

The Word of Truth Ministry

Presents

MORE Special Studies

#MSS02

**ISRAEL IN THE
DISPERSION**

By JOHN C. RIBBENS

CONTENTS

Preface

Introduction

A Kingdom Divided And Its Sins

Restoration Prophesied

The Captivity of Israel and Judah

The First Exiles of Judah

The Image In Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

The Theocratic Kingdom

Israel's Hope In Resurrection

Finishing Nebuchadnazzar's Dream

Jerusalem Destroyed The Second Time

Israel Today

Summary

CHARTS

CHART 1: The Great Image, Daniel 2:31, World Powers

CHART 2: Contemporary Kings in Judah and Israel

CHART 3: The Ancient World In About 400 BC

CHART 4: First Century Christianity

(NOTE: These CHARTS have been filed separately as MSS02.1, to ease your retrieval. We recommend that you download and print them, so that it will be easier to follow along with the text herein.)

PREFACE

This study is dedicated to the memory of the late Otis Q. Sellers at whose feet I was privileged to enter into an appreciation of the prophetic Word. In the year 1947 the Spirit of God caused him to perceive that a time lay ahead in which God would allure Israel and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her. The great holocaust of Jews from 1933 to 1945 did not diminish his belief in a time when God would bring them out from the peoples and gather them out of the countries wherein they are presently scattered, and bring them into the bond of the covenant. The awareness of this hope led him to understand that this would not be possible without the divine assumption of sovereignty. His dedication to the study of the infallible Word of God was rewarded with his discovery that the next thing in God's plan for mankind is a period of divine government before the parousia of Christ. Thousands of men, women and youths have been enabled to learn and rejoice in the reward of his labors. This includes my children and their families who will one day live to see "the increase of His government and peace" (Isa. 9:6-7).

INTRODUCTION

One of the most extraordinary periods of divine history in the life of God's chosen people, Israel, began with the rending of the kingdom in 931 BC through the captivity of the Israelites and ending about 493 BC. This includes Jewish families who had experienced the bitter years of captivity in the land of Babylon for 185 years. During those years they were forced to live away from their promised land; and their holy city, Jerusalem which had been reduced to rubble by Nebuchadnezzar. While in captivity they were unable to practice their God-given religion, lacking a temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and observance of their holy-days. They formed synagogues and tried to follow the Mosaic Law, but they mourned for Jerusalem and the Temple.

God had not abandoned them, but He made them to understand that having passed through the fiery furnace of their deprivation from their ancient land, ahead lay a period of divine history in which all the majestic promises would be fulfilled relating to her restoration and regathering from the nations. They looked to the future, and that glorious day when Israel is to enjoy the blessings of divine intervention in the manifest Kingdom of God. At long last the blessings of the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and the new covenants would be realized in the life of a people destined to become the "the Israel of God." This study will take us into that journey. As God says of it, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60:1).

ISRAEL IN THE DISPERSION

By John C. Ribbens

A KINGDOM DIVIDED AND ITS SINS

Most Bible scholars agree that Israel became a divided nation upon the death of Solomon about 931 BC. For 80 years leading to the rending of the kingdom, the twelve tribes of Israel flourished as a united people under kings David and his son Solomon. The dissolution of the nation can be traced to the fact that the heart of Solomon was turned away from the Lord God of Israel by his many idol-worshipping wives (1 Kings 11:9). For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father (1 Kings 11:4). As a result of this defection, The Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen (1 Kings 11:11-13).

Solomon's failure to keep the covenant and statutes did not nullify the great promises, which God had lavished upon the nation. God's decree that Israel is to become a great nation (Gen. 12:2) remained intact. Speaking through Moses, God declared, Thus shall thou say unto the house of Jacob, and tell to the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). These words were corroborated by Peter who declared, But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10). Moses had spoken earlier saying, For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:7-8).

This testimony makes it abundantly clear that God has singularly blessed the nation with enormous spiritual blessings. No nation on earth today can boast of such blessings. Any attempt on the part of an individual or religious body to lessen or repudiate these promised blessings for the nation of Israel is an assault on the character and honesty of a righteous and just God. To reject the unique and distinct place of service for the people of Israel in the plan and purpose of God is failure to believe in the inspired Word of God. The fulfillment of God's intention to redeem and restore the nation of Israel will have an unprecedented impact on every nation on earth in the Kingdom of God. From the moment that God determined to rend the kingdom from Solomon's progeny, Israel became divided into ten northern tribes, in the land of Samaria and whose ruling city was Samaria, while the two faithful tribes of Judah and Benjamin made their home in the land of Judah and retained Jerusalem, the place of the house of God, as their capital.

