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**ISRAEL IN THE PLAN
AND
PURPOSE OF GOD**

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Introduction (by M.B. Hammond)

Many Christians, studying the Bible, see that books like Revelation, the Gospels and the Old Testament prophets contain vivid descriptions of the vengeance, which God will bring on men who rebel against God. They are so moved by it that they fail to see that God will shower great blessings upon all the families of the earth and teach them His righteous ways before He punishes mankind, bringing His vengeance. The "rapture" they speak of supposedly takes them away from this time of testing. Unfortunately, the "rapture" is not Scriptural, but a figment of their imagination. Some sects believe that God has canceled His promises to Israel, giving them to the Christian "church," not knowing what Scripture says. Some others, like the Preterists, would have us to think that all the things prophesied in Scripture, even the second coming of Christ, have already taken place. Sadly their evidence is non-existent.

We must take away all the foolishness of religion and approach the Bible with an open mind—one that doesn't preconceive its understanding. We believe that the greatest truth in the universe is that "God has spoken." We further believe that the Bible, the written Word of God, is the only record we have of what He has said. Any other books or scriptures are a Satanic counterfeit. We believe that God speaks only the truth—He cannot lie—and every promise He has made will come to pass. Therefore, this booklet on the plans and purposes of God for Israel examines in depth the things God has said in His Word. As the people who came forth from Abraham, Israel has a special place in the work of God. They were given ten terms of the covenant by God at Mt. Sinai, and even though they broke it, God still plans to carry out His part. They will someday become a nation of priests bringing the Word of God to the nations.

Today, we are living in the Dispensation of the Grace of God. God's work is in secret and most men think He has abandoned this world. But God still is at work even with sinful, evil men. All men are recipients of His grace, and whether it is active or passive, His strength is not reduced. Someday we will find out the wonderful things He has done for us and all mankind. In this booklet you will see God's promises of blessing to Abraham and Israel, as well as the penalties of disobedience. The reader will see God's plan to save His people and restore Israel to her land with divine government (the Kingdom of God) and a new covenant. We must understand that the Acts Period was a special time in which God was demonstrating the blessings He will put into the earth someday. The present dispensation was inserted to display for all men one particular side of God's character, His extreme grace or loving kindness.

Someday men will see the truth of Isaiah 26:10 which says, "Let favor (grace) be shewed to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." But when God's divine government is established, Isaiah 26:9 will be made clear: "With my soul I have desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me I will seek Thee early: for when Thy judgments (God's righteous order) are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." God's character is displayed in His grace and in His righteous order; this is the work He has yet to do before He takes His vengeance on those who rebel. The destiny of Israel is bright and their service to God is going to be awesome in the future Kingdom.

The Purpose Of God For Israel

God, in His infinite wisdom, has determined that Israel is to become the greatest nation upon the face of the earth. The purpose of God, once achieved, will result in Israel becoming a mediatorial nation with respect to every nation existing today or in the future. The realization of this plan will bring enormous blessing to every family on earth. Instead of Israel being the recipient of foreign aid, the Scriptures say, ... Thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow, and the Lord shalt make thee the head (an outflowing source) and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath ... (Deut. 28:12-13). Israel's greatness will not be limited to material things, but will include the joy of entering into and possessing the land the Lord God promised to the patriarch Abraham. That land is now occupied by Arab states including Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and part of Egypt. She will be endowed with great spiritual blessings based on God fulfilling His great promises and covenants made with Abraham, and confirmed with His son Isaac and grandson Jacob.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Some 4000 years ago God appeared to Abram, while living in the land of the Ur of the Chaldeas, and said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen. 12:1). At this point Abram faced great opportunity, privilege, and responsibility. He could have refused to obey God and remain in the land of his nativity. Instead his action was to obey as Scripture says, By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and went out, not knowing whither he went. (Heb. 11:8). Paul asked, "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). As a result of believing God, he became the recipient of the promise that he should be the heir of the world. This promise was not to Abraham through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. Few men comprehend or believe this great promise God made with Abraham. God's covenant promises enormous hope and assurance of blessing for every living being upon the earth. God declares in Genesis 12, 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 (Gen. 12:2-3). The mere contemplation of the fulfillment of these blessings should bring great joy to the heart of every believer. Very few fathom the enormity of these promises. This is because men are reluctant, and very foolish to reject what God has said. Today there is great denial that God will ever act on behalf of Israel and, in many cases, outright rejection that these promises will ever be consummated.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that if God were to intervene today in His manifest Kingdom, every man, woman and child living on earth would immediately become the recipient in some measure of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Take note that God said "I will make of thee a great nation." Israel, i.e. the people living in the land of Palestine today, is certainly not a great nation at this time. Obviously they do not have the material wealth, numbers of people, government superiority, the land promised them, or the international esteem that would make their enemies to become friends. But all this is to dramatically change once God breaks His present silence and injects Himself into the affairs of men.

