

Israel: Future

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Forerunner, "Prophecy Watch," April 1997

The descendants of Israel, scattered from their God-given homeland by war, captivity and migration, eventually found a home in northwestern Europe. From there, some of them took to the seas, colonizing distant lands across vast oceans. These colonies became great nations themselves—the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand. Most modern Israelites have no idea who they are and what is in store for them in the coming years and beyond.

The nations of Israel lead the world in numerous categories—the good as well as the bad. Though they are among the wealthiest nations, they are also near the top in crime, addiction, divorce and sexual disease. Though Israelite nations define the cutting edge of technology, they also head the list in using these technologies for pornography, fraud and espionage. As we heard so often in the past, this world, especially the Israelite world, is a paradox of astounding progress amidst appalling evils.

Where will this lead? James writes, "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? . . . Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh" (James 3:11-12; see Haggai 2:11-14). This illustrates a principle apropos to the future of Israel. Their "spring," in generating such quantities of evil, defiles whatever good they also produce. Such an excess of sin invokes another principle, found in Deuteronomy 28:15, 20:

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments . . . , that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. . . . The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.

Leviticus 18:24-25 puts it a little more colorfully:

Do not defile yourselves with any of these things [sexual sins]; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

Just as the Assyrians drove the ancient people of Israel from their land, so again will modern Israel reap the whirlwind for its sins (Hosea 8:7).

War, Captivity and Exile!

An objective observer of the world scene might scoff at such a pronouncement, saying, "These nations are too strong and wealthy to fall, even with all their problems!" Such an observer fails to consider how involved God is in world events; He makes and breaks nations to suit His purpose, and He will do so with His people, Israel. The fall of Israel will not be prolonged either:

Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perversity, and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, *whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant*

. And he shall break it like the breaking of the potter's vessel, which is broken in pieces; He shall not spare. . . ." (Isaiah 30:12-14)

The most severe part of God's punishment for sin begins with war:

But you are those who forsake the LORD Therefore I will number you for the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer . . . , but did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight. (Isaiah 65:11-12)

Jeremiah 5:15-17 adds more detail:

"Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the LORD . . . "It is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know. . . . They are all mighty men. And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, which your sons and daughters should eat. . . . They shall destroy your fortified cities, in which you trust, with the sword."

The church has long thought that this "mighty . . . ancient nation" is modern Assyria, known today as Germany, which will lead the revived Holy Roman Empire in the end time (Isaiah 10:5-11; Daniel 11:40-12:1; Revelation 17:7-18).

War is not the only calamity the nations of Israel need to fear:

Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth. . . . Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. (Jeremiah 15:1-2)

Ezekiel 5:12 gives a rough estimate of the proportions of the devastation God pours out on his rebellious people:

One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter [into captivity and exile] another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

As sins and perversions mount, the outlook for our nations is dim. There seems little hope of avoiding this terrible punishment from God—unless, like Nineveh in Jonah's day—the people repent. Then God would turn his anger:

'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11).

However, unless the peoples' attitudes change drastically, repentance seems highly unlikely.

A Second Exodus

If this were the end, this would be a terribly tragic story! The good news is that God loves Israel and does not punish them without cause. He, as a wise Father, disciplines His children to cause them to change, to repent! Yet Israel is so stiff-necked, so stubborn (Ezekiel 2:3-7), that they refuse to yield to God until they have suffered terrible devastation and death.

Hosea describes what God must do to get their attention:

For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will diligently seek Me. (Hosea 5:14-15)

Once He gets their attention and they turn to Him, God is quick to help them:

Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days [years (?) of Jacob's Trouble] He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. (Hosea 6:1-2)

Jeremiah 30:7-11 speaks further of Jacob's Trouble and God's deliverance of Israel:

"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day," says the LORD of hosts, "that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob," says the LORD, "nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished."

Once Israel has learned its lesson, God will regather the people and bring them back into their land:

Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!" Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. . . . Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, . . . and say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock." (Jeremiah 31:7-8, 10)

This will truly be a second exodus:

It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt [and other nations]. . . . He will . . . assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11-12)

God will not regather them just for old times' sake; He has a specific reason for assembling Israel after their punishment:

I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. . . . I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 20:35, 37-38)

All of this takes place so God can bring Israel to conversion (Ezekiel 36:24-28)! This is a very important step in God's plan because He again desires Israel to be the model nation, showing the rest of the world how to live God's way (Isaiah 60:3; 61:11; 62:1-5,12; 66:19; Ezekiel 28:25). Finally, Israel will do what God originally intended them to do from the beginning!

Millennium and Beyond

With Israel back in its own land and fulfilling its role as a model nation (Ezekiel 37:22-28), the earth will have peace, prosperity and security (Ezekiel 28:26). The land will be cared for as God instructs, and it will produce bountifully.

"Behold the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them." (Amos 9:13-14; see Ezekiel 36:28-30; Joel 2:18-19, 21-26; 3:18)

As Amos mentions, Israel will rebuild the ancient cities and repair the ruins to make them habitable again. Ezekiel writes:

On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. . . . So they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited." (Ezekiel 36:33, 35; see Isaiah 58:12).

This remnant of Israel, living according to God's ways, will not only assist in the conversion of the rest of the world, but they will also be rearing their children in righteousness (Isaiah 49:22-25; 54:13; 59:21; 65:23). God will give them a pure language so they can truly worship Him (Zephaniah 3:9). Everything about Israel will be cleansed and purified as befits a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6; Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2-3).

As we saw in Jeremiah 30:9, God will resurrect David to be king over all Israel under Jesus Christ (see Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5). Under King David, the twelve apostles will each rule over one of the tribes (Luke 22:29-30). The land will be divided among the tribes (Ezekiel 48:1-29), with "a district for the Lord, a holy portion of the land" (45:1) and for "the city" (verse 6) and "the prince" (verse 7).

This section of Ezekiel (chapters 40-48) shows that a new Temple will be built, and the priests and Levites will conduct the rituals,

...and they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths. (Ezekiel 44:23-24)

God's way will be followed with great care, and those who do not follow it will be excluded and punished (verses 5-9; Zechariah 14:16-19).

These conditions will continue into the time beyond the Millennium. The tribes of Israel will remain prominent in God's government, for their names will be written on the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12). God says of that time:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. . . . For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "so shall your descendants and your name remain." (Isaiah 65:17-19; 66:22)

Israel will be a joy to God throughout eternity, and they will help Him in creating forever!

All Israel Saved

Though the coming days are dark and terrible, the people of Israel have a glorious future to anticipate and prepare for! God is working out His marvelous purpose to bring Israel into His Family and give them eternal life in His Kingdom. Paul says, "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

Yet for now, "God has committed them all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all" (verse 32). Before it is all over, Israel will be chastened severely for its sins. Many—maybe 90%—will die! But those who remain will be humbled and ready to submit to God and His law (Jeremiah 50:4-5). They will want and plead for God's forgiveness, redemption and salvation, and He will give it to them gladly (Hosea 2:14-23)!

We, too, must be ready for the return of our Savior and His Kingdom to this earth, for we will be instrumental in helping humbled Israel repent and learn God's way. We may be the ones spoken of in Isaiah 30:20-21:

And though the Lord gives you [Israel] the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

As Isaiah 52:7-8 seems to imply, the resurrected sons of God will be the ones to bring the good news of God's salvation and reign to His people.

For this reason and many others, we need to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18), purify ourselves as He is pure (I John 3:3) and seek His Kingdom and His righteousness

first (Matthew 6:33). Thus we will be preparing to assist our Savior in making Israel's future truly wonderful!