Following the death of Solomon, **"he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam ruled in his stead"** (1 Kings 11:43). Before his death, Solomon selected a young man named Jeroboam and made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. And it came to pass at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way and when he had clad himself with a new garment and the two were alone in the fields and Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces; and said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will take the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to thee, but he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, ... I will take the kingdom out of thy son's hand, and give it unto thee (Jeroboam), even ten tribes; and unto his son (Rehoboam) will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to put My name there (1 Kings 11:28-32,:35-36). By means of this judicial action God chose to divide the twelve tribes of Israel into the ten northern tribes, and the remaining two faithful tribes, identified for us in 1 Kings 12:23 as "all the house of Judah and Benjamin."

In subsequent years the ten northern tribes became known as Ephraim Israel, or simply, Israel. This is made clear in Hosea 1:4 where the Lord instructed the prophet Hosea to take thee a wife of whoredoms and the children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord. So he went and took Corner the daughter of Diblaim, which conceived, and bare him a son. And the Lord said unto him (Hosea), Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. These words signified that the captivity of the ten tribes was imminent. It should be noted that the prophet Hosea was a

contemporary of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of the southern province of Judah. Hosea's prophecy spanned the time frame of 688 to 614 BC. At the birth of his son, he was named, Jezreel, after the city of Jehu's bloody brutality (1 Kings 10:1-14). Following this, the wife of whoredoms, Gomer, conceived again and bore a daughter named Lo-ruhamah symbolizing that God had, "no more mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away" (Hosea 1:6). The birth of this child became a warning of the impending captivity of the ten tribes of Israel, which happened in 678 BC. The reader is encouraged to consider the chart titled, "Contemporary Kings In Judah And Israel," **Chart No. 2**. Following the birth of Jezreel, Gomer conceived again and bore a son. Then said God, call his name Lo-ammi, for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God (Hosea 1:8-9).

RESTORATION PROPHESED

Although the ominous event of Israel's captivity remained imminent, the hope of the restoration of the nation perpetually remained prominent. In the words of the prophet Hosea, we read these important words of God, Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered, and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel (Hosea 1:10-11). This passage provides proof positive that God's commitment to the nation of Israel had not been forgotten. Although Israel had become a fractured nation, God has determined that these twelve tribes would be restored and regathered to fulfill their role as, "an holy nation," a peculiar people destined to "show forth the praises of Him who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). In the sign given to the prophet Ezekiel, God instructed him saying, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land, and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all (Ezek. 37:21-22). These irrefutable words provide assurance of the unification of the people of Israel. The amazing thing is that prior to the first deportation of Israel (Ephraim Israel) "into Assyria, in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kings 18:9-11), the prophets wrote of Israel's future restoration and regathering. Hosea 2:14-23 makes it very clear that God has great plans for them, speaking of the time when He "will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness (that place of separation to Him) where she will sing as in the days of her youth." In that day God "will break the bow and

the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." (Hosea 2:14-23). These words are in sharp contrast to the many centuries of violence and warfare that have plagued these people and their land. Isaiah declared, Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and gates Praise (Isa. 60:18). In that glorious day of her restoration God will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people, and they shall say, Thou art my God: (Hosea 2:23).

Twenty six centuries have elapsed since the prophet penned these words, but they remain as viable today as when first recorded. Looking to the future, Hosea declared, for the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince (ruler), and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim; afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king: and shall fear (stand in awe of) the Lord, and goodness in the latter days (Hosea 3:4-5). God will certainly not disappoint His people. These "last days" (Heb.-acarythyom) are also spoken of in Isaiah 2:2 and Mcch 4:1. They point to a time when there will be a confluence of all of God's prophetic word aimed at the restoration and the reconstitution of the nation of Israel. Inasmuch as God is not time constrained, He is at liberty to determine the sequence of the fulfillment of every prophetic event. In the words of Solomon it says, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor (glory) of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).

THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Beginning with the ascension of Rehoboam to the throne, upon the death of Solomon his father, the son of David, thirteen kings reigned over Judah through King Hezekiah. Beginning with Jeroboam, the king of Israel, seven kings ruled in succession (see Appendix 77 of the Companion Bible). The last of these kings who ruled in Samaria was a man named Hoshea. He succeeded Pekah, the son of Ramaliah who ruled over Israel in Samaria for twenty years. Like many of his predecessors, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, by not departing from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made (caused) Israel to sin (2 Kings 15:27-28). Hoshea the son of Elah reigned in Samaria nine years, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings that were before him (2 Kings 17:1-6). He ascended the throne in 687 BC and reigned until 678 BC. "In the third year of the reign of Hoshea, Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz king of Judah, began to reign" (2 Kings 18:1). The reign of Hezekiah greatly discouraged idol worship in Judah. As Scripture says of him, He trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him (2 Kings 18:1-6). During his reign the people of Judah enjoyed an

unprecedented spiritual revival and sense of the nearness of the Lord (2 Kings 18:4-7, 2 Chron. 29:3-30:27) Thus, beginning in 678 BC, Israel was carried into captivity, where they remained until the southern two tribes were carried away captive to Babylon, which marked the beginning of the 70 years spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 29:10-14).

