9:27, 29; 11:5). That is why the Scripture says, "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Romans 11:2). God cannot undo Israel's position as a chosen nation because of the unilateral nature of His covenant (Romans 11:29; cf. Jeremiah 31:35-37). However, the covenant was not meant to guarantee the salvation of every Israelite. There is divine election according to God's free grace that determines those who are to be saved (Romans 9:6-8; 11:5). Therefore, the rejection of some Israelites is in harmony with God's plan.

Secondly, Israel's temporary rejection was not to cause her fall from her covenant privilege. Instead, it was designed for the salvation of the Gentiles that will in turn provoke Israel to believe in her Messiah. "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (Romans 11:11; cf. 10:19; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28). Therefore, once this divine plan of Gentiles' salvation is fulfilled, God will remove Israel's judicial hardening and reinstate her into her privileged position in faithfulness to the irrevocable promises of His covenant (Romans 11:28-32).

Thirdly, Israel's hardness is only partial. It did not include all the Israelites (Romans 11:7, 25). Since salvation was bestowed on those who were not judicially hardened, the Abrahamic covenant was not discontinued. These saved Jews are called "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5, 7). Moreover, this partial hardening is also temporary and there is a divinely appointed time when it will be removed and salvation shall be given to the whole of Israel (Romans 11:25-26; Zechariah 13:1).

The Fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant

Romans 9-11 show the place of the nation of Israel in God's overall plan of salvation. Though Israel has rejected the Messiah and has been temporarily set aside by God, Paul affirms that God's promise to Israel did not fail (9:6). God is still looking upon disobedient Israel with compassion and is continually offering grace to her (10:21). Moreover, God's word declares that God did not totally and finally cast away Israel (Romans 11:1-2). There are several key phrases in Romans 11 that show Israel's future restoration to her covenant privileges.

Firstly, there is deep-seated expectation for "their fulness," Israel's restoration (Romans 11:12; 9:1-3; 10:1). Secondly, this is further explained by the phrase "the receiving of them" (Romans 11:15). In the future, Israel shall be received back to her privileged position. Thirdly, "they... shall be grafted in" into their root by believing in Christ (Romans 11:23-24). And this act of engrafting is attributed to the omnipotent God (verse 23b). Fourthly, "they also may obtain mercy" (Romans 11:31). Now, God has judicially shut Israel up in

unbelief that He might have mercy on her at the end (11:32). Fifthly, a time is coming when Israel's partial hardness will be removed (11:25), and they will believe in the Messiah and obtain mercy and thus, "all Israel shall be saved" (11:26). This phrase is the theme statement for Romans 9-11. It contains God's divine decree for the future restoration of ethnic and national Israel. This will happen because of God's faithfulness to His unilateral and irrevocable covenant to the fathers (11:28-32). Man's unfaithfulness can never override God's covenant faithfulness. Therefore, God's covenant promises to the patriarchs concerning Israel's national blessings through the Messiah have not been abrogated despite the unbelief of many of the Jews.

When Will Israel Be Restored?

This future restoration of the nation into God's covenant privilege is called a mystery. Paul uses the word "mystery" to refer either to "a past secret purpose of God which has now been uncovered and made known to us (Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:26-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:7), or to a future purpose that is made known now for the instruction and attitude of the believer (1 Corinthians 15:51)." (Johnson). This salvation is in the future because it comes after the fulness of Gentiles come in (Romans 11:25) and it is stated in the future tense. If Paul had a concurrent conversion of the Jews and Gentiles in mind, he could have used the present tense. The future reference is also supported by the temporal adverbial preposition "until" in verse 25. The temporal clause in verse 25 is linked with verse 26 by conjunction "and so" that draws the implications of the thought of the preceding passage and develops thereon. The phrase "and so" is used with temporal meaning expressing the sequence of events at Christ's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and this is the case in Romans 11:25-27.

The Salvation of "all Israel" Includes National Restoration

The Abrahamic covenant has two aspects with regard to the nation of Israel: promise of salvation and of land. In Romans 11:27-28, Paul says that God will renew this covenant with Israel at the coming of the Messiah affirming that Israel is still beloved of God because of the

election of her fathers. Paul quotes the Holy Scriptures to certify that the eschatological restoration of Israel is part of God's revelation (Isaiah 59:20-21; cf. Jeremiah 31:31, 34). This covenant involves a physical presence of Israel in the Promised Land (Genesis 15:7-21; cf. Zechariah 14:6-11). This is also attested by the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 2:3; Zechariah 14:16). They have said that when the Messiah comes, He will deliver Israel spiritually from sin and politically from the invading armies (Zechariah 10:8-10). And there will be great geographical and ecological changes at that point for the restoration of the nation of Israel in her fulness as God's covenant people in her land (Zechariah 14:6-11; Jeremiah 31:38-40).

The New Testament also asserts that at the Second Advent of Christ, the whole earth will be delivered from the corruption unto which it has been unwillingly subjected (Romans 8:19-22). This tallies with the premillennial view of Christ's coming that ushers His universal reign from Jerusalem as predicted to take place at the final stage of the salvation history (Romans 11:26-27; Revelation 20:1-6).

Moreover, the unfulfilled prophecies of the Holy Scriptures demand the restoration of the nation of Israel and Christ's rule on the throne of David (2 Samuel 7:11-16; Isaiah 9:6-7). At His first coming, Christ did not sit on the throne of David and rule over His kingdom. Thus, this unfulfilled prediction looks forward to a future fulfillment when Christ will rule over the whole nation from Jerusalem (Luke 1:32-33; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 5:10; 20:1-6).

Therefore, one day "all Israel shall be saved" though the nation is temporarily hardened and rejected by God because of her rejection of the Messiah. God did not cast her away totally. There is hope of future restoration for the nation as God's covenant people under the reign of Messiah the King at His premillennial return (Romans 11:26-27). This is guaranteed by God's faithfulness to His irrevocable and unilateral covenant given to her fathers (Romans 11:28-32).





Yitzhak Rabin, the former Prime Minister of Israel, just before his assassination said in a rally for peace, "There are enemies of the people. They are trying to attack us in order to torpedo peace - The rally must broadcast to the Israeli public, to the world Jewish public and to many in the Western and outside world that the people of Israel want peace, support peace." Rabin was a man who relentlessly worked to bring peace between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine. In 1994, the world acknowledged his efforts for peace in the Middle East by awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize together with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. He was praised as a "true hero of peace," who tried to bring the Jews and Arabs together.

Now that Rabin is murdered, who will bring lasting peace to Israel? The Americans say they have a "roadmap for peace" in Palestine. Can they really bring peace? In this article, we shall try to find out what the Bible says about the peace of Israel.

Why No Peace in Israel?

The city of peace, Jerusalem, has been full of war and trouble over the last 20 centuries. Why has there been no peace for so long in a land, which God has planted to be a city of peace and prosperity? From the Bible's point of view, several reasons can be cited.

The first reason is that the people of Israel turned away from the God of their fathers, Abraham, Jacob and Isaac, to idols of the nations around them. Though God taught them hard lessons through the Babylonian captivity; except for a few devout Jews, the children of Israel had often rebelled and betrayed their Lord. Even in the modern world, some Jewish men like Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Sigmund Freud, and John Dewey blasphemed against the Lord God Almighty in one way or the other.

The second and most important reason is that they rejected and crucified "the Prince of Peace," the Lord Jesus Christ. Upon rejecting the Son of God, they said, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). As long as they reject Christ the Messiah, they will be without true and lasting peace. Moreover, the Jews invited trouble upon themselves when they



Prabhudas Koshy

killed Christ, saying, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25).

