

Light Brings Salt

Volume 4, Issue 28

July 16, 2006



Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



O' Jerusalem

Dave Hunt

Israel is the major topic of the Bible, occupying most of its pages. The many prophecies concerning its past, present, and future are vital in understanding God's Word. Sadly, they are ignored, explained away, or simply rejected by the vast majority of professing Christians, a growing number of whom insist that Israel has been replaced by the church.

Yet Jeremiah declares that Israel will never "cease from being a nation" (Jer 31:35-37); in just one sermon Paul refers to Israel as an ongoing entity three times (Acts 13:17, 23, 24); and on the twelve gates of heavenly Jerusalem are written the names of "the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Rv 21:12)-so ten tribes were not lost after all!-along with the names of "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" in the foundations (21:14). Unaware that "replacement theology" is one of several Roman Catholic doctrines that clung to Luther, Calvin, and other leading reformers, it is accepted by many as Reformation theology.

Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all who believe on Him, is, of course, the most important subject in Scripture-yet without Israel, there would be no Savior. Jesus is a Jew, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through King David, giving Him the right to rule Israel and the world. He was born in Israel, lived there all of His days on earth, and (with few exceptions) ministered solely to Jews: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the

house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). He commanded His disciples, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5,6). After the Cross and Resurrection, however, He commanded them to take the gospel "into all the world" (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15)-but the gospel remains "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16).

How staggering, when you consider the incredible vastness of space, and to think that the Creator has selected this tiny planet and one small city on it to be eternally the center of the universe. Bypassing thousands of larger cities with greater beauty and natural resources, God chose Jerusalem, saying, "I will put my name [there] forever" (2 Ki 21:7; 2 Chr 33:7).

God declared that in the last days He would cause Jerusalem to be "a burdensome stone for all people" (Zec 12:3). For that to become true, there had to be a worldwide organization. The United Nations was formed in 1945 in time to vote Israel back into existence after 1,800 years of destruction and dispersion. And Jerusalem has become such a burden that the UN has spent one-third of its time debating and condemning Israel, a miniscule nation that represents merely one one-thousandth of earth's population. Finally, World War III will be fought over Jerusalem as Antichrist's armies seek to frustrate God's plans for her and to accomplish at last Hitler's "final solution to the Jewish problem" with the destruction of Israel and all Jews worldwide.

Twice in the Bible Jerusalem is called "the city of our God" (Ps 48:1, 8), twice the "city of God" (Ps 46:4; 87:3), eight times "the holy city" (Neh 11:1; Is 48:2; 52:1; Mt 4:5, etc.), and once "the city of the Lord of hosts" (Ps 48:8). God has decreed that never will there be a city to rival Jerusalem! It is mentioned 811 times in the Bible but not once in the Qur'an, showing the lie that it ever was sacred to Muslims. Only after Israel's rebirth was this bogus claim invented to justify Muslim attacks against Israel as an "occupying power." The USA, UN, EU, et al., accept this lie as the basis of a "peace" they intend to force upon Israel with Muslim neighbors determined to destroy her.

Jerusalem's entire history, including its destruction and ultimate restoration in the "last days," was pronounced by ancient Hebrew prophets and by Jesus Christ ("There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"-Mt 24:2; "the city shall be built...it shall not be...thrown down any more for ever" - Jer 31:38-40). Still in process, in the face of fierce opposition from the world and Satan, the ongoing fulfillment of these prophecies (none of which could possibly apply to the church) is the greatest proof God gives of His existence and that the Bible is His infallible Word-a vital proof that replacement theology rejects.

That Christians would deny God's purposes for Israel is beyond comprehension. Equally incredible, throughout history Israel herself has rejected God and the blessings He would impart. This rebellion has persisted in spite of spectacular displays of God's power and protection: the parting of the Red Sea, guidance by a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day, water from a rock, fresh manna daily, hearing God speak with an audible voice, seeing the walls of Jericho come down, and the miraculous defeat of armies far superior to its own, etc.