It is important to recognize that In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it, and at the end of three years, they took it, even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken (2 Kings 18:9-10). This marks the date when Samaria was taken into captivity. Recognize that the sixth year of the reign of King Hezekiah, king of Judah, corresponds in time to the ninth year of Hoshea, the northern king of Israel, when the ten northern tribes in Samaria entered into captivity (2 Kings 17:6). By tabulating the duration of the reign of each of the kings of Judah, beginning with Rehoboam, the son of Solomon in the year 931 BC, we can determine approximately the year in which the ten northern tribes entered into Assyrian captivity. The number of these years from the time Rehoboam began to reign until the sixth year of King Hezekiah is 254 years. This implies that Shalmaneser king of Assyria carried Israel into captivity in 678 BC. Thus, beginning in 678 BC, Israel was carried into captivity where they remained for 115 years until the time the two tribes of the southern portion of Judah were carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, marking the beginning of the 70 years spoken by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 29:10-14). In the enclosed Chart 2, "Contemporary Kings In Judah And In Samaria," we show a comparison of those kings who reigned during this transition in power from the pre-exilic days into the post-exilic days, when Israel entered into the captivity until the return from captivity of all the twelve tribes.

The duration of the captivity of the ten northern tribes can be determined by the time interval between the time Israel went into captivity and the start of the captivity of the two southern tribes of Judah. This can be established by an examination of 2 Chronicles 36:11-21. Upon the death of King Hezekiah, Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. Beginning with the reign of Manasseh, seven kings in Judah reigned in succession. These are, Ammon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. It was during the three-month reign of Jehoiachin that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against Jerusalem, and besieged it (2 Kings 24:10). It was during the eighth year of Jehoiachin's reign that the king of Babylon took Jehoiachin and carried him to Babylon: including the king's mother, and his servants, and the king's wives, and his princes, and his officers, and the mighty of the land (2 Kings 24:12, 15). He was succeeded by Zedekiah who began to reign in 555 BC.

He reigned for 11 years in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:11). **And it came to pass that in the ninth year of his reign that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah** (2 Kings 25:1-2). This represents 544 BC, the end of his rule, and the record is corroborated in Jeremiah 39:1-2 where we are told that, In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up. Two important facts need to be observed. One is that the duration of the siege was at least two years, and did not encompass the entire land of Judah.

Also, take note of the fact that Jeremiah speaks of those (people) that are not gone into captivity would endure great physical suffering (Jer. 29:16). We reckon with the fact "that in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken" (2 Kings 18:10). They were taken by the Assyrian King Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:3), and remained in exile until the eleventh year of Zedekiah, when Nebuchadnezzar brought King Zedekiah into Babylon. Thus, we can establish the duration of the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel. Hezekiah reigned 23 years following Israel being taken into captivity. We can now determine the length of time Israel was held in captivity until she would be joined by the two remaining tribes out of Jerusalem. The total number of years is 132. Inasmuch as Israel entered into captivity in the year 678 BC, the total length of time of the captives of Israel and Judah combines to 185 years. This would mark the formal release of all the exiles held in the captivity in the year 493 BC. **Chart 2, "Contemporary Kings in Judah and Israel,"** provides what I consider a Biblical chronology based on the internal evidence provided by the infallible Word of God. I leave it to the reader to confirm the veracity of the number of years spoken of in the books of the Kings and the Chronicles. While the precise dates I have shown in my charts may be in question, of even greater importance is their relationship to the truths pertaining to the past, present, and future of the Israel of God. In the same Chart 2, "The Contemporary Kings in Judah and Israel," we show a comparison of those kings who reigned during this transition in power, from the pre-exilic days to the post-exilic days, when Israel entered into and returned from captivity, consisting of all the twelve tribes.

The writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel make it clear that the condition of the exiles was not one of great oppression. This is illustrated in Jeremiah, where we are told, **Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; build ye houses, and dwell in them: and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for**

your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have cause you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace (Jer. 29:4-7). Although these words were spoken to Judah, it is reasonable to surmise that they applied equally well to all the Israelites taken into captivity. Life in the exile was not one of hardship, but probably was an improvement over their life in Palestine. The Jews still had the services of the priesthood, and even without the temple, they observed, as much as possible, many of the ceremonies of the law.