Jesus had warned them of the destruction and dispersion that were coming upon the Jews because of their unrepentant ways. Luke records in chapter 19, verses 41 to 44, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city (Jerusalem), 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."

The much trouble was also partly due to their rejection of God's prophets. Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which 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" (Matthew 23:37-38).

When Will Peace Come to Israel?

Return and Nation-Building

According to biblical prophecy, the people of Israel would be brought back to their own land from all the nations to which they have been dispersed. "And I will bring again the captivity of

my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God" (Amos 9:14-15).

The Jews after about 1,900 years of homelessness were brought back to their own land in 1948. In 1870, the number of Jews in Palestine was zero. But in 1948, the world witnessed the beginning of the fulfilment of the above prophecy as Israel entered into statehood with about 650,000 Jews. As Jews from all over the world started their return to the homeland, Israel's Jewish population increased incredibly. In 1984, their population became 3 million. Today, their population in Palestine is more than 6 million.

Nonetheless, the young nation had to fight many battles against her Arab neighbours. Two of those famous battles are "The Six-Day War" (June 1967); and "The Yom Kippur War" (October 1973). It was reported that in the Six-Day War, the Arabs outnumbered Israelis fifty to one, and were expected to drive the Jews into the sea. But the powerful Arab countries were utterly defeated by Israel in that war.

How could a small nation stand victorious against her powerful enemies who surround her? The answer is that God Almighty has promised to do just that for her. God Almighty has kept His word concerning Israel. So Israel, the young nation, appears to be a miracle. She is God's miracle. All the events in Israel are happening according to God's eternal plan as revealed in the Bible. God spoke through yet another prophet, Jeremiah, "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely" (Jeremiah 32:37). According to these words of prophecy in the Scripture, Israel will enjoy peace and safety for a while. In the light of the above passages, it seems to me that there will be some form of peace agreement that helps Israel to dwell safely for a time.

Though the Bible promises that Israel will continue to live in Palestine, it also warns of

great days of trouble in Israel's future. Two of the great future trouble of Israel, which are predicted in the Bible, are discussed below.

Future Trouble of Israel

God's prophetic words in the Scripture tell us that the stability that the nation of Israel enjoys upon her re-gathering will be eventually disturbed by two invasions by her enemies. One of these is the invasion by a nation called "Gog" from far north (Identified by Bible scholars as a people led by Russia) which comes to attack Israel. Referring to Gog, God spoke through Ezekiel that "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army" (Ezekiel 38:14-15).

Invasion led by "Gog"

In Ezekiel, we read of God's description of the coming invasion by "Gog" as, "And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords . . . After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee . . . And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (38:4, 8-9, 15-16).

Though the prophet used the language of ancient weaponry, which was familiar to his immediate hearers, the passage is clearly talking about a future event of invasion. Furthermore, such an

event has not yet occurred in the history of Israel.

According to this prophecy, Russia will be joined by her allies ("company" in KJV) in her invasion of Israel. Her allies are "Persia," "Ethiopia" and "Libya," "Gomer and its bands" (Identified as East Europeans) and "Togarmah...and all his bands" (Identified as Armenia and may include Turkey). Ezekiel also made reference to another confederation which greets the invading army of Russia with diplomacy. Ezekiel 38:13 says, "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?" The names "Sheba," "Dedan" and "merchant of Tarshish" are identified as a reference to the confederation of Western Europeans, namely Britain and her allies. But Ezekiel says nothing about them as defending Israel. It will be just a diplomatic group.

Hereafter the scenario in Ezekiel's prophecy is one of God's marvellous interventions to deliver Israel from the hands of "Gog" and its company. God will first intervene with an earthquake, "For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground" (Ezekiel 38:19-20). Then God will also bring confusion upon them, causing them to turn against one another – "And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother" (Ezekiel 38:21). Finally, rain, hailstone and fire will He bring upon the advancing army from the north, for the deliverance of Israel from them. "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and

brimstone" (Ezekiel 38:22). Thus, once again God will deliver the nation of Israel from her powerful enemy.

Invasion led by the Antichrist

About this time there will also be a revival of the ancient Roman Empire (the West) under the leadership of the Antichrist. Antichrist will soon make his way to Israel by signing a peace treaty with her (Daniel 9:27). Nonetheless, we are told in Daniel's prophecy that the seven-year covenant will not be a happy one. Because the Antichrist will break the treaty and will bring about a time of great trouble, which Jeremiah referred to as "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). During the last half of his seven-year rule, Antichrist will put the nation of Israel through great trouble; and will even gather a great army of all nations to surround and attack Jerusalem. Through the prophet Zechariah, the Lord foretells, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (14:1-2).

In those awful and miserable days, the nation of Israel will realise that those trouble are God's punishment for rejecting and killing Christ the Messiah. Zechariah the prophet tells us that at this juncture "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son. . ." (12:10). Then the Lord shall descend to deliver the repentant nation of Israel. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (Zechariah 14:3). This great final battle is the battle of Armageddon mentioned in Revelation 16:14, 16.

The Coming of the "Prince of Peace"

Upon their repentance and acknowledgment of Christ, the Jews shall receive help from the Lord. The Lord shall come down and stand upon the mount of Olives to fight the battle for the repented nation of Israel (Zechariah 14). With great vengeance, the Lord shall slaughter the great army that come against Israel under the leadership of Antichrist.

Thus, once and for all God shall remove all the enemies of Israel. This will mark the beginning of Israel's real peaceful and prosperous time under the reign of Christ. From Jerusalem, then, Christ shall reign for a thousand years (Revelation 20). The prophet Isaiah spoke of those days of peaceful reign of Christ from Jerusalem in chapter 2 - "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any

more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD" (verses 2-5). There will be no more war, nor weapons of war. Weapons of war will be transformed for peaceful use, such as for agriculture.

After the thousand year reign on this earth, the Lord shall first destroy this present world and shall unveil the New Jerusalem which He has prepared for His people to live for ever (Revelation 21).

Prepare Yourself to Meet the Lord

The gathering of Israel, the trouble in the Middle East, and the political changes in the West are signs of the Lord's return. When all these signs are happening around us; will we dare to live carelessly and ignorantly? Let us not be like the five foolish virgins in Jesus' parable who missed the coming of the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). Let's constantly purify ourselves from the filthiness of sin and the world. Let us also hasten our labour for the salvation of the people around us. Jesus is coming soon!

ISRAEL'S SALVATION: BY WORKS OR BY FAITH?

Quek Suan Yew



Israel was specially chosen by God out of all the nations of the world. No other nation on earth has the kind of history or special beginning as that of Israel. Israel's special history begins from the 12th chapter of the book of Genesis, when Abraham was called of God to begin a nation that will bless the whole of mankind. Genesis 12:1-3, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

But does this divine favour mean that Israel's salvation was to be different from the people of all

other nations? Was there a special way of salvation for Israel than the rest of the world? The answer must come from God's revelation. Our prejudices and man's notions must be set aside in order to find the answer to these questions.

Since the Fall

Before the Fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, we know that salvation was by works. Genesis 2:16-17, "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." From these verses, we find that Adam would be punished with death if he ate of the forbidden fruit. Conversely, it meant that Adam would live if he had obeyed. This truth is known in theological circles as the Covenant of

Works. How long the test lasted, the Bible did not say. One thing we know for certain was that they had no children yet, when this test was in operation. Therefore, we may safely conclude with some probability that the test may have lasted for a few weeks, at the most months, but not years.