God promised Abraham saying, "I will bless thee and make thy name great." That blessing will make Abraham a man of great reputation, having become the object of God's gift of enormous material wealth and spiritual blessings. His stature among men, especially in Israel, will be heralded as both a man of great faith and the heir of the world. Abraham will be looked upon as a man "... strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-21).

A man's name is his reputation. It is a revelation of his character, of who he is and what he is. God also said, "... Thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him who curseth thee ..." (Gen. 12:2-3). By this I do not say that men ought to worship Abraham, but I do say it will be appropriate to give him recognition and esteem because of the role given him by God. This is of particular importance as we recognize that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. Clearly, this promise has never yet been fulfilled. In terms of greatness we read, And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen 26:4). These are primarily spiritual blessings in which God will provide instruction, light and truth.

God's Promised Blessing of Israel

We are told also by God, And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee, and I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee, . . . and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen. 17:6-8). By an "everlasting covenant" God intended Abraham to understand that this covenant was an eonian covenant, one flowing out of God, having the guarantee that every promise He made would be fulfilled to the

letter; not only to Abraham, but to his successive generations as well. These promises include the land of Canaan, extending east to the great river Euphrates. We learn from Paul that, By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:9). Paul went on to say, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, . . . and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth (Heb 11:13). Enjoyment of these promises was linked to the matter of obedience. Moses declared, And it shall come to pass if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and 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 (Deut. 28:1). It is certainly impossible to conclude this being true today, in any sense. Moses added, And all these blessings shall come on thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God (Deut. 28:2). These include great physical and material blessings. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people to Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways, and all peoples of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee (Deut. 28:9-10). I repeat, this certainly is not true today. He says, And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandment of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe them and to do them (Deut. 28:13). Take note of the conditional nature of these promises.

The Penalties of Disobedience

In contrast with these promises of blessing, Moses spoke of certain curses which would come upon them for failure to "hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." The result would be 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 bring you to nought... And the Lord shall scatter you among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other ... (Deut. 28:63-64). This is precisely the condition of the people we know as Israel today. Of about 13,540,000 Jews living today, Jews can be found on all seven continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, North and South America, and even Antarctica. Moses goes on with God's warning, And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, . . . and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations wither the Lord thy God hath driven thee. And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey His voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations,

wither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee (Deut. 30:1-3). Here, Dr. C.I. Scofield adds an important note: "It is important to see that the nation has never yet taken the land under the unconditional Abrahamic covenant. Not has it ever possessed the whole land." (compare Gen. 15:18-21 with Num. 34:1-12).

God's Return of Israel

It is my firm conviction that this promise will be fulfilled once this present Dispensation of the Grace of God comes to an end. Over three decades ago Otis Q. Sellers wrote, "As the incessant march of events brings mankind ever nearer to the verge of the eclipse of civilization and the destruction of the human race, the question arises as to whether we can expect any definite and manifest move on the part of God regarding these matters. It is my firm belief that God is going to bring this present administration to a close by ushering in the manifest Kingdom of God. This will have a direct and immediate impact on the nation of Israel. It will result in the fulfillment of every major prophecy God has covenanted with the nation of Israel and the nations of the world. Once God intervenes, the world will experience an avalanche of physical, material and spiritual blessings." God's great promise to Israel in Deuteronomy 30:3 is paralleled by a multitude of others in the Old Testament prophets. For example the prophet Jeremiah declares, Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, wither 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: And they shall be My people, and I will be their God (Jer. 32:37-38). It is not possible to overstate this important promise since God's word cannot be broken and God cannot lie; every barrier to the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel will be removed.