Thus, they got into the habit of assembling on the Sabbath for prayer and the reading of the Scriptures, which some had carried with them into the exile. There can be little doubt that the institution of the synagogue was a product of the exile. Nevertheless, the true Israelite could never be reconciled to the culture of Babylon with its many gods. Their exile from Palestine was the essence of misery; to be deprived of the temple was nearly the equivalent of being cast off by the Lord. A psalmist declared, **By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. we hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. ... If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee. let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy** (Psa. 137:1-2, 5-6).

THE FIRST EXILES OF JUDAH

After this there followed a succession of world rulers who would have a dominant impact not only upon every nation on the earth, but also the people of Israel. **"It was in the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it"** (Daniel 1:1). The third year of Jehoiachim would have been 563 BC. Little is known of Daniel, one of the exiles, beyond what may be gathered from the book which bears his name. He was carried to Babylon eight years before Ezekiel. He was not a priest as Ezekiel and Jeremiah were, but rather, he was one of the children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace (Dan. 1:4). His presence in Babylon, in the king's palace, was not mere coincidence. God was acting on this momentous fact that His people Israel had forfeited their place of privilege, and at least for the present, as God had stripped them of their name as His people. Henceforth, they became "Lo-ammi" (not My people). As a result of Israel's defection was the startling fact that the government, which God had set up in Israel, accompanied by the visible sign of His presence, the shekinah glory, was now to exist no more. Nevertheless, more than 200 years after Judah had become "Lo-ammi," the last prophet, Malachi, could tell of them

that feared The Lord, And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels (NAS, prepare my own possession); I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him (Mal. 3:17). Beginning in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; the which (God caused) Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, . . . And this whole land shall be a desolation , and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer. 25:1-2,11).

This "three score and ten years" which is referred to here and in 2 Chronicles 36:21, is the fulfillment of Leviticus 26:32-36. One year later, "in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came unto Jerusalem and besieged it" (Dan. 1:1). Jeremiah's prophesy was fulfilled shortly. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah (2 Chron. 36:22-23).

This was the fulfillment of the word of the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah, For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years are accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you causing you to return to this place (Jer. 29:10). This would have been the year 536 BC, marking the inception of a shift in world government from Babylon to Medo-Persia. Confirmation of this proclamation by Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, is found in Ezra 1:1-2. It is not my purpose in this study to attempt to expound the words of Ezra, which are a separate study in itself. The Darius spoken of in Daniel 9:1-2 is evidently Cyrus, spoken of in Ezra 1:1. It was during the first year of the reign of Cyrus that Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:2).

Having made these profound declarations, we now turn to the highly significant events revealed by God as Daniel prepared to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream.

THE IMAGE IN NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

The king had been greatly troubled by a dream and could not recall the details. So he had commanded the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and Chaldeans to explain his dream (Dan. 2:1-2). He could give no details to them, but, nevertheless became furious with them and commanded all the wise men in Babylon to be killed. This included Daniel, and when he heard of it, Daniel approached the captain of the king's guard and asked "Why is this decree so hasty from the king?" Daniel then went into the presence of the king "and desired of the king that he would give him some time, and that he would show the king the interpretation" (Dan. 2:15). Daniel and his friends implored the mercies of God that they would not die. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision" (Dan. 2:19). After denouncing the ability of the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the sooth-sayers to reveal the dream, Daniel said to the king, But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days (Dan. 2:27-28).

Then followed the interpretation of perhaps the most important dream recorded in Scripture. In the course of interpreting this dream, Daniel explained, Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:31-35). Over the centuries men have sought diligently to understand the meaning of this majestic dream, but have been baffled by its conclusion. The significance of this dream cannot be overstated. It is of great importance to carefully consider the divine interpretation of this dream given to Nebuchadnezzar. It is significant to note that beginning with the head of fine gold, each succeeding element in this image is of decreasing value.

Daniel said, **Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory** (Dan 2:37). Undoubtedly Nebuchadnezzar was not only a most successful ruler, but enjoyed unparalleled power and prestige. The greatness of this man is revealed in Daniel 5, where Daniel told Belshazzar, **O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar**

thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: and for the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down (Dan. 5:18-19).

