

People Of Zion

'David took the stronghold of Zion; that is, the City of David' (2 Samuel 5:7).

'Solomon assembled the elders of Israel ... to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Zion, the City of David' (1 Kings 8:1).

'Out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion, they shall escape. The zeal of the Lord shall do this' (2 Kings 19:31).

'I (God the Father) have anointed My King (Jesus) on My holy hill of Zion' (Psalm 2:6).

'Sing praises to the Lord Who dwells in Zion, and declare to the people the things He has done' (Psalm 9:11).

'Oh that the salvation of Israel would come forth from Zion! When the Lord shall restore the fortunes of His people, then Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad' (Psalm 14:7).

'Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain; beautiful in elevation is the joy of all the earth – Mount Zion – the City of David, to the north, the whole city of the Great King! ... Let Mount Zion be glad! ... Walk around Zion, number (count) her towers' (Psalm 48:1, 2, 11 & 12).

'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth' (Psalm 50:2).

'In Jerusalem is His tabernacle and His dwelling place is in Zion' (Psalm 76:2).

'For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth like brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns' (Isaiah 62:1).

'Upon Mount Zion there shall be deliverance and it shall be holy; then the house of Jacob (Israel) will own their possessions' (Obadiah 1:17).

These are just a few scriptures that tell us where Zion is located; on the north of Jerusalem near Mount Moriah, which is the place Abraham offered up Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:2). It is where the temple was built (2 Chronicles 3:1) and near where Jesus was crucified (Matthew 20:18), truly a holy place. However, if we look more closely, we can discern that Zion is a spiritual place rather than an earthly place. The name 'Zion' in Hebrew means 'Dry Place'.

'You will arise and have mercy on Zion, for it is time to have compassion for her; yes, the 'set time' has come ... the nations shall worship the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth Your glory. When the Lord builds up Zion, He will appear in His glory ... Let this be recorded for the generation yet unborn, that a people yet to be created shall praise the Lord. For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord see the earth, to hear the sighing and groaning of the (spiritual) prisoner, to loose those who are appointed to (spiritual) death, so that men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem, when peoples and kingdoms are gathered together to worship and serve the Lord' (Psalm 102:13 to 22). The Hebrew word for 'set time' is a very definite word meaning a special day set aside for a special purpose. When the Lord builds His people, it is a sure sign that He is about to appear in His glory. In the Old and New Testaments, we have this clear prediction of restoration preceding Jesus' return.

'All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow down and worship before You; for the Kingship and the Kingdom are the Lord's, and He is the Ruler over the

nations. All the mighty ones upon the earth shall eat and worship; all who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve Him; they shall tell of the Lord to the next generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people yet unborn – that He has done it; that it is finished!' (Psalm 22:27 to 31).

These two Psalms were fulfilled during the time of Jesus and the apostles. They were the generation who were created to praise the Lord. The last line of Psalm 22 confirms that. When Jesus was on the cross, He declared, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). He had finished the job given to Him by God the Father – the job of bringing salvation to the world. The 'job description' written in Psalm 102 regarding Jesus' ministry, shows us that Psalm was also written for the time of Jesus. It was the generation of the early church that had the first Holy Spirit-filled praise and worship, and those people were 'yet unborn' when those two Psalms were written.

Since the time of Jesus until now, the Lord has been slowly working on the redemption of all of His people. There is no greater sign that the Lord is near than the fact that the Lord is building up Zion (Psalm 102:16), that is He is building up Israel and the church simultaneously. During the time of the apostles, they all thought Jesus was going to come back in their day (1 Corinthians 4:5) but the Lord is patiently waiting for the right day (2 Peter 3:9), that is until the last of the Gentiles have come into the Kingdom of God (Romans 11:25). He will return when He has built up (restored) Zion and so we are the generation who will see Jesus come in all His glory. The Lord never calls Israel the church, and He never calls the church, Israel. There is just one name that covers both and that is spiritual Zion. Zion is God's special word to describe His two peoples – Jew and Gentile believers – the church. There is a set date (set time) for the Lord to remember the restoration of Israel and the church.

'I will bring them (the Jews) again to the land which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, and they will fish them out; and afterwards I will send for hunters and they will hunt them from every mountain and hill and out of the clefts of the rocks' (Jeremiah 16:15 & 16).