The Bible reveals to us that Adam did sin and he did die. Not only did he die but all of his descendants, born of both human father and mother, will also die. This is because of sin in our lives. Romans 5:12-14 teaches that, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

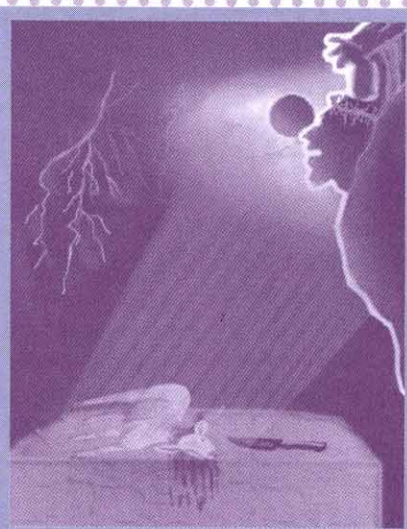
All mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, are in the same state of sin, totally depraved and in need of the Saviour. Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Theology of Messianic Fulfilment

We know from the Bible that Israel was specially chosen by God. Now we need to find out from the Bible what this special privilege is. If this special privilege means that Israel would be saved differently from the rest of the world, then Israel will indeed be very special from a salvific standpoint. On the other hand, if Israel is special because of another truth, then this special favour she receives from God will have no bearing on her salvation. The answer lies in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he

had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." God brought Israel out of Egypt and made her a nation unto



Himself because of the covenantal promise that the LORD made with Israel's forefathers. What was this promise?

This covenantal promise was initially made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob whom the Bible describes as the Lord's anointed. They were specially called of God to bring forth the nation of Israel. That is why Israel's God is also known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Matthew 22:32 records, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of

Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This was a Messianic covenant rather than a covenant of special salvation for the nation of Israel and a different one for the rest of the world.

God said to Jacob, in Genesis 28:14-15, "And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." This promise of God to Jacob (Israel) is the same as the promise that God made with Isaac and Abraham. This promise centres on the blessing which is for the whole world, not just for Israel.

This promise is none other than the fulfilment of Genesis 3:15, the first gospel preached by God Himself to all mankind. Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This gospel message tells us that the seed of a woman, whom we know from the New Testament that He is the Lord Jesus Christ, will bruise the head of the serpent and in the process, the

serpent will bruise His heel. This is a reference to the death of Christ on Calvary (serpent bruising His heel) and by His death, Satan is defeated once and for all. Jesus Christ rose from the dead to defeat death and hence destroy the one who has power over death, Satan himself (Jesus bruising the head of the serpent). Hebrews 2:14, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Israel was a favoured nation, but not in terms of Israel being saved by another way from the rest of the world. Israel was the favoured nation because it was through Israel that the Messiah would finally be born into this world to die for all of us. It was hence a Messianic blessing. Israel was made the guardian of God's Word and His Tabernacle and later the Temple of Solomon and also the ones who were given the special honour of the Levitical priesthood making acceptable offerings to God. They were privileged in terms of being the chosen nation and people through whom the Messiah would finally come. We know from the Scripture that not all Israel were saved. To read and infer more than this would be far-stretching the Scripture. Romans 9:6 says, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

Theology of Salvation

In regard to Israel's salvation, we find that they are like all people, sinners in need of the Saviour. The Bible reveals to us that there is only one Saviour, not many. In 1 Timothy 2:3-6, we read, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." And in John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

We have already established above, that all (Jews and Gentiles) are totally depraved and are sinners alike and that there is only one Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the whole world. Then Jews and Gentiles alike need to believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. The Jews and Gentiles (e.g.,

Rahab, Ruth, etc.) in the Old Testament looked forward by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and the New Testament believers (both Gentiles and Jews) look backward to the Lord Jesus Christ. All people look to Calvary for their salvation. This is, therefore, a matter of faith for all parties throughout the ages. The biblical content in which the faith is based upon differs because of progressive revelation but all must believe by faith in the Word of God in order to be saved. Romans 3:20-30 clearly states, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."

Conclusion

The nation of Israel is favoured by God in terms of being the chosen nation through whom the Messiah finally came. But this favour does not mean that Israel's salvation is any different from that of the rest of the world. All, without exception, must come to God by faith. Hebrews 11:6 makes it very clear, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And Romans 14:23b asserts, "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Salvation for all, including the people of Israel, is by faith. It has been so in the Old and New Testaments and will continue to be so till the Lord returns. Amen.



The Bible is full of prophecies. It is important that we interpret prophecy accurately and understand it correctly. In understanding prophecy, Israel is the key. But there are scholars who say that Israel is no longer in God's plan. Since Israel failed God by crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ, God punished Israel by casting her away. God has disowned Israel, and has replaced her with the Church. All the promises God made to Israel are transferred to the Church. So all Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel, they say, must be read spiritually or allegorically to refer to the Church. No more Israel today, only the Church.

There are two questions we want to ask: (1) Has God cast Israel away? (2) Should we spiritualise away prophecies that pertain to Israel?

Has God Cast Israel Away?

The Apostle Paul answered this question in Romans 11:1, "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid." In the original, the words "God forbid" are the strongest possible expression for saying that something will never happen. In other words, it is something impossible: "God will never ever cast away Israel." And in Romans 11:26, Paul said, "And so all Israel shall be saved." God will keep the promises He has made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And these promises to Israel concern (1) the Jewish people, (2) the Promised Land, (3) the Davidic throne, and (4) the future millennial temple.

Israel and the Church in Prophecy

Jeffrey Khoo

Did Israel not sin against God? Did Israel not crucify her Messiah? Was not Israel unfaithful? Yes, yes, and yes. But the sins of Israel do not cancel out God's promises. Understand that God is greater than all our failures. God keeps His Word. In the Old Testament, we find Israel deep in sin. For 400 years, God sent His prophets to rebuke the people, to call them to repent, to warn them of severe punishment if they did not. What did Israel do? They killed His prophets, one by one. Did God punish Israel? Yes. In 586 B.C., God sent the Babylonians to take Israel into captivity. The Jews became slaves in Babylon. God punished Israel, but did He forsake Israel? No. In Jeremiah 29:10, He told them ahead of time that they would suffer for 70 years in Babylon, and after that they would be allowed to return to the Promised Land. Israel failed God as well when they crucified their Messiah. God punished Israel by sending the Roman army to raze Jerusalem to the ground in A.D. 70. The Jews were dispossessed of their land, and scattered to all parts of the world.

God has punished Israel severely but He remains faithful to His promises. In Isaiah 11:11-12, He again promised that He would gather them back into the Promised Land one day. This finally happened on May 14, 1948. The fact that Israel as a nation exists today testifies of the veracity of God's Word, and the truthfulness of His promises. God never breaks His Word. That is a great comfort to us.

How many times have we failed the Lord already in our Christian lives? Are we more righteous than Israel? No. We are equally sinful, are we not? When we sin against God, does He cast us away? Do we lose our salvation? No. He punishes us. He disciplines us. But He does not disown us. Those whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. We are His children, and God will not disown His children. He loves them too much. In the same way, He loves Israel too much to disown her. Israel has a special place in God's redemptive plan.

The Church has not taken away the promises God

made to Israel. Paul tells us that we, Gentile believers, must understand our place. Romans 11:23-26 tells us that we in the Church are but wild olive branches that have been engrafted into the natural olive tree which belongs to Israel. The Church ought not to despise Israel. If God is able to graft us, wild olive branches, into the natural olive tree, how much more easily it will be for Him to graft the natural branches back into the natural olive tree when the time of salvation arrives.