This man, Nebuchadnezzar, was clearly a man commanding absolute power. It was not a question of his own prowess or any special wisdom he possessed. He symbolized the supreme power God had vested in one man. The absolute authority conveyed to this man is revealed in the words of Jeremiah who said, **Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have made heaven and earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet (appropriate) to Me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with famine, and with pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand (Jer. 27:4-8).**

The exercise of the power, authority, and dominion of this nation marked the inception of human government at the pinnacle of its success. Though it lasted only about 164 years, it marked the beginning of the times of the Gentiles. The symbols represented in the metallic image provided a succession of world-ruling empires, which had powerful political organizations, each appearing on the scene of human history in a sequential fashion. It is very important to remember as we study the Bible, that prophecy does in fact explain history, but history never interprets prophecy. The man who understands prophecy can open up history, but the understanding of history will only enable him to explain prophecy. Getting back to the dream, Daniel continued his interpretation of the image, by telling the king, **And after thee shall arise another kingdom (government) inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth (Dan. 2:39).** The succession of world rulers began with the Babylonian empire in 700 BC, which continued to about 493 BC. However it is extremely important to recognize that with the ascension of subsequent world political organizations, world powers existing among the nations continues until the present time. I have attempted to convey this concept in the attached **Chart 1**, titled "The Great Image, Daniel 2:31-35, World Powers."

THE THEOCRATIC KINGDOM

Of utmost importance is the fact that this succession of world powers will continue to appear on the world stage until such a time "that the stone that smote the image becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34-35). Beyond all doubt this points to the coming Kingdom of God, which will dominate all mankind and nations living upon the earth in the manifest Kingdom of God, that will follow this present Dispensation of the Grace of God. Then every human government, whether great or small will have to submit to the government of God. At such a time in the plans and purposes of God, that stone, the symbol of divine government, shatters and pulverizes the image. All nations must be subservient to Jesus Christ, whom the Apostle Paul describes as, Which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:14). At this time Jesus Christ will assume control and authority over every nation on earth. The entire structure of the nations will be radically transformed. The Psalmist states, I will declare the decree: the Lord (Jehovah) hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me and I shall give the heathen (nations) for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:7-9).

As a result of this assumption of power and authority by God, some nations may cease to exist. New nations may appear on the world scene. These nations will continue to exist "until the times of the nations be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The times of the nations will consummate in the Day of the Lord. No nation that will have sought to destroy Jerusalem in that day will be permitted to exist (Zechariah 12:9). In fact, It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of the tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). This marks the second coming of Christ and the dawn of His 1000-year reign upon the earth (Millennium). Every obstacle for nations to share in the reign of Christ will have been removed. This includes, That old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into a bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20:2-3).

After about 164 years of Babylonian rule, Darius was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, and Persian rule began. Daniel's prophecy predicted this defeat when, The king spake (Nebuchadnezzar), and said, **Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?** While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, **O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; thy**

kingdom (all your power and authority) **is departed from thee** (Dan. 4:30-31). What the king had failed to observe was **"that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will"** (Dan. 4:32).

In the silver portion of Nebuchadnezzar's dream we take note of the power assumed during the Medo-Persian rule by Darius the Median (Dan. 5:31). His desire to proclaim and perpetuate the government of God was stated by the king in Daniel 6:25-28. Then King Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell on the earth; peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom (government) that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion (rule) shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. Clearly here was a God-fearing king who recognized the greatness of the God of Daniel. We are told in Daniel 5:31 that **"Darius the median took the kingdom, being about three score and two years old** (62 years)." Dr. E. W. Bullinger, in the Companion Bible, makes the note that this Darius the Median of Daniel 5:31 is the Artaxerxes (the great king) of Nehemiah 2:1 and Ezra 6:14, and the Ahasuerus of Esther 1:1. He claims these names are all used of the same person. This man is also identified as Astyages, whose name appears on the Behistun Rock and the cylinder of Cyrus. It is further noted that, In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia (said to be the son of Astyages and Esther), that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, put it also in writing saying, **Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah** (Ezra 1:1-2). These words find their confirmation in the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders, which were carried away captives, and to priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon (Jer. 29:1). It goes on like this: **For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform My good word to you, in causing you to return to this place** (Jer. 29:10).

This was God's assurance to the nation of Israel that subsequent to being held captive 70 years in the land of Babylon, God would be found of these exiles, and ultimately returned them to their land. They would not be abandoned by God. **And I will be found of you, saith the Lord. And I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I**

caused you to be carried away captive (Jer. 29:10-14).

For the space of 70 years, beginning with the year 563 BC, and ending in 493 BC, these captives from Jerusalem would remain exiles in the land of Babylon. But the sin and guilt of other thousands remaining in the land of Judah would cause them to experience enormous physical suffering including sword, famine, and pestilence, and become a reproach among the nations whither I have driven them, because they have not hearkened to My words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, but ye would not hear, saith the Lord (Jer. 29:16-19). God warned them of the severe consequences they would experience as the result of their idolatry. Moses said, And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations, whither the Lord shall lead you. And ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood, and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell (Deut. 4:23-27).