The Zionists (the fishermen) went through Europe in the 1930's and told as many Jews as would listen, to return to Israel. The people who already lived in Israel were rebuilding their inheritance. Sadly, the majority of European Jews did not listen to the warnings spoken by the Zionists. Then tragically, the hunters (the Nazi's) began to do what the Jews were warned about and did not heed. God did not want that to happen to the Jews so He gave plenty of warning, but just as in the Old Testament, they did not listen to God. It happened the way God said it would happen. God did not want that to happen to His people, but in His foreknowledge, He warned them to get out. They were well educated and they were so respected that they could not envision what the Zionists were saying. They said it couldn't happen. But it did. Many did not want to give up their wealth and privilege to return to Israel and work hard with their hands and tragically, we lost millions of Jews as a result. Once again in our generation, the Lord has sent 'fishers' to nations around the world, to bring Jews back to Israel.

Zion is the word that describes God's people who are living in obedience, under divine command, under divine Leadership, with divine authority. When God's people meet in divine order, under divine Leadership, they will have divine authority. This sequence is of paramount importance; we must come under divine (God's) Leadership for us to have divine authority. 'The Lord will send forth from Zion (Israel) the sceptre of Your strength (Jesus); rule then in the midst of your enemies. Your people (all believers) will offer themselves willingly in the day of your power, in the beauty of holiness and in holy array out of the womb of the morning (the birth of the fresh new covenant). To You will spring forth Your young men, who are as fresh as dew' (Psalm 110:2 & 3).

Jesus was our Forerunner so we could go to glory and not be separated from God eternally. We have been called with a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), we have been justified by His blood (Romans 5:9), we have been

glorified (Romans 8:30), made alive (Colossians 2:13), resurrected (Romans 6:5) and enthroned as kings and priests (Revelation 5:10). We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own purchased special people (1 Peter 2:9). As believers in the Messiah, that is where we as Christians, are now. Our ministry is a king/priest ministry. Notice everything written here is in the past tense; it has already happened. We are already, as Christians, on Mount Zion. We have come to a heavenly display of dignity, honour and power. We are already citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). As part of the church of the Firstborn we have an amazing future. As born-again believers, our names are enrolled in heaven in the Lamb's book of Life (Philippians 4:3). It doesn't matter if our names are registered in any church or not. What seriously matters, is that our name is enrolled in heaven.

Once, only the children of Israel and the land of Israel were the Lord's holy nation and chosen people. 'You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6), but now all genuine born-again, Holy Spirit-filled believers since the resurrection of Jesus have this mantle, and are regarded as a chosen race, a royal priesthood and God's holy nation, purchased by the blood of Jesus and adopted into His family. There is an earthy Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem. So where is Zion? It is the Heavenly Jerusalem. 'You have come to Mount Zion, even to the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem and the countless multitudes of angels in festal gathering; to the church of the Firstborn, who are citizens in heaven, and to the God Who is Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant' (Hebrews 12:22 to 24).

Many people, Jews and Gentiles alike, will stumble over the fact that Jesus will come from Zion – that the Messiah would be Jewish. 'As it is written: Behold I am laying in Zion a Stone that will make men stumble, a Rock that will make them fall; but they who trust in Him shall not be put to shame' (Romans 9:33). But ... if we don't love Zion then we don't really love God and we will be put to shame. 'Let them all be put to shame and turned backward who hate Zion' (Psalm 129:5). The Lord is at this time, building up Zion. The church and Israel are both being restored simultaneously and it is happening in this generation. The best part of all this is; it is all true. We are the people of Zion.

Jesus said, "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). Or in other words, there will come a time when Jerusalem will no longer be controlled by Gentiles. At the time Jesus said this, Jerusalem belonged to the Jews, so in order for that prophecy to be fulfilled, Jerusalem had to be lost to the Jews then regained. That is a very remarkable fulfilment of prophecy. The city is still divided, but in time the whole of Jerusalem will be returned to the Jews.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave a great teaching about His return (Matthew 24:3 to 51; Mark 13:3 to 37; Luke 21:7 to 36). These chapters record the same discourse. We need to study all three chapters then interrelate them. This discourse was prompted by the disciples questions after Jesus said the temple would be destroyed. That was a shocking thought for the Jews. The beautiful temple was the centre of Jewish life, both physical and spiritual, which Jews all over the world esteemed above all else on earth. This temple was to be completely destroyed and not one stone would be left upon another. When Jesus said that, He left the temple, walked east down the slope, crossed the valley, walked up the west side of the Mount of Olives and sat down on the summit overlooking the temple. His disciples gathered around Him and asked Him about the temple. 'When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age'. The disciples must have thought that if the temple was destroyed, then that would have to be the end of the world. They probably thought these things would all happen at once. They asked two distinct questions.