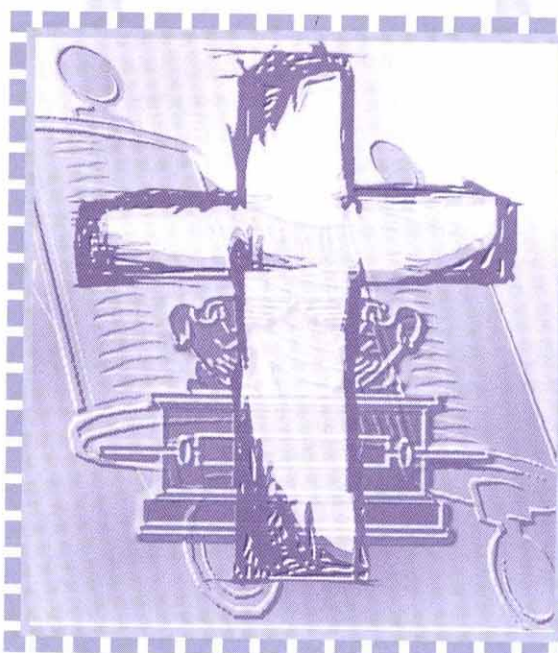
When will this happen? In verse 25, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." In other words, when the Gentile Church is full, when the last Gentile gets converted, Christ will return to deliver Israel from her enemies. Verse 26, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." This will happen at the second coming, at the end of the Great Tribulation period, at the end of Jacob's trouble. Has God cast Israel away? God forbid.

Should Old Testament Prophecies Be Spiritualised Away?

God means what He says, and says what He means. Faithful interpretation of prophetic Scripture involves taking God at His Word. If we are to be faithful students, we must understand biblical prophecies and promises in their normal, literal sense.

How do we know that prophecies must be interpreted literally? Well, consider what happened when Christ came the first time. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament with regard to Christ's first coming. God told Israel way ahead of time that their Messiah would come. He even gave clues on roughly when they could expect Him to come.

Let us learn from the wise men from the East (cf. Matthew



2:1-2). These Eastern men were not from the Far East, but Near East, probably from Persia. How did they know about the King of the Jews? Not just by studying astronomy, but by studying the Jewish Scriptures, probably the prophecies of Daniel. Remember? God gave to Daniel visions about end-time events. Daniel received those visions when he was living in exile in the East, under the Babylonians and later the Medo-Persians.

Daniel must have preached the gospel, and left behind the Jewish Scriptures for the people there.

These wise men, I believe, were Old Testament believers. They were looking forward to the first coming of Christ. They must have studied Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:25). On the 69th week, the Messianic Prince will come. They must have calculated that the time was about right. The 69 weeks or 483 years had passed; the King of the Jews was about to arrive any time soon. So they looked out for a sign, and saw a special Star that miraculously appeared, and they followed it to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem they asked Herod, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). Herod, of course, got very upset by this news of a newborn King. He felt threatened by this new King. So he

summoned the Bible scholars of his day and asked them to tell him where Christ would be born. And they said "in Bethlehem" (Micah 5:2).

Do you now see the point? We must read prophecy in the light of its literal meaning. The wise men read prophecy literally; the chief priests and scribes understood prophecy literally. 69 weeks (483 years) mean just that, and Bethlehem means Bethlehem.

The Bible talks a lot about the second coming of Christ.

Since the first coming prophecies were fulfilled literally, we can expect the second coming prophecies to be fulfilled literally as well. When God said that there would be a future millennial reign of Christ on earth, it means just that. In Revelation 20:1-7, the word "a thousand years" is used six times. Christ will come and rule this world for a thousand years and we will reign with Him. 1,000 years mean 1,000 years. When Christ said He would descend in the same way He ascended to heaven, it means just that. He ascended to heaven in Acts 1:11 from the Mount of Olives; He will descend and step on the same Mount of Olives when He returns (Zechariah 14:4). Bethlehem means Bethlehem, Mount of Olives means Mount of Olives. Israel means Israel. Church means Church. We must not confuse Israel with the Church. Neither should we replace Israel with the Church. Israel still has a special place in God's redemptive plan. So let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Let us pray that God will save Israel. Let us pray for the Lord to return soon.

God does not want us to be in the dark. He wants us to know the future. He wants us to study prophecy. And there is a special blessing that comes from God when we study prophecy carefully and faithfully. In Revelation 1:3, we read, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Let us be like the wise men from the East!



Vrambout Marc



Psalm 22:1 – "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"

Today, there is much conflict in the Middle East: the continual trouble in Israel between Israelis and Palestinians. In Europe, there are also sporadic disturbances: sometimes attempts are made to burn down synagogues. What is the cause of all this turmoil? Could it be because there are anti-Semitic feelings in Europe and the Middle East?

We cannot claim that we live in similar circumstances as those before World War II, when anti-Jewish sentiments were very obvious in many parts of Europe. In those days of the Nazi-regime, the Aryan race was considered superior and the Jewish race a threat to humanity. Six million Jews were killed, mostly in concentration camps. 90% of the East European Jews were exterminated. The Jewish men, women and children who underwent these atrocities might have remembered Psalm 22:1 and they might have cried out in the same earnestness, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken us?"

The writer of this article was born in Belgium about 20 years after those awful events. He does not have first hand information. However, when he became a young adult, he was sent to Germany to do his military service. In the beginning of the nineties, a one-year military service was still compulsory for all Belgian male citizens. In the long aftermath of the war, many were still sent to Germany as a protective measure. One day there was that outing which this soldier will never forget. We went by bus from Koln (Germany) to Belgium to visit the former concentration camp in Breendonck.

After walking through the cold and dark corridors of the camp, we arrived at the torture room with all necessary equipment for such practice. At the actual museum, the soldiers viewed some pictures from the War archives. One series of photographs was particularly shocking. Those

pictures portrayed rows of men who were standing naked in the snow. Our eyes gazed upon this extreme humiliation and we could imagine the severe sickness that must have soon come upon them. Some of these men, if not all, were certainly Jews. "God, O God, have you forsaken them?"

A few years later, a family wanted to visit this place in Breendonck again, but surprisingly the museum had been closed to the public. Apparently, some people wanted to conceal the truth of the past or might have thought that it was not educational for future generations to be reminded of what happened in World War II. But, is this the right approach? Is it right to try to conceal things that have actually happened in the past?

Psalm 14:1-3 says: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The beginning of Psalm 14 tells us that the works of the godless men are bad: they are filthy and even more so, they are abominable! The Holocaust gives us, in this respect, a good picture of what a man without God really is: he is worse than a beast! The fool has said in his heart that there is no God, and he wants to cover up his sins. He does not want to be reminded of his own sins, not even the sin committed by a previous generation. Many will remember the trains of World War II that transported men like animals to an awful destination; and one cannot forget that heap of little shoes which belonged to the children that were exterminated in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But strangely, a sovereign God allowed these things to happen. So, those who faced torture, humiliation and death, had they not the right to say: "O God, O God, why hast thou forsaken us?"

But let us now consider a portion of Psalm 22, a prophetic Psalm that God revealed through David. Psalm 22 must be seen in this light: it is a prophetic Psalm! Almost throughout the whole Psalm, except toward the end of it, the first person singular is used. This person seems to be going through a lot of suffering as described in the Psalm. But these agonies bring about good to others. For toward the end of the Psalm, when the seed of Jacob comes in the picture, the announcements become beautiful and pleasant: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations (Psalm 22:27-28)."