Now Jeremiah addresses: **All ye of the captivity whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaceiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in My name: behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes, and of them shall be taken up a curse on all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; because they have committed villainy in Israel, and committed adultery with their neighbor's wives, and have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commended them: even I know and am a witness, saith the Lord** (Jer. 29:20-23). No wonder Israel needs a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 18:31). Jeremiah says, **Though I make a full end of all nations, whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished** (Jer 30:11). The prophet Jeremiah declared that as a consequence of her failure to hear the word of the Lord, this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years, **and it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it perpetual desolations** (Jer. 25:11-12). With the demise of the Persian empire about 330 BC, the structure of world government fell into the hands of Greece. Born in 356 BC, Alexander the Great marched into Asia with about 40,000 well-disciplined soldiers, met the Persian troops in the battle of Arbela, and utterly annihilated them in 334 BC. By this time in world history, the exiled Jews in Babylon had dispersed, with a remnant returning to Israel 200 years earlier.

The crash of Babylon's fall had resounded throughout the eastern world and the long looked-for tidings, "**Babylon is fallen, is fallen**" (Isa. 21:9), had reached the ears of all the captive Israelites. Some responded to the call of this generous Persian king, Cyrus the Great, who expressed God's determination to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple, both of which were destroyed in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. The scope of Isaiah's prophecy covers the period of 649 to 588 BC, or during the worldwide rule of Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet was born in 667 BC and died in 584 BC, or during the time of Israel's captivity.

ISRAEL'S HOPE IN RESTORATION

With an eye to Israel's hope in restoration. God said to the prophet, that saith to Jerusalem, **Thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, Ye shalt be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers** (a probable reference to the rivers of Babylon {Psa. 137:1}, **and the river Gozan** {in Assyria}): **That saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid** (Isa. 44:26-29).

These prophetic instructions reach out into the distant future, but are inextricably linked to the past. Ezra, in his history of the Jews return, wrote: Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it in writing, saying, **Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is God,) which is in Jerusalem** (Ezra 1:1-3).

The response of the children of Israel was such that 42,360 children of the congregation plus 7,337 men of their servants and maids, joined in the return to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:64-65). We note that four courses of priests (sons of Aaron) went back out of the 24 courses at the time of Solomon, implying that only one-sixth of them returned to Jerusalem for their special service to God. In the plan of God concerning the government of God, Jerusalem was to be the only place of sacrifice, and the sons of Zadok the only ministrants at the altar. The Levites were prohibited from exercising "the priestly office" because they ministered "unto the house of Israel before their idols" (Ezek. 44:10, 15, 16).

What an interesting sight it must have been to see this band of Jews leaving Babylon! Chiefs, priests, Levites, singers, servants, and people went forth in joyous procession, inspired by the feeling that they were the children of God. In the year 537 BC, the exiles turned their backs on Babylon. Daniel remained behind, an old man, and high in the government.

It was during the time of Israel's captivity that, **The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah. This was the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, from the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the twentieth, the word of the Lord came unto me (Jer. 25:1-3).**

Here before us, is the divine chronology informing us of the impending seventy-year captivity of Judah, Note that Josiah, a king in Judah, began his reign in the year 597 BC. Therefore the "thirteenth year" of his reign would be 584 BC. The reign of Josiah ended in 566 BC. This date is based on 2 Chronicles 34:1, telling us, "**He reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.**" This godly king "broke down the altars in his presence and the images that were on high above them he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images . ." Thus he was bringing an end to idolatrous worship in Judah. Following his death, the people took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and appointed him, and made him king in his father's stead. Jehoahaz was twenty three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:30-31). He was succeeded by Jehoiakim, who "**was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem**" (2 Kings 23:36). Like his father Jehoahaz "**he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done**" (2 Kings 23:37). Inasmuch as he began to reign in 566 BC and reigned 11 years; his reign would have ended in 555 BC. It was during his brief reign that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up and "**called Jehoiakim to be his servant,**" but in turn he rebelled against the king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:1). Because Manasseh sinned, the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it (2 Kings 24:2). This was God's punishment for the innocent blood that he shed, which filled Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:4).

Note carefully that according to Daniel 1:1, "**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiachin king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and besieged it.**" Since Jehoiakim became king in 566 BC, "the third year" of his reign would correspond to the year 563 BC, the year inaugurating the seventy-year prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the captivity of Judah. This prophetic declaration

is found in the words of the prophet Jeremiah. We read: **And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years, and it shall come to pass, when the seventy years are accomplished that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations** (Jer. 25:11-12). Based on this divine chronology, the seventy weeks of captivity ended in 493 BC. This is a remarkable moment in the life of the twelve tribes of Israel, which had entered into captivity. In order for the reader to more fully understand this divine scenario, this study includes a chart exhibiting the kings of Judah, who immediately preceded the 70 years of captivity. It is exceedingly important to recognize that by the time the 70 years of captivity of Judah had concluded in the land of Babylon, all of the twelve tribes in Israel emerged a scattered people. While a vast number of Jews remained in Babylon and Assyria, the exodus of the post-exilic Jews reached westward into Egypt and along the northern shores of Africa. Note Chart 3 titled, "The Ancient World About 400 BC," showing the migration of the Israelites into the then-Roman world (about the time of Christ).