The first question; "When shall these things happen?" Or "When will the temple be destroyed?" Jesus answered that in Luke 21:20 to 24. This was totally fulfilled in 70 AD when Titus and the Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem. For a short time, the army withdrew and those Jews who believed in Jesus ran for their lives. Then the Roman army returned and destroyed the temple. The stones were prised apart because when

the temple burned, the gold within the temple melted and ran between the stones and the Romans prised the stones apart to get the gold, leaving no stone unturned. All that is left of the temple is what we see now; the Western Wall. Jesus said there would be great wrath on the Jewish nation and they would fall by the sword. It is estimated that about 2,000,000 Jews perished in that war and the remainder were sold as slaves and were scattered amongst the Gentile nations, just as Jesus said would happen. All this has been fulfilled. Then Jesus said Jerusalem would continue to be trodden down until the time of the Gentile rule was over. Nobody could have understood that it would take close to 2,000 years before Jerusalem would belong to the Jews again.

The second question; “When will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Jesus gave them several indications of the close of that particular age – that was the close of the age where the Law of Moses was a means to righteousness. Jesus ushered in the new age of grace; of salvation by faith for all who believe. ‘For Jesus is the end of the Law as a means of righteousness, for everyone who believes in Him’ (Romans 10:4). Jesus answered their question in Matthew 24:14 – when the full Gospel of the Kingdom is preached the world over. There is a dramatic change in Matthew 24:15 to 20. From then onwards, the setting and language is specifically in the Land of Israel and Jerusalem. This cannot be anywhere else. Jesus said ‘when you see the abomination of desolation in the temple’ – only Israel had a temple. ‘Let those in Judea flee to the mountains’ – only Israel had a place called Judea. ‘Pray your flight not be on the Sabbath – only Israel closed down on the Sabbath. Another passage of scripture reinforces that there would terrible times coming to Israel at that time in their history, when Jesus spoke directly to the women who were living in Jerusalem about the upcoming time of sorrow. ‘And there was a great multitude of the people; women who bewailed and mourned Him. But Jesus, turning towards them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming during which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and those who have never nursed babies’. Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ And to the hills, ‘Hide us!’ (Luke 23:27 to 30).

That was all before 70 AD. Fast forward about 2,000 years, and we will see the miraculous parallels of the restoration of Israel and the church, happening simultaneously. There is a miraculous restoration parallel of both Israel and the church taking place in this generation. Since the early 1900’s the church and Israel have been wonderfully restored. ‘The tree bears its fruit; the fig tree (Israel) and the vine (the church) yield their strength’ (Joel 2:22). The fig tree is one of the only fruit trees that sends the beginnings of its fruit at the same time as it grows the new seasons leaves. Jesus said, “From the fig tree learn this lesson; as soon as its young shoots become soft and tender and it puts out its leaves, you know surely that summer is near” (Matthew 24:32). The specific sign of this generation is the ‘fig tree’ (Israel) putting on its ‘leaves’ and beginning to grow ‘fruit’. Every prophecy regarding Jesus’ second coming, speaks of Israel as being a nation in their own land. None of those prophecies could have been fulfilled before World War Two, because Israel was not a nation until 1948. The purposes of God for this miraculous restoration is to usher in His Kingdom. Jesus said ‘Your Kingdom come’ (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). When we pray that, we are not just being polite; we are identifying ourselves with God’s purpose. His purpose is to bring us to the Kingdom of God.