This quote seems to describe the Messianic Kingdom where people from the ends of the world will worship the Messiah. Psalm 22 is really a Messianic Psalm! But has this prophesy already been fulfilled? Many Jews believe that the Messiah is

yet to come, but Christians believe that He has already come in history. Psalm 22 gives us the clues as to what type of Messiah we are to expect. One wonders whether Jesus Christ (the Son of David), whose life is recorded in the four Gospels, is the Messiah. The Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John give true historical records of the life of the 'Son of David' who came to this earth about 2,000 years ago.

"Thou art my God from my mother's belly," says Psalm 22:10b. In the Old Testament, the Messiah is never spoken of as having an earthly father. David speaks here of the Messiah having an earthly mother. Indeed, Jesus Christ had only an earthly mother, the virgin Mary (Luke 1:35), who had conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the major part of Psalm 22, a suffering Messiah is portrayed. In the seventh verse, it says: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head." This verse has its fulfilment in Matthew 27:39 where we read about those passers-by at the cross of Jesus Christ: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads." In the eighth verse of Psalm 22, the scoffers said to Him: "He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." This verse is fulfilled in Matthew 27:43 where evil men said: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him."

Psalm 22:14-18 further describes the Messiah's

suffering on the cross. The sixteenth verse especially: "The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet" is fulfilled in John 19:18 which describes Jesus' crucifixion. After they had nailed Him, they raised the cross and put it in a socket. As a result, His bones were out of joint (the fourteenth verse). The eighteenth verse states: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," is fulfilled in John 19:24. For soldiers had stripped His clothings and parted them among one another. And the fifteenth verse mentions: "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws," and this is a figure for Jesus' extreme "thirst" (John 19:28). All these passages again describe the agonies that Jesus Christ underwent while hanging on that wooden cross.

And lastly, as it is recorded in Matthew 27:46, the 'Son of David' exclaimed just before His death: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Definitely, the Psalm was not about David, who had written those words. It was all about the One who is greater than David, the King of kings who entered triumphantly into Jerusalem (John 12:12-15). But in the same week, He was betrayed, led to the hill 'Golgotha,' outside the walls of Jerusalem, and was nailed on the cross. And it was on the cross, He uttered the words of Psalm 22:1.

Why did the King of kings die in great suffering and pain as David predicted? He didn't die the cruel death because he

had committed some crime. The prophet Isaiah said that "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:9b). Then, why did He die? The prophet answers, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10a). Indeed, Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice for sins of all those who would believe on Him. Through the atoning work of this great Kingly Priest, who offered Himself up on the cross, the wrath of God is taken away from the true children of Abraham, even all those who trust in Him for forgiveness and salvation. The prophet Isaiah puts it like this: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

All of us who have transgressed the law of God deserve punishment, even more, the wrath of God rests upon such persons. It is to provide deliverance from the wrath of God against our sins that Jesus Christ became the 'Perfect Sacrifice.' He took our sins; and He suffered the wrath of God on our behalf. This is the ultimate reason why Jesus Christ cried in agony: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

When the curse was laid upon Jesus Christ, He was truly forsaken by God. His complete separation from God lasted, however, only for a short time. For Psalm 16:10 says: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." God was also satisfied with His saving work on the cross as Isaiah 53:11a explains: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

We do know from the accounts in the Gospel that His body was laid in a sepulchre and was preserved. Jesus, the Prophet about whom Moses prophesied (Deuteronomy 18:15), had predicted beforehand that He would rise from the dead (John 2:19-21). Even more, after His resurrection, He would ascend into heaven as foretold in Psalm 68:18 and predicted by Jesus Christ in John 6:62. And after He had ascended into heaven, He would be seated at the right hand of God the Father (as announced in Psalm 110:1 and fulfilled in Mark 16:19) from whence He will come to judge (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

These and numerous other prophetic passages in the Bible are like many puzzle pieces that we try to fit together. We are guided by the facts laid down in history. Every piece makes it clearer and clearer as we consider the historical person, Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah, the great Prophet, Priest and King.

Now we have to consider an important question. Who are the seed of Abraham as mentioned in Psalm 22:30? In verse 26, it is mentioned that "they shall praise the LORD that seek him." Indeed, true children of Abraham are seekers after the Lord. They behold the "Lamb of God" that taketh away the sin of the

world. To be such a child, one has to be declared righteous by God's righteous servant (Isaiah 53:11).

Let us first look at Abraham himself. Genesis 15:6 tells us that Abraham believed in the Lord, and counted it to him for righteousness. So Abraham had trusted in the Messiah and was justified. When Abraham was asked by God to offer up his son, Isaac, he believed that God could raise him up from the dead. In obedience, he wanted to slay his son but God provided a ram to be slain. Abraham himself was saved through the blood of the "Lamb of God."

Let us look at Moses. He would lead the people out of Egypt. The night before leaving, they kept the Passover meal. Moses sprinkled the blood of the lamb upon the door posts and all the firstborn of the Israelites were saved, while Pharaoh's firstborn passed away that night. Moses trusted that the blood of the lamb could cover the sins of the firstborn so that they would not die; Moses saw from a distance that only the blood of the "Lamb of God" could take away the sins of the people.

When the Israelites were in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, many were bitten by snakes because of their sin. Then Moses lifted up a brazen serpent on the pole. All the Israelites who looked toward the brazen serpent were healed. In fact, all the Israelites who looked even further: to the "Lamb of God" that would be hung upon a tree would be saved. And Joshua brought the people over the Jordan into the Promised Land, but Jesus leads the children of Abraham into heaven. So, the seed of Abraham are those who put their trust in Jesus (Psalm 22:4-5). Their hearts shall live forever (Psalm 22:26)!

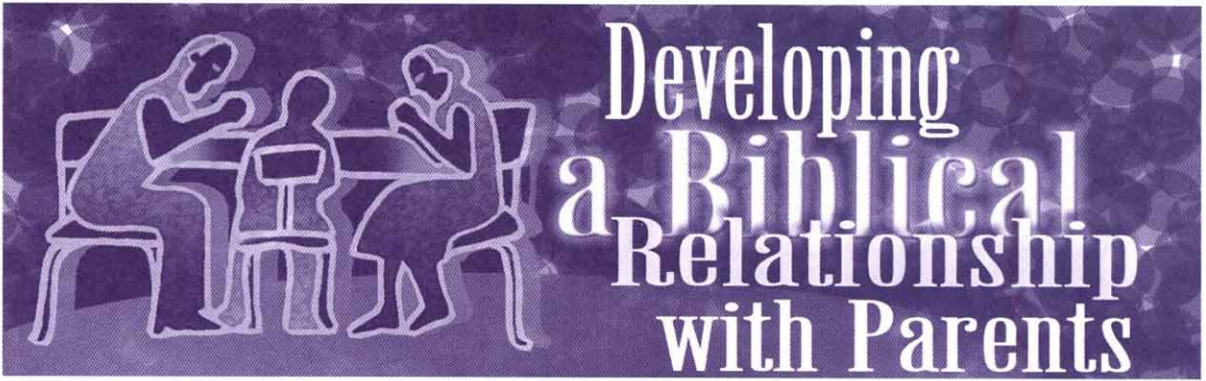
Finally, the word "Holocaust" has the following meaning in the Old Testament: "total sacrifice by fire to Yahweh, normally of an unblemished male animal." All these animal sacrifices offered

up for the sins of the people, as described in the Old Testament, point to no other than "the Lamb of God" which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). All those who were facing the gas chamber, but had received Christ as their Lord and Saviour, their souls would live forever. And even if a man has the same attitude as a former Nazi, would humble himself with a contrite heart and would be clothed with the robe of righteousness (Christ's righteous life and His sacrificial death), his soul would not see death. But on the contrary, eternal punishment awaits those, Jew or Gentile alike, who reject the voice of the "Son of God" that once exclaimed on Golgotha: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

O reader, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

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Philip Heng



Our parents brought us into the world, fed, clothed and educated us. No matter how old we become, we will always remain our parents' children. However, we may acquire another set of parents by adoption or marriage and we must love them well too.