Every impediment to God's purpose to reconstitute the nation of Israel and return her to the land promised to Abraham will be eliminated. As God says through Jeremiah, And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul (Jer. 32:40-41). What greater witness could be called upon to attest to the fact that Israel is going to be regathered and restored back to her land? The next verse says, For thus saith the Lord; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them (Jer. 32:42). The "good" here must by definition include all the blessings promised under the Abrahamic covenant wherein God said, "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

God Will Save His People

Honesty and sincerity in dealing with the Word of God brings the conviction that these great promises in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah have never yet been fulfilled. There is absolutely no proof anywhere in Scripture to suggest otherwise. Israel, today, is still a scattered people. Every roadblock to her regathering will be removed. God again states through Jeremiah, And I... will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; . . . and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it (Jer. 33:7-9). Once God intervenes He will undertake to do a work among the nations on behalf of Israel that will cause nations to wonder and be in awe at His enormous power to restore and redeem Israel. God's work will be done in the sight of all nations and manifestly on Israel's behalf, being a source of joy, praise and honor.

Israel for centuries has been hated, vilified and suffered at the hands of the nations. anti-Semitism is still rampant in the earth today. But these conditions will end once God openly identifies Himself with His ancient people. God has not forgotten or abandoned the people of Israel. Isaiah declared, "Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He: I am the First, I also am the Last" (Isa. 48:12). The prophet adds later, And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again unto Him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles (nations), that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth (Isa. 49:5-6). As for the future of Jerusalem, Isaiah declares, But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy I walls (protective covering) are continually before Me (Isa. 49:14-16).

The sacrificial death of Christ upon the cross of Calvary provided Israel with a complete "pardon all their iniquities" (Jer, 33:8). Israel's past idolatries and sins were well known to God, but she has been forgiven. The prophet Jeremiah adds these powerful words, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David: and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness. For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel (Jer. 33:14-17). This powerful message is further revealed in Jeremiah 23:1-8.

Note these significant words in verse 5, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth (Jer. 23:5). The clear and obvious references to the Branch is to the Messiah. He is Jesus Christ, the direct descendant of David, the son of Jesse. He is the one who is to occupy the throne of His father David. This declaration is also made in Luke 1:32-33 which says, ... And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever (with respect to the eons); and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.

God's Plan to Rule Israel

Once Christ assumes the reigns of government, an orderly procession of events will occur, beginning with the regathering and restoration of the nation of Israel. Hosea declares what the Lord says, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." (Hos. 2:14-23) The word "allure" means to "speak to her heart." This is clearly the language of love. God will yet openly profess His love for His people Israel. No longer will Israel suffer the deprivation of God's love. I believe God will yet speak to the heart of every living Israelite on earth. The veil will be removed from their heart. God will make plain His love for Israel by alluring her back to the wilderness (the place of separation). I believe that the greatest act of faith in that day for an Israelite will be to immediately cease and desist from whatever may occupy his or her mind and return to their ancient land. I do not know how God will accomplish this, but I do know that it will meet with overwhelming success. Those in Israel who respond will be greatly blessed by God. Scripture says, "... Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11). Ezekiel declares, And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God (Ezek. 20:34-36).

This is the denationalization of the scattered people of Israel when they are regathered.

Some people claiming to be Bible students insist there is no such thing as an "Israelite" today, because they have been merged with the nations through intermarriage, having lost their true identity. However, God knows who they are, and their true identity is known to Him. This process of denationalization will be carried out with great intensity, even to providing a common language for all to converse in. God will get an immediate response. God's "mighty hand" in the Ezekiel passage above signifies the skill He will employ to effect this separation. It will be an awesome work that will astound every one on earth. His "stretched-out arm" signifies His strength and His determination to rule over His people Israel. God has decreed, "And I will bring you out from the peoples and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered" (Ezek. 20:34).

Jews today are scattered world-wide. They will be regathered and returned to a place of separation. This place is spoken of, in Hosea 2:14, as "the wilderness." But, do not think of this as an arid, waterless, barren place, but rather as a region in which God will cause it to "blossom as a rose." Ezekiel notes, And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead (present the facts) with you, saith the Lord God (Ezek. 20:35-36). This passage has seeming reference to Numbers 14:2 at which time "all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron." This angered the Lord who said to Moses: ... How long will this people provoke Me? and how long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee (Moses) a greater nation and mightier than they (Num. 14:11-12). Moses, in response, said, ... I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression . . . Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy . . . (Num. 14:17-19). In response, And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord (Num. 14:20-21). This promise is repeated in Habakkuk 2:14, where God has decreed that: "For the earth (signifying its inhabitants) shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord; as the waters cover the sea." This great commitment of God will one day be fulfilled; but not until God's purpose in this present dispensation is complete.