This inexcusable unbelief continues today on the part of most Jews worldwide, as well as in the church. The vast majority of Jews

persist in rejecting Christ as their Messiah in spite of His fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies that prove His identity beyond dispute. As their own Hebrew prophets foretold, the Messiah has come and has been rejected by His people and the world. Moreover, they even join heretical replacement theologians in refusing to acknowledge God's hand in preserving the Jews as an identifiable ethnic people and bringing them back into their land after 2,500 years of dispersion.

Nothing so exemplifies God's passionate desire to bless Israel, and her determined rejection of Him and the blessings He wants to bestow, as does Christ's anguished lament over Jerusalem. Viewing the city of God from the Mount of Olives, He wept over her: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Lk 13:34).

The New Testament records only one instance of Christ weeping over Jerusalem. How, then, could He claim to have wept over her countless times? Clearly, He was claiming to be the God of Israel, who sent His prophets repeatedly: "And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them...yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord" (Jer 25:3-7).

As for replacement theology, yes, there are many similarities between Israel and the church: both are called God's "elect" (Is 45:4; Mt 24:31; 1 Pt 1:2); both are called to be a "peculiar people" separated from the world (Lv 20:24-26; Dt 14:2; Ti 2:14; 1 Pt 2:9); both were to be hated and persecuted (even to the death) by the world (Ps 119:161; Ps 143:3; Mt 24:9; Jn 15:20; 17:14); and both are called to holiness (Lv 20:7; 1 Pt 1:15).

However, there are many distinctions: Israel is promised a country and a city on this earth, the church a home in heaven. Israel will be ruled by Christ; the church will rule Israel and the world with Him.

Two-thirds of all Jews on earth will be killed under Antichrist (Zec 13:8-9); but the church will not be on earth at that time, having been married to Christ in heaven (Rv 19:7,8). Israel will recognize Christ for the first time at His Second Coming; the church will arrive with Him from heaven in triumph (Zec 14:4,5; Jude 14) as His bride, never to leave His side.

Israel has always been in almost total unbelief, even in the days of Moses (Ps 81:8-13), but the church was faithful at the beginning and only goes into apostasy in the "last days" (Acts 20:29,30; 2 Thes 2:3). In spite of the complaint that the Israelis don't deserve to be there because of their rebellion and rejection of Christ, their unbelief is no worse now than when God first brought them into the land under Joshua. Israel constantly rebelled and worshiped idols even under Moses on the way to the Promised Land.

Israel will come out of apostasy in a total transformation and restoration on this earth (Ezk 36,37); but the church sinks ever deeper into apostasy until the Rapture (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Thes 2:3; Jude 3,4, etc.) and will only be perfected in heaven. Israel had already fallen away from the very beginning: the church began well but is in the process of falling away as the apostasy worsens in the last days. At my recent meetings in many places throughout England, a large percentage of those attending had fled apostate churches.

As Israel went into idolatry, adopting the gods of the nations around her, so the church, through the growing ecumenical movement, embraces false doctrine. Englishmen, whose forebears stood firmly against Rome's grievous heresies in spite of flame and sword, now boast of their unity with Catholicism. While there I thought repeatedly of Hugh Latimer and Nicolas Ridley, in 1555, bound to the same stake at Oxford for refusing to accept the alleged "transubstantiation" of a wafer into the literal body of Christ. As the flames mounted, Latimer exclaimed, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man;

we shall this day by God's grace light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out." Tragically, that flame is barely visible. The 16th-century Reformation that transformed England and Europe is now repudiated by the vast majority of Christians and church leaders.

Billy Graham says his beliefs are basically the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics. He claims that the Mass is "straight and true to the gospel" and boasts that the RCC has welcomed him everywhere. Chuck Colson, an architect of ECT, advocates joining Rome and attends Mass with his Roman Catholic wife. Rick Warren, James Dobson, et al., surely know better, yet work with Catholics and their Church and give no warning that Catholicism is the road to hell. I'd like to see these men visit Lourdes, France (as Ruth and I have just done) without being grieved in their spirits and smitten in their consciences.