God commands us and expects us to treat our parents well, so we must treat them well. It is better to show love to our parents whilst they are alive than try to make amends when they are dying or dead and gone. An ounce of love now [when they are alive] is worth far more than a ton after they are dead and gone. Some simple love-gifts now for our parents to enjoy while they are still healthy is far better than sending them on a holiday trip when they are too weak to walk, sending them lots of delicacies when they are too sick in hospital to eat, giving them an elaborate funeral which they cannot see, or erecting a monument in their memory after they are gone.

Let us treat our parents always with respect, not just with toleration. Love them

genuinely. The following are some practical suggestions for maintaining a biblical attitude toward parents:

1. We should be grateful to God for the Christian heritage we have received through our parents. We should uphold the name of Christ and that of the family (cf. Proverbs 22:1).
2. We should obey them (cf. Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; Proverbs 1:8; 23:22). We must listen, hearken, and do as we are told! (Parents must expect children to obey.)
3. We should imitate them in the truth (cf. Genesis 18:19; 1 Corinthians 11:1).
4. We should honour them (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2). We should think well and speak well of them – in front of their faces, behind their backs. Under the Mosaic law, the one who curses his parents is worthy of death (Exodus 21:17; Deuteronomy 27:16). Don't mutter under your breath or harbour unkind thoughts against your parents.

Remember their birthdays, wedding anniversary and other special days. Buy them a gift or take them out for a meal.

5. We should be courteous and respectful towards them. Children may expect from their parents (a) protection, (b) provision, (c) guidance, (d) control, but at the same time, children must give to their parents, as to those in authority, (a) obedience, (b) submission, (c) respect, (d) honour.

Address them when we leave for or return home from work, school, and elsewhere. Spend time to converse with them and let them know how we are getting along. Do not leave them out of conversations.

Absorb as much shock of new surroundings, situations and circumstances for them especially if they are getting senile (Romans 15:1) or when their bodies are weakening (Ecclesiastes 12:3-6). Remember that when we were young, they took all the shocks and cared for us. Now we must do the same for them as they go through their "second childhood."

At meals, address them before eating. Let them precede you in eating the first mouthful. Pass food to them

and serve them. Be alert to their needs. Thank your father for providing the meal and your mother for cooking. Ask to be excused before leaving the table.

6. We should support them by providing for their physical needs in old age (1 Timothy 5:4). When you start earning, be sure to give them an allowance from your salary. Even if they are well-off and do not need our support, giving to them demonstrates our love for them.

During old age and infirmity, parents expect (a) physical support and attention, (b) social contact for a sense of well-being and being wanted, (c) monetary help for the provision of daily and other needs.

7. We should care for them and serve them in sickness and in health. Ask them regularly about their health, comfort and welfare. Arrange for their comfort and welfare if you are unable to be present with them while you are away on travel, business trips or holidays (Genesis 45:23; John 19:26, 27).

8. We should be considerate and thoughtful toward them (Philippians 4:5). For example, (a) Be punctual for meals and do not keep them waiting. (b) Help to wash up after meals (unless told not to). (c) Inform our parents when we are going out and

where to, so that we can be contacted in case of emergency. (d) Call home if we are late in returning or get a message to them somehow, so as not to let them worry unnecessarily.

9. Be patient with them. Parents may have old habits which are difficult to break (e.g. smoking, alcoholic drinking, gambling, and swearing). Pray for them and help them to overcome. Do not rebuke or embarrass them; rather intreat (1 Timothy 5:1). Do not hold grudges within your heart against them for how badly they treated you in the past (Ephesians 4:32). Do not spite, snub or hate them.

10. Be honest with them. Do not lie to them about your faith in Christ. Do not betray their trust in you, especially over your religion (1 Corinthians 10:32).

11. Do not wish them dead. As hungry vultures swoop upon their prey (Matthew 24:28), some may long for their parents' death because of prolonged sickness, or perhaps they are thinking of their inheritance. God forbid such thoughts in our hearts.

12. Your love for them must always be exhibited through (a) giving, (b) forgiving, (c) sharing, (d) caring.

13. Let us show our love for them by our (a) attitude, (b) words, (c) reaction, (d) action.

14. Parents are not difficult to please. Parents wish their children well. Their children's success is usually measured by: (a) a good education, (b) a good job, (c) a good life-partner, (d) grandchildren, but most of all, by a godly and morally upright life.

15. Children's honour and prosperity will reflect favourably on parents and gladden their hearts. To many parents, a good name is better than ill-gotten riches and family honour than fortunes (Proverbs 22:1).

16. Do not cause your parents heartache, shame, remorse or regret by ending up as: (a) a criminal or jail-bird, (b) a spendthrift, (c) a profligate, (d) a drunkard, (e) a drug addict, (f) a gangster.

If you are one of the above or on the way to becoming one, I urge you to change your course and make amends before it is too late. What did your parents do to deserve this?

17. Do not send your parents to their graves in sorrow knowing: (a) you are in trouble, (b) you have blackened the family name, (c) you hate them.

18. Even if your parents have let you down, you are answerable to God for your own life and what you make of it. Don't plot revenge.

God loveth a cheerful giver

2 Corinthians 9:7

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is worthy of your generous support. For information on sending your support to the Bible Witness Literature Ministry, please refer to page 2.



God's purpose of Christian marriage is recorded in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." In these days of disputes, divorces and disintegration of families, many wonder whether their marriages will survive? The following testimonies by C. H. Spurgeon and Alexander Maclaren about their wives' contribution to their blessed marriage show us how it is possible to have God's purpose of marriage fulfilled in Christian marriages. Let us emulate them in our marital relationships.

Spurgeon's Testimony

"Sometimes we have seen a model marriage, founded on pure love, and cemented in mutual esteem. Therein, the husband acts as a tender head; and the wife, as a true spouse, realises the model marriage-relation, and sets forth what our oneness with the Lord ought to be. She delights in her husband: in his character, his affection; to her, he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes he is all-in-all; her heart's love belongs to him, and to him only. She finds sweetest content and solace in his company, his fellowship, his fondness: he is her little world, her Paradise, her choice treasure. At any time, she would gladly lay aside her own pleasure to find it doubled in gratifying him. She is glad

to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no renown for herself; his honour is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She would defend his name with her dying breath; safe enough is he where she can speak for him. The domestic circle is her kingdom; that she may be there to create happiness and comfort, is her life work; and his smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks. Even in her dress, she thinks of him; without constraint she consults his taste, and considers nothing beautiful which is distasteful to him. A tear from his eye, because of any unkindness on her part would grievously torment her. She asks not how her behaviour may please a stranger, or how another's judgement may approve her conduct; let her beloved be content, and she is glad. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not quite understand; but she believes in them all, and anything that she can do to promote them, she delights to perform. He lavishes love on her, and, in return, she lavishes love on him. Their object in life is common. There are points where their affections so intimately unite that none could tell which is

first and which is second Happy woman and happy man! If heaven be found on earth, they have it! At last, the two are so blended, so engrafted on one stem, that their old age presents a lovely attachment, a common sympathy, by which its infirmities are greatly alleviated, and its burdens are transformed into fresh bonds of love. So happy a union of will, sentiment, thought, and heart exists between them, that the two streams of their life have washed away the dividing bank, and run on as one broad current of united existence till their common joy falls into the ocean of eternal felicity." (C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography Vol. I*, "The Early Years," p. 410).