God will yet allure Israel and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. At that time He will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. God says to Hosea, And in that day I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely (Hos. 2:18). What a contrast to the present time

in which violence, terrorism, and unrest is seen throughout her land. Hosea adds, And I will betroth thee unto Me forever (in respect to the Kingdom and His outflow of blessings to Israel and the nations), yea I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, loving-kindness and in mercies. I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord (Hos. 2:19-20).

These are the majestic promises God has committed to the nation of Israel. They will be fulfilled. These promises are denied by the "Preterist-cult movement" who claim God has rejected Israel. The fact remains that Israel is yet going to be blessed by God in every conceivable way and made to become a mediatorial nation, exalting God and being a channel of blessing to every family and nation on the earth. How else could God consciously fulfill His unconditional promise made to Abraham and confirmed to his successors. Israel's place of exaltation on the earth under divine government will be unprecedented. Moses adds, "And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail . . ." (Deut. 28:13). Israel is to be an outflowing source of blessings to all the nations; in bold contrast to her position today and in the past.

Hosea declares, And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people, and they shall say, Thou art my God (Hos. 2:23). Affirmation of this great prophecy of Hosea is seen in the words of Jeremiah, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them ... out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man His brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34). It would be well for all people claiming to be believers to carefully reflect on the enormity of this work. After all, God said to Abraham, By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (Gen. 22:16-17).

Not only are these words addressed to the over 13.5 million Jews living today, but those millions who have already entered the state of death. The necessity for the new covenant recognizes that... The Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mount and be there: and I will give thee tablets of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that thou mayest teach them (Exod. 24:12). And Moses went up into the midst of the cloud, and gat himself up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights (Exod. 24:18). It was during this time, when Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, that the people had Aaron make them a molten calf and said, "These be thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 32:1-4).

This greatly angered God who instructed Moses to, ... Get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest forth out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt (Exod. 32: 7-8). And it came to pass as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount (Exod. 32:19).

The result of this gross transgression led to the death of the people that day, about 3000 men (Exod. 32:28).

God's New Covenant

Once God begins to govern, He will enter into a renewed covenant with the houses of Israel by writing His law indelibly on their hearts. She will be in absolute possession of the law of God. No Israelite will be able to claim ignorance of God's righteous commandments. It will unite the people of Israel with God in a binding covenant no man can abrogate or dissolve. In the clearest possible language God says, . . . For they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:34). I challenge every man who alleges that "God cast away His people," to set aside prejudice, rejection, and unbelief and embrace the irrefutable words of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Habakkuk, and Micah. The irrevocable guarantee that God will perform the terms of the new covenant are clearly stated by Jeremiah, Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.

Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord (Jer. 31:35-37).

The fulfillment of this covenant has never yet been accomplished. It will be done. God cannot lie. To claim, as some do, that these numerous Old Testament prophecies God made with Israel find their fruition in the lives of Christian believers today, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, is patently false. God is not dealing with Israel at this present time. Those of other nations are not the inheritors of Israel's covenants. They have no right to arbitrarily claim promises made to Israel for themselves. Many men today will insist that the Jews living in the first century AD must be charged with the guilt for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men will point to certain verses in Acts to defend their position. For example, Acts 2:23 states, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And Peter adds, in 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and (even) Christ (Messiah)."

It should be recognized that the death of Jesus Christ was a predetermined matter in the counsels of God. As He said, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put him to grief . . ." (Isa. 53:10). If the clear evidence revealed in the Gospel of Matthew is weighed, it will become evident that in answer to the question, "Who crucified Jesus?" the guilty parties were the Pharisees, the Saducees, the scribes, and all the rulers of the people. This also includes a multitude, who at the urging of the chief priests and elders demanded His death. To arbitrarily assign the guilt of the crucifixion of Jesus to the entire nation of Israel is faulty and biased. What Peter goes on to say in Acts 3:14-15 and in Acts 4:10 was spoken to the men of Israel collectively. The "ye" spoken in Acts 2:23, 2:36, 3:14, and 4:10 could not be those thousands of Jews, devout men out of every nation, who had come to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost to worship God (Acts 2:5).

On December 7, 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. As a result of this infamous action, President Roosevelt declared war against Japan. To suggest that every Japanese citizen was in complicity with her leaders is wrong. Likewise to indict every man in Israel with the guilt of crucifying Jesus Christ is equally wrong. In fact, upon hearing the message of Peter on Pentecost, about 3000 Jews were added to those who received and believed his words. These became active believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever guilt may be assigned to Israel for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, it must be remembered that they acted in ignorance (Acts 3:7).