The prophet Joel speaks about the past, present and future of the whole earth. Joel chapter 1 speaks of the desolation of ‘all the inhabitants on the land’ due to their sin. Joel chapter 2 is the restoration of Israel along with the church. ‘Be glad, you children of Zion and rejoice in the Lord; for He gives you the former rain in just measure and in righteousness, and He causes to come down for you the rain – the former rain and the latter rain, as before ... and whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape’ (Joel 2:23 & 32). The former rain was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit just after Jesus was resurrected. The latter rain is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our generation. The people in Jerusalem who partake in the ‘latter rain’ will be the ones who escape God’s judgement. Joel chapter 3 is the judgement of the whole earth. Millions of people in the valley of decision, will have to decide which way to go – either the Lord and heaven, or the world and hell. The valley of decision is where nobody will any longer be able to ‘sit on the fence’. God will demand people be hot or cold; totally 100% dedicated to Him or

100% against Him. Fence sitters, or luke-warm Christians will be vomited out of God's mouth (Revelation 3:16). Israel made the wrong choice when they rejected their Messiah and have paid the price for it for 2,000 years. The decision that confronted Israel then will confront the whole world. In the last verse of Joel, the Lord is again claiming Zion as His dwelling place. When Jesus mentioned the fig tree (Israel) and all the other trees (all the other people who believe; Luke 21:29 & 30), Jesus was actually quoting the prophet Joel. Jesus did not mention the 'vine' because He told us He is the Vine (John 15:5) – the founder of the new faith. Just as a great spiritual darkness swept over the world and destroyed millions, so another wave of great spiritual darkness will sweep over the earth. We will have to decide to either believe in our Messiah, or the world and its evil lies. There are no 'fences' to sit on in heaven.

We will study a few significant dates relating to the restoration of both Israel and the church. The 'coincidental' timing could only have been brought about by the wonderful, powerful, great and mighty hand of God. There can be no other explanation for the parallel dates; 1900, 1904, 1914 to 1918, 1948 and 1967.

The Zionist movement began in 1897 to get the Jews back to their land and made the original settlements possible for the first intakes of Jews. In 1904, the founder of Zionism died, but before he died, he believed his dream of Israel being given back to the Jews as a nation would be a reality within 50 years – and he was right. Forty-four years later, in 1948 the State of Israel was reborn. It happened because God said it would happen. The start of the Pentecostal movement began with a major outpouring of the Holy Spirit around the turn of the century. Persia, Russia and Armenia, long before other nations, were impacted with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, baptism and signs following. The first real public impact in the US took place in 1900. Then in 1904 there was a major revival, from which almost all Pentecostal denominations received their origins. So 1900 was the beginning of the awakening of both the fig tree and the vine. For Israel, the beginning of Zionism; for the church, the beginning of Pentecostalism.

1914 to 18: The First World War. In Israel in 1917, the Australian light horsemen liberated Bathsheba, south of Jerusalem, then the British army under the leadership of General Allenby liberated Jerusalem from centuries of Moslem and Turkish rule. Allenby was a born-again believer, and when the British army took Jerusalem, Allenby walked into Jerusalem on foot because he said only one Person (Jesus) had the right to ride into Jerusalem. In that same year, a declaration named after another born-again believer, Lord Balfour, opened the way for Jews to return to Israel. In the church in that same year, the great world outreach began, turning millions to the Lord. Literally all over the world, dedicated missionaries turned millions to Jesus.

1948: Soon after the end of the Second World War. Going back to 1922, the League of Nations (precursor to the United Nations) gave Great Britain the mandate over the area that would become Israel. Twenty-six years later, on 14th May 1948, Great Britain withdrew her mandate and immediately Israel was declared an independent nation – a sovereign state. The very next day, on the 15th May 1948 Israel was born. 'Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in a moment? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children' (Isaiah 66:8). The public ministry of Billy Graham began in 1948 turning even more millions to Jesus. Healings that were thought to be relegated to the days of the apostles, began again.

1967: In June 1967 the Jews regained control of Jerusalem during the Six Day War. Just as Jesus prophesied, the Jews regained political control of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24). 'Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her, rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn over her' (Isaiah 66:10). Only the Moslems were mourning over their loss of Jerusalem, but it is all in the plan of God and nobody can stop it. A new wave of 'Pentecostals' – Holy Spirit-filled people were coming to the Lord by the million. The Charismatic movement within main-stream churches began about February 1967 when two Charismatic – Holy Spirit-filled Catholic priests began to teach the full Gospel. From those two dedicated men, within 2 years over 30,000 Roman Catholics received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That was a sovereign act of God.