The Rev. William Fairweather, in his book, *From The Exile To Advent* (printed in 1894), defines the Jewish dispersion as 1) Jews living beyond the Euphrates, 2) Jews living in Syria, especially in Antioch and Damascus, this includes the Jews who penetrated Asia Minor, 3) the greatest exodus was to Egypt where over a million Jews lived in Alexandria, under the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy I, and 4) the dispersion among the Greeks, which would include large numbers living in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, and a numerous community well in excess of the 100,000 who lived in Rome. While we total the number of Jews living in the dispersion including Palestine, by the year 4 BC, the year of the birth of Christ, they numbered as much as 5,500,000; we do not know the precise identity of these Jews in their respective tribes. However, it is false to assume that the twelve tribes were ever lost. In the epistle of James we read, "James a servant of God and (even) of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). Peter writes, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers (that is the diaspora, expatriates of the seed of Abraham) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappodocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . . grace unto you and peace be multiplied" (1 Peter 1:1-2). This is a brief description of the location of the some of the Christianized twelve tribes of Israel in 60 AD. But it is important to note that as of the days of the apostles, the strict identity of the twelve tribes is not known. Some like Paul, who was a Benjamite, did know and had some records of lineage, but the general problem persists even until this present day, and its resolution awaits the return of Elijah. The important mission of Elijah is one that has been sorely neglected.

For suggested reading, the late Otis Q. Sellers has provided us with an excellent overview of "The Mission Of Elijah," in issue **SB091** of Seed And Bread.

FINISHING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

Turning our attention to the interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, we recall the description of the "great image." With the destruction of the Babylonian Empire, the then-prevailing government fell into the hands of the Medo-Persian rulers: Artaxerxes and Darius I. The record of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, is found in Ezra 7:11-28. It was this Artaxerxes, king of kings (called Cyrus here) that issued the decree to Ezra encouraging all they of the people of Israel, and priest, and Levites, in his realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13). Under his rule, Israel enjoyed a privileged position and a time of peace and prosperity. This decree brought great delight to Ezra (Ezra 7:27-28). In the days of Nehemiah that followed unto the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, Nehemiah prayed to the Lord God of heaven to intercede on behalf of those who were left of the captivity to return to Jerusalem to build the wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 7:2-18). Whatever success they may have know is not given. But the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt with its gates, and in record time (five months). The last of the kings of Persia reigned until 332 BC. The Persian period extended over a 156-year period, but existed as a world power for only about 100 years. It would appear from political considerations that the Persian empire diminished in power with the end of the Babylonian Empire, although it increased geographically for over 50 years more.

Following the collapse of the Persian Empire came the Grecian Empire, which existed from about 331 BC to about 167 BC. This period of world domination is described as "thighs of brass" (Dan. 2:32) in Daniel's description of the great image. Under the Ptolemies, the Greek kings of Egypt, the number of Israelites living in the dispersion continued to increase. The exact numbers are not known, although according to the Roman census records at about the time of the end of the Acts Period, there were about 5,500,000 Israelites who made up the diaspora (see Seed And Bread, issues 177 and 178). The Jews everywhere were treated with toleration, including religious freedom and exemption from military service. In Egypt, under the Ptolemies, many of them held the highest offices, both civil and military. The type of Judaism developed in the dispersion differed considerably from that which was practiced in Palestine. The Alexandrian Jew was in reality both a Jew and a Greek. He held the faith of Jehovah and sincerely worshipped the God of his fathers; but he spoke the Greek language, had received a Greek education and had contracted many of the Greek ideas and culture, being called a "hellenist." Still, those in this position were Jews first and Greeks afterward, and

on all the "fundamentals" were in sympathy with their Palestinian brethren. In spite of the dispersion, the heart of the nation continued to beat in Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, over time the influence of the Greek kings of Egypt and Syria (which were jealous of the Jews and ruthless in trying to destroy Judah) diminished, and for 100 years Judah gained independence under the Maccabees. Then in 63 BC, the influence of Rome became overpowering, and the Roman legions conquered much of the civilized world, under the twelve Caesars and the Herodian family. On Chart 4, titled "First Century Christianity," we show in chronological order the reign of the first five Caesars in succession, following the reign of the dictator Julius Caesar, 49-44 BC. Born in 100 BC, he became a brutal and treacherous tyrant conquering much of Europe. What a contrast in rulership compared to King Nebuchadnezzar, a God-fearing monarch. He was followed by Augustus Caesar, who ruled from 42 BC to 14 AD. The world ruled by Rome grew by 4,937,000 in 14 AD (over the time of his reign). The kingdom is described by Daniel as the fourth kingdom, strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things, and as iron breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise (Dan. 2:40). Such is the Biblical description of the fourth kingdom in the great image having "his legs of iron" (Dan. 2:33). It was during the reign of Augustus Caesar that Herod the Great, Tetrarch of Palestine, rebuilt the temple on a grand scale to gain the support of the Jews. This was the temple spoken of in John 2:20, "then said the Jews, forty-six years was this temple in building." In the year 4 BC, Herod died, and Jesus Christ was born.