The Record of Acts

If the record of the Acts Period is carefully considered, it will demonstrate conclusively that the overwhelming number of Jews who heard the spoken message concerning Jesus Christ became active believers in the risen Messiah. To illustrate this, consider Acts 4:32 which says, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul . . ." This was a total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. As the result of the ministry of the apostles, "And believers were the more added to the Lord ..." (Acts 5:14). Having heard Philip speak, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did, the people with one accord gave heed to his message, there was no rejection. Having heard Paul speak in the name of the Lord Jesus, they were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, also in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, being multiplied and faith was rewarded.

When Peter raised Dorcas from the dead, ". . . Many believed in the Lord" (Acts 9:40-42). Likewise, when Paul had preached the Lord Jesus in Antioch, ". . . A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:19-21), and in Iconium, "... A great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14:1, 23). Having come to Derbe and Lystra, Paul delivered certain decrees, "And so were the churches (Gk. - ekklesia, the out-called ones) established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:4-5). In Berea the results were equally positive, "... In that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). In Corinth, "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized (identified with Christ)" (Acts 18:8). The spectacular success of Paul's ministry is noted in Acts 21:19-20, where he addressed the elders in Jerusalem and . . . declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles (nations) by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto Him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (myriads or tens of thousands) of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.

The pattern is clear that the overwhelming number of Jews became active believers in Christ. Even as the Acts dispensation came to a close, "Some believed and some believed not." Dr. Lensky, the noted Lutheran theologian, holds that at least 50 percent of the Jews believed, but I think this number was much greater. To portray Israel as a nation of Christ rejecters, as the Preterists do, is shameful, and a discredit to the work of the Holy Spirit.

These facts suggest that by the end of the Acts Period there were upwards of five million Jews who believed in Jesus Christ as Messiah. During the 33 years of the Acts Period every purpose God intended for the people of Israel was completely fulfilled. God commissioned heralds went forth and proclaimed the gospel of peace everywhere (Rom. 10:15). This message reached every Israelite in Palestine and those living in the dispersion scattered about throughout the world. This was the message concerning the risen Christ and the manifest Kingdom of God. These heralds were told that: "But the Comforter (the Paraclete) which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). These God-commissioned heralds were equipped to make a presentation of Christ in each case to fit the exact need of the hearer. The result of their ministry was such that they could say, For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and hi them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life ... (2 Cor. 2:15-16).

The chief characteristic of the Acts dispensation was that God commissioned certain men to go forth at His direction, speaking a God-inspired message. Each spoken word was, "... Not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God . . ." (1 Thess. 2:13). No man today can claim such privilege or opportunity. The result of the apostles' ministry met with instant success. We are told to, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul's admonition is to Timothy, and all of us too, for we are not commanded to be successful, but simply we must be faithful. In the Acts Period, tens of thousands of Jews, living in every nation, became active believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Under heaven's manifest government, the time will come when God will work a work of such an incredible nature among the dispersed in Israel, that His learners would not believe it even if He told them of it (Hab. 1:5). Men will say: incredible, magnificent, true. Even though this prophecy awaits its final and definitive fulfillment, there can be no doubt but that there was a precursory fulfillment of it in the Acts Period. You may note from Acts 13:40-41; Jews living in the Acts Period, those in Palestine and those scattered among the nations, not only heard the spoken word, but were witnesses to the miracles, wonders and signs at the hands of the apostles. Also, take note of Acts 4:29,30, 32; 5:12-16; 6:8 and 8:6. Miracles were the normal thing from the time of Pentecost through Acts 28:28-29.

The Dispensation of Grace

Suddenly these manifest miracles ceased. The famed British barrister of 100 years ago, Sir Robert Anderson wrote, in his book *The Silence of God*, "The divine history of the favored race for thousands of years teems with miracles by which

God gave proof of His power with men, and yet we are confronted with the astounding fact that from the days of the apostles to the present hour, the history of Christendom will be searched in vain for the record of a single public event to compel belief that there is a God at all." I do not deny the occurrence of miracles during the present dispensation, I recognize the distinction between the "evidential" miracles of the Acts dispensation and the present untraceable riches of Christ. At the close of the Acts Period, God had accomplished everything He had set out to do. No purpose was left unfinished. No project left incomplete. The message had gone forth to the ends of the earth; all Israel had heard it. A remnant had been established, and a company for His name had been called from among the Gentiles. The Kingdom of God had progressed through the stage marked by the "blade and the ear." The final stage of God's Kingdom did not materialize. Instead, God, by the mouth of the apostle Paul, declared, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation (bringing message) of God is sent (authorized) to the Gentiles (nations), and they will hear it (with a guarantee that it would get through to them)" (Acts 28:28).