Our hearts broke for these poor deceived people arriving at Lourdes in a continual stream by the thousands each day, many in wheel chairs or on pallets. As the long line moves slowly through the grotto, where "Mary" appeared to Bernadette in 1858, hands reach out to caress its walls, hoping to receive a healing or blessing. Some are whispering under their breath the "Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes: 'O immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy, you are the refuge of sinners, the health of the sick, and the comfort of the afflicted....By your appearance at the Grotto of Lourdes you made it a privileged sanctuary where your favors are given to people streaming to it from the whole world....Therefore I come to you with limitless confidence....Obtain, O loving Mother...my requests...I will endeavor to imitate Your virtues, that I may one day share in your glory.'" Mother of Mercy...refuge of sinners...your glory? What blasphemy!

This Catholic "Mary" is the dominant figure everywhere one turns. Jesus appears only as a babe in her arms (even in heaven!),

hanging on the Cross, or lifeless on her lap at the foot of the Cross. In the main cathedral, behind the altar hovers a huge "Mary," with the words, Par Marie à Jésus ["Through Mary to Jesus"]. Yes, Jesus is the acknowledged mediator with God, but Mary is the only way to Jesus. Any exaltation of Jesus is conspicuously absent. On hundreds of the stones with which the cathedral has been built are inscribed praises of and prayers to "Mary."

Throngs of deluded souls, bearing candles of many sizes (purchased nearby at varying prices), walk the 100 yards or so past the grotto to two rows of adjoining metal stalls, where candles are put into position and lit with the flame of another to add to the continual conflagration. Thousands of these candles burn simultaneously, day and night, the melting wax dripping down through the grill into metal boxes that are replaced with empty ones and wheeled back to the factory to be recycled into more candles to make more money for the Church. Above and behind the candles in each section are written the words in several languages: in French-Cette lumière prolonge ma prière ["this light extends my prayer"].

The devout followers of "Mary" can also purchase Masses to be said for one's "intention" somewhere in the world. Outside the fenced grounds, the town streets are lined with shops whose cash registers are ringing up sales of indulgences, crucifixes, and all manner of holy hardware that the Church has devised for passing on blessings from the "Virgin"-at a price. Among the biggest sellers are varying sizes of plastic bottles shaped like the "Virgin Mary" to be filled with water from the sacred spring.

Israel's apostasy, including idol worship, is no worse than what Rome practices and with which evangelicals have joined in ecumenical partnership. The world is in rebellion against God, but so is the church. Proof of that rebellion is everywhere.

In one Normandy cemetery, I stumbled

heartbroken through hundreds of the more than 9,000 stark white marble crosses marking, in perfect rows, the graves of men who died in the June 1944 invasion that freed Europe. Each marker bears the name, rank, outfit, and date of death. Unable to fathom such horror, I sobbed uncontrollably, my chest heaving, crying out, "Lord, why did you make man? You knew all the evil and suffering that would result. What is the point of these crosses? How many of these men believed in the Christ who died for their sins?" Here and there was a white marble Star of David. A surprising number of these monuments had no names but only the caption, "Here rests in honored glory a comrade in arms known but to God." I thought of the many who were not resting but were in agony in the flames of hell. And once more, with heaving chest and irrepressible sobs, I gasped again and again, "Why, Lord? Why?"

I knew that God had created man to bestow His love and blessing upon him. This present evil world is not what God made and He cannot be blamed for it. This is the world man has made in defiance of God, by trying to act as his own God. My sobs were only an echo of the cry of God's own heart-which should touch ours. The Father grieves over this world, whether for the centuries-long rejection of His love by His chosen ones, the Jews, or for the apostasy of today's "Christian" church, or for the lost who thumb their noses at His offer of forgiveness for their sins and eternal life in His presence. Let us pray that true repentance will yet come to the church and to the world to gladden the Father's heart and that Christ will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

We hear the lament O Jerusalem! echoing through the centuries undiminished, though Jew and Gentile crucified Him there. Now He weeps for the entire world. May we as envoys of His compassion do all we can to rescue as many as possible before it is forever too late.

- The Berean Call