The next great thing God will do, will be the preaching of the full Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is more than just the initial salvation message. 'I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, that I might fix the new heavens as a tabernacle and lay the foundations of a new earth and say to Zion, "You are My people"' (Isaiah 51:16). There are two programs to plant the new heaven and lay foundation of the new earth. There is a spiritual restoration of God's Kingdom in the heavenlies through the church, and there is a restoration of God's Kingdom through Israel with it's centre at the new Jerusalem on the new earth (Luke 21:26). 'For behold, I create a new heavens (universe) and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a rejoicing and her people a joy' (Isaiah 65:17 & 18). 'For as the new heavens and the new earth which I make shall remain before Me, so shall your offspring and your name remain' (Isaiah 66:22). 'But we look for the new heavens and the new earth according to his promise, in which righteousness dwells' (2 Peter 3:13). 'Then I saw a new sky (universe, heaven) and a new earth, for the former sky and the former earth had passed away, and there no longer existed any sea, and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, all arrayed like a beautiful bride for her husband. Then I heard a mighty voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the abode of God is with men, and He will live among them and they shall be His people, and God shall be with them personally and be their God"' (Revelation 21:1 to 3).

'And so that He (the Father) may send the Messiah, Who was appointed for you – even Jesus Whom heaven must receive and retain until the time for the complete restoration, of all that God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets for ages past, that is from the most ancient of times' (Acts 3:20 & 21). The heavens must retain Jesus for now. He cannot return from heaven until all this has taken place. At the close of this age, just before Jesus is to return from heaven, all things (regarding Israel and the church) will be restored. We are dealing with a period of history, foreknown by God and written into scripture for our information. The word Zion is all the people related to God by a covenant. We are the people of Zion.

Many believers, Jews and Gentiles alike will miss God's warnings because they will want to cling to the world. Many Christians do not believe they will go through the terrible times ahead. The terrible time ahead will happen just as God said it would and we need to be prepared for it. The call for holiness is being sent forth with a clarity and a conviction not seen for 2,000 years. We must prepare our hearts for His coming just as the Lord is preparing the hearts of the Jews. It matters how we respond to the Gospel. If we compromise our faith and refuse to follow God to the letter, it could cost our lives just as it did for too many Jewish people. When people refuse to listen to a scriptural truth regarding holiness, then God may withdraw that revelation from that person and judgement will come upon them as with the rest of the world. In fact God allows them to believe a lie. 'Therefore God sends upon them a lie, a working of error and a strong delusion to make them believe what is false, in order that all may be judged who did not believe in the Truth, but instead took pleasure in unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 2:11 & 12). Notice why they perished – because they would not receive the truth. When God offered them the love of the truth, they rejected it. God sent them a delusion that they should believe a lie. If we reject the Holy Spirit, we are insulting God.

What happens in Israel affects the whole world. It is not a matter of a tiny nation somewhere in the Middle East, but it is a question of the destiny of nations which in some ways, depends on the destiny of Israel. The birth of Israel in 1948 was a time of great danger for the people in Israel, and yet it was a miracle. There were so few Jews in number, maybe only 600,000 with inferior arms and weapons. Against them were about 40,000,000 Arabs with modern military weapons. It was just as great a miracle as the Lord performed for the Hebrews in ancient times. Israel is facing ongoing crises today. Some of the problems come from within Israel itself. Israel desires peace as much as anyone. They have been through many wars and skirmishes since 1948 and have suffered many casualties. They desperately long for peace. 'Peace, peace when there is no peace' (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). 'When people say, all is well, there is peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them' (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

The land of Israel is being carved up in the name of so-called 'peace'. 'They have divided My land' (Joel 3:2). This same land was won by supernatural victories by the hand of God. God calls that land His land, and He has never authorised anyone to give it away. The simple fact is; it is not their land to give. We believers need to be part of their solution. What can we do? We can pray for Israel. God never reacts to a situation – He only ever acts to fix a situation. We must not pray in reaction to what happens; we need to take the initiative, study the Word of God and pray according to His will. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they prosper who love you' (Psalm 122:6). 'And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written; the Deliver will come from Zion. He will banish ungodliness from Jacob (Israel)' (Romans 11:26). 'Those who trust and hope in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but will stand fast forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from this time forth and forever' (Psalm 125:1 & 2).

Nothing that happens on earth can change the fact that Jesus our Messiah; God's anointed One, is the King of Zion and will be forever. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, He became God's appointed Ruler. Jesus is the King of all kings and Lord of all lords (Revelation 19:16). They are not empty words. What that means is; He is the Ruler of all rulers and the Governor over all governments. Jesus is our Messiah and King, and only those who are prepared to accept that fact and who live accordingly, are called the people of Zion.

Amen and God bless you.

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