The "salvation-bringing message" of Acts 28:28 most likely is the Gospel of John, which contains the internal message, But these are written, that ye (the reader) might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name (John 20:31). It is centered in the fact that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God. Faith, founded upon believing this message, is the basis for forgiveness, our righteousness and the assurance of eternal life. In the words Paul to the Romans, Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:4-5).

The unique character of this present dispensation is noted in the fact that for the past almost 2000 years of mankind's history, all of God's activity has been centered in the grace inherent in His character. Every act of God has been one of unrequited love and compassion to all men, including the most heinous of criminals, the undeserving. God has not punished and does not punish men today. His sole purpose has been to write into the story of His long dealings with mankind the record of the grace inherent in His character. Grace, defined as love and favor to the undeserving, is the dominant aspect in the polarity of His character being demonstrated in this dispensation. In fact, His activity in grace is so dominant that it is both active and passive, and if He cannot act in grace He will not act at all. The nature and character of God's grace has been well documented in a book written by the late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, titled Grace. I highly recommend that all believers obtain and read this excellent book (available from Kregel Publications, P.O. Box 2607, Grand Rapids, MI 45501-2607).

During this present day of grace, Israel is no longer the dominant nation in the world from God's point of view. As a result of the great holocaust described as the final solution by the WWII German regime under Hitler, the number of the Jewish population annihilated came to about 6 million Jews. This wanton destruction of human life brought death to 2 out of every 3 European Jews.

On May 14, 1948, three years following WWII, the United Nations approved a partition to create the present Jewish state called Israeli. At that time, Palestine was divided into Jewish and Arab states. Conflicts between the Jewish and Arab states have continued until this day. Among a group of Bible students, the events of 1948 seemed to signal that at long last Israel had returned to her land in fulfillment of God's prophetic word.

It has been now 50 years since Israel became an independent Jewish state. Based upon this history, I see no evidence of God having returned Israel to her land. There is no priesthood, temple, or temple worship in place, and only a small fraction of the land promised to Abraham has been acquired. While she has enjoyed some measure of prosperity, conflicts still exist, the deserts still remain hostile. Many in Israel have become disillusioned and returned to their native countries, and there are still as many Jews in New York City as in Palestine. Israel's history over the past 50 years does not provide any evidence of divine intervention.

The Future of Israel

In light of this recent history and events which have characterized God's long display of grace, we need to ask, "What is the future for the nation of Israel?" The ultimate answer recognizes that God has made innumerable promises in regard to the future of that great nation. Without exception, the fulfillment of the prophetic word depends on the divine assumption of sovereignty. This is the ultimate solution. Once God breaks His present silence, Micah 4:1-5 will be accomplished. This is equally true of Amos 9:11-15 and Ezekiel 37 which provides a majestic picture of the resurrection of "the whole house of Israel."

It is at this time, that the Lord God will speak and say, ... Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I, the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord (Ezek. 37:12-14).

This is not figurative language, but a description of the physical resurrection, denied by most men. To those who object to a literal resurrection, I would remark using Paul's words, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8). And in 1 Corinthians 15:16-18 we read, For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain (an empty thing): ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If there is no hope in resurrection, Israel has no future, nor do we. But since Christ has declared Himself to be "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), we are assured of the future resurrection of every Israelite now in the grave. Christ will triumph over death. Israel will be raised to life in fulfillment of God's great promise to her. Israel, now divided, is to be "no more two nations." Israel and Judah will become one nation, And David My servant shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes and do them (Ezek. 37:21-24). "My tabernacle (dwelling place) also shall be with them: yea I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Ezek. 37:27).

The time is yet future when in God's words, And I will set My glory among the heathen (nations) and all the heathen (nations) shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward (Ezek. 39:21-22). Israel has a great future, and we have a great Savior who says, Neither will I hide My face any more from them: for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God (Ezek. 39:29). Psalm 98:1-3 will be fulfilled: O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand (skill), and His holy arm (strength), hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen (nations). He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. God has spoken. God will not pour out His vengeance on mankind until all men have had the opportunity to know Him and to choose, of their own volition, to follow His instructions in righteousness. Those who take the "mark of the beast," or have worshipped his image, will be destroyed, but that's what the Tribulation is—a time of testing all mankind to see how well they have learned God's righteousness.

END

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