Alexander Maclaren's Testimony

"In 1859 Marion became my wife. God allowed us to be together till the dark December of 1884. Others could speak of her charm, her beauty, her gifts and goodness. Most of what she was to me is for ever locked in my heart. But I would fain that, in any notices of what I am, or have been able to do, it should be told that the best

Excellent Models of Christian Marriage

Prabhudas Koshy



part of it all came and comes from her. We read and thought together, and her clear, bright intellect illumined obscurities and "rejoiced in the truth." We worked and bore together, and her courage and deftness made toil easy and charmed away difficulties. She lived a life of nobleness, of strenuous effort, of aspiration, of sympathy, self-forgetfulness, and love. She was my guide, my inspirer, my corrector, my reward. Of all human formative influences on my character and life hers is the strongest and the best. To write of me and not to name her is to present a fragment."

(Maclaren, *Exposition of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 17, Pt. 2, p. vii).

Some Practical Counsels for Couples

Here are some counsels for married couples that they may lead a joyful and fruitful life in the Lord.

1. Be frequent in praying together and in discussing

spiritual things out of God's Word.

2. Let there be discourses about the needs and goals of God's kingdom rather than earthly matters only.

3. Ensure that your hearts are not given into temptations and unfaithfulness to each other.

4. Keep your life open to each other. Between husband and wife, let there be no secrets, which could lead to distrust and hatred.

5. Serve each other with respect, humility and sincere love. Do not speak ill of each other in private or public.

6. Teach each other by leading an exemplary life.

7. Assist each other in finishing family and business duties.

8. Do not forget to appreciate and commend the other.

9. Abstain from all that exasperate and frustrate the other.

10. Lovingly and gently confront each other to correct and to admonish. Do not cover up your fault but seek forgiveness by humbly apologising.

11. Co-operate enthusiastically in the nurture, education, discipline and counselling of your children.

12. Encourage and support each other to actively engage in God's work in the church.

A family which builds upon God's Word and prayer,

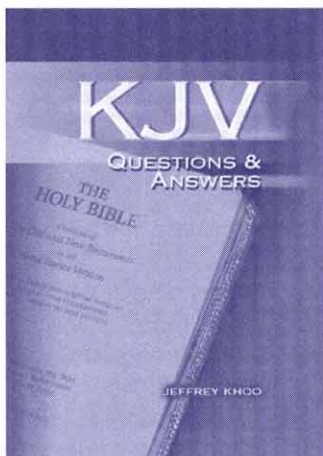
A family which gives unto God's work in church,

A family which welcomes God's people with cheer

Will always receive God's blessings, sure and rich.



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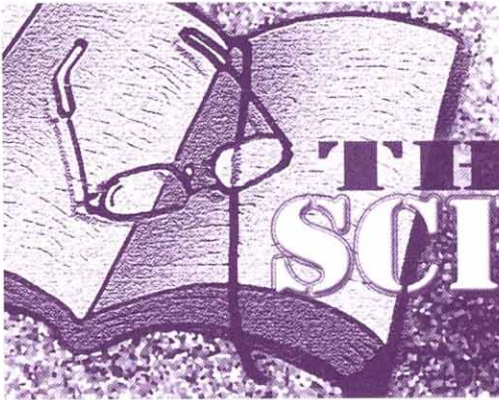


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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Jack Sin



The Holy Bible is the Word of the living God, and it is

indestructible, incorruptible, indispensable, infallible and inexhaustible. Jesus our Lord instructed, in John 5:39, to search the Scriptures. What does it mean and how can we do it practically? We shall use the acrostic to assist us in this needful spiritual exercise.

1. **Studiously** (Psalm 119:12; 2 Timothy 2:15). We need to be diligent to use our mental faculties to study hard and strive to understand and apply the Word. It requires heart work and hard work.

2. **Earnestly** (Psalm 119:4). There must be enthusiasm, zeal and fervour in seeking to know God's will and Word.

3. **Anxiously** (Psalm 119:9, 20). Are you expectant and curious to know more of the truth of God? Have an inquisitive mind to learn more.

4. **Regularly** (Psalm 1:2; Acts 17:2, 11). There is to be a systematic and frequent reading and study of the Word, not haphazardly nor in a disorganised manner.

5. **Carefully** (Psalm 119:30; 2 Timothy 3:15, 17). The study of the Word requires meticulous and careful scrutiny with proper rules of interpretation, and not a superficial, cursory glance only.

6. **Humbly** (Psalm 119:36; Jeremiah 15:16). The proud and arrogant will not find much in the Word. The meek and humble shall be blessed and, thus, we need to seek God's Word with great humility.

7. **Thankfully** (Psalm 119:7; Jeremiah 15:16) Do we rejoice and give thanks to God for the promises, warnings and admonitions in His Word? If we pause to think, we have cause to praise and thank God for giving us this map and compass of life.

8. **Happily** (Psalm 19:8; 119:16). Blessed is the man who searches the Word, for his joy will be greater in the understanding of God's Word.

9. **Eagerly** (Psalm 119:33; 1 Peter 2:2). Are you enthused and excited about the knowledge of the most High God? Do it ardently, not perfunctorily.

10. **Systematically** (Luke 24:27). Use a guide like *RPG* (Read Pray Grow) or read through one or two chapters of the Bible a day at a certain time which is best for you and keep up the good habit and schedule consistently.

11. **Consultatively** (Psalm 1:1-2; 119:24). It is the nourishment of our souls. It will give us great spiritual success and strength for the day. Check up commentaries, dictionaries and concordances to understand deeply.

12. **Reverently** (Psalm 19:9; 119:15). Study the Word with great respect and awe, for the Author is none other than the Almighty God Himself. Do not take the promises and warnings lightly, but heed them dutifully.

13. **Intently** (Psalm 119:40; Proverbs 2:1-5). Do it with purpose and one desire in mind, to obey and to practise it, and not just for the sake of soothing our conscience.

14. **Prayerfully** (Psalm 119:18; James 1:5). Always commence with prayer to ask the Lord for wisdom in understanding His Word.

15. **Trustingly** (Psalm 119:43; Acts 24:14). We must believe and trust the Word of God as we read it and not doubt or be sceptical about what the Bible says. Faith is important for the proper handling of God's Word.

16. **Unashamedly** (Psalm 119:6, 35-36). Are we embarrassed if our colleagues or parents or friends see us reading the Bible? This is one thing we ought not to be bashful about.

17. **Retentively** (Psalm 119:11; Jeremiah 20:9). Read to remember also. Make short notes (better than long memories) in a booklet or Bible as you go along and commit some relevant verses to memory too.

18. **Expectantly** (Acts 1:8; Isaiah 55:11). Do you yearn and expect God to minister to your heart, and to guide you? If you seek, you shall find. Expect God to act in accordance to His Word.