JERUSALEM DESTROYED A SECOND TIME

The rule of Rome over the people of Judah extended from 63 BC to about 70 AD. It was in the year 70 AD that the Roman emperor Titus decided to eliminate the offending and rebellious Jews. Thus began a siege of Jerusalem, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Jews, the total destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. With the destruction of this beautiful edifice, the historian Josephus claims the number of captives taken during this war at 97,000 and the number who perished during this siege at 1,100,000. Hunger, rage, despair, and madness seized the city. Mothers slew and devoured their own children. And with the destruction of the temple, the daily sacrifices and services of the priests ceased. While the Roman Empire continued on to about 400 AD, the country of Israel ceased from being a political entity. The prophet Hosea, speaking on the eve of the Assyrian captivity, had declared, Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it shall come to pass that in that place where it was said unto them, ye are not My people, there it shall be said of them, ye are the sons of God (Hosea 1:10). In a dire warning Hosea declared, For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and

without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days (the acarith yam, the concluding days) (Hosea 3:4-5). It has now been almost 2800 years since these words were first spoken. During this time they have been "without" for most of the elements, which symbolized their divine religion. David, their king, is dead and buried, awaiting resurrection. If this promise of restoration is ever to be fulfilled, God must intervene and bring the Israel of God under the bond of the covenant. The Davidic covenant must be fulfilled.

By the year 70 AD the nation of Israel had become decimated by war, greatly impoverished, and also scattered among the nations (principally those of the surrounding nations of the Roman Empire), having no place of its own. Today, those who are legitimately part of the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, can be found living in every corner of the earth. With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the people we designate as Jews or Israelites are simply citizens of one of the nations, and will remain so until such a time as God makes the determination to "gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered" (Ezek. 20:33-35).

ISRAEL TODAY

In the final description of the great image, we behold feet and toes, part of potters clay, and part of iron. The kingdom divided, . . . And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay. So the kingdom will be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay (Dan. 2:34, 41-43). This is an apt description of the nations of the world as they exist today. We are now witnessing the fragmentation of human government on a global scale. Terrorists and anarchists are almost untouchable, as nations are crumbling and in disarray. This is clearly evident in the Balkan countries and several of the African nations at this time. God is poised to act and assume the reigns of government over the people of the earth. The world needs and awaits divine intervention. The need is critical for mankind. In the words of the psalmist David, Arise, O Lord: let not man prevail: let (cause) the nations be judged in Thy sight. Put them in fear (awe), O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men (Psa. 9:19-20). At that moment in time will the words of Daniel be fulfilled: "... and the stone (symbolic of the government of God) that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35). This action will be the divine assumption of sovereignty. Finally, the long night of Israel's darkness will end and every nation on earth will become submissive to the "only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). May God's will be swift and gracious.

SUMMARY

The Israel of God is currently scattered among the nations and left few in number as Moses had predicted in Deuteronomy 4:17. Israel's recognition in 1948, as an independent nation did not fulfill one line of Biblical prophecy. In fact, now 50 years later, her ranks have been decimated, and waves of terrorism have inflicted great anguish and loss of life upon that people. The ancient city of Jerusalem remains in ruin. It is inhabited, but not by God nor the priests of God sacrificing in the temple. Isaiah declared, Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, . . . that saith to Jerusalem, thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, ye shall be built . . . that sayeth of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem thou shalt be built; and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid (Isaiah 44:26-28). It is possible that this is a double prophesy, having been partially fulfilled once, and will be again in the future Kingdom of God.

Next for Israel is the reconstitution of the nation. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, all My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you to the land of Israel . . . Behold, I will take the children from among the nation, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land (Ezek. 37:12, 21). Ahead for Israel lies a period of unexcelled time of rejoicing and great spiritual blessings. Israel will once again be God's people and will worship in a new Jerusalem, and a new Temple (Isa. 60:14, 62:1-4). They will be the greatest nation in the world and God's promises to Abraham completely fulfilled (Gen. 12:1-3, 15:18-21, 17:2-9, 22:15-18).

END