19. **Satisfyingly** (Job 23:12; Psalm 119:50). Are you occupied with the world or with the Word, with gold or with God? We ought to be satisfied and contented with God's revelation and not to seek extra-biblical things that cannot satisfy.

That brings us to the end of our exercise of searching the Scriptures. Do it for your soul's spiritual nourishment and health. Amen.

Wholehearted toward God

Simon Nagarajan

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23).

Our service for God should not be confined only to the church. We are to serve the Lord wherever He has placed us and in whatever we do – in our relationships at home between husband and wife, parent and child, or in the work-place between employer and employee, and between friends. How ought we to serve the Lord? We are to serve Him with our whole heart. The Bible tells us: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord..." Colossians 3:23. That is the right spirit and proper attitude of service.

When I was a student at the Far Eastern Bible College, Principal Rev Timothy Tow reminded us from time to time to carry out our students' duties "with wholehearted diligence." He said that when a job is done half-heartedly, the work becomes twice as difficult and burdensome. But, when the work is done wholeheartedly, it becomes easy and joyful

and much more is accomplished because the spirit of service is right.

When we want to succeed in worldly pursuits, we put our whole heart and mind into getting things done. Should we not have the same attitude, if not more, in the service of our Almighty God? Is He not worthy of our best and our all? Brethren, the whole heart is needed when we worship and serve our Risen Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

Wholehearted Personal Worship of God

The Psalmist praised God thus: "I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works" (Psalm 9:1). Brethren, have we been losing interest in our quiet time and rushing through our prayers? Have the activities of the day drained away the best part of us? Are we "washed out" by the demands of the world, of our work, even of our family? While reading God's Word, do our minds wander to our worldly cares and concerns, the phone calls to make, marketing

and shopping to do, the bills to pay, etc? Do we give to the Lord the little of our time and energy that is left? Brethren, this is not honouring God. We need to discipline ourselves to concentrate on God, to go deeper into His Word and be serious in walking closely with Him. The Psalmist was serious in getting into wholehearted fellowship with God. He meditated on the goodness of the Lord constantly and counted God's blessings daily, one by one. It is true that many of God's children long for a better life, but they do not realize that they must give God time, each day in the inner chambers through His Spirit, in order to renew and sanctify their lives. May God help us to seriously give our whole heart in quiet meditation before God and in worshipping Him.

Wholehearted Public Worship of God

"Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation" (Psalm 111:1). As we approach God's throne of grace on the Lord's Day, let us remind ourselves that we are not coming "just to attend a Worship Service" but to participate wholeheartedly in it. With the right spirit and attitude, our hearts will celebrate the pure joy of worship. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant in Matthew 22:37: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Let us not allow domestic squabbles, just before coming for Sunday Worship, to rob us of the joy of worship. Let us not render half-hearted worship to the Almighty God. As we step into the sanctuary, let us quieten our hearts and attune our hearts and spirits in wholehearted worship.

Wholehearted Personal Walk with God

"Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). When believers obey God's Word and walk the strait and narrow path, many trials are averted and we bring less sorrow and pain into our lives. I am not talking about obeying "selectively" but the total obedience of God's commandments and placing our trust and faith in God. We have to constantly pray

with all our hearts that we will not depart from God's precepts (Psalm 119:69) but keep them in our hearts and obey them. Storing God's Word in our hearts is a deterrent to sin. The Psalmist testified: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). This should encourage us to memorise God's Word and put it to work in our lives, making it a vital guide in everything we do. God has promised favour upon His children who are obedient to Him: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart" (Psalm 119:2).

Great saints and servants of the Lord have their fair share of trials and sufferings. No one is spared from trials and tribulations for God has a purpose for them in their lives. But when the "dark clouds of life" descend upon us, let us turn to the Lord and seek His face for grace and strength to see us through. The prophet Isaiah testified: "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall" (Isaiah 25:4). What blessed assurance! When on our knees, we pour out our hearts to the Lord, we will rise to our feet in confidence that God has heard our prayers and that He will take care of all that we have committed wholeheartedly unto Him. The Psalmist pleaded with the Lord, "I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:58). If you rise to your feet with a "not-so-sure-God-has-heard-my-prayer" feeling, most likely, you have only entreated God's mercies and favour half-heartedly. May I encourage you to go on your knees again to seek the Lord with your whole heart.

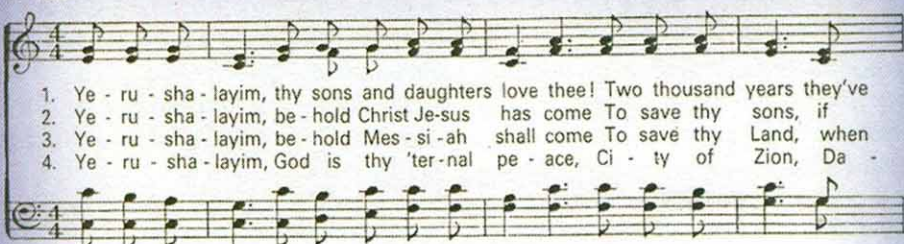
May God help us all to do things with our whole heart as unto the Lord for this is only right and pleasing before the Lord. Amen.



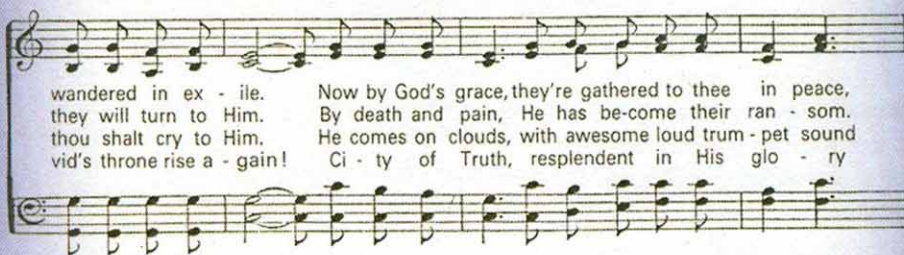
Yerushalayim, Messiah Is Come

T. Tow

Swedish folk melody
Arr. by R. J. Hughes



1. Ye - ru - sha - layim, thy sons and daughters love thee! Two thousand years they've
2. Ye - ru - sha - layim, be - hold Christ Je - sus has come To save thy sons, if
3. Ye - ru - sha - layim, be - hold Mes - si - ah shall come To save thy Land, when
4. Ye - ru - sha - layim, God is thy 'ter - nal pe - ace, Ci - ty of Zion, Da -



wandered in ex - ile. Now by God's grace, they're gathered to thee in peace,
they will turn to Him. By death and pain, He has be - come their ran - som.
thou shalt cry to Him. He comes on clouds, with awesome loud trum - pet sound
vid's throne rise a - gain! Ci - ty of Truth, resplendent in His glo - ry

Chorus



By thy embrace, their weeping turns to smile.
Ris - ing a - gain, He has forgiv'n their sin. Ye - ru - sha - layim, let
To judge the earth - peace a mil - len - ni - um.
Till sun shall rise and moon no more shall wane.



peace and freedom ring, To thee Sha - lom! To thee Sha - lom! Ye - ru - sha



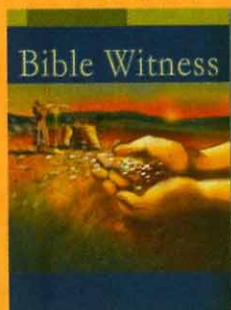
layim, lift up thy voice and sing, Messiah is come, Messiah is come!

Bible Witness

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- A magazine for Bible study groups

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Next issue:



Biblical Separation