

Israel - Hated Among the Nations
Zechariah 14:1-13, Ezekiel 38:3-6

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On May 14, 1948, Israel was recognized as an independent nation. At the same time five Arab nations promised to “*drench the soil with Jewish blood*” if their recognition was acknowledged by the world.

And, true to their word, the day after their recognition Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq invaded Israel with all their fury.

Yet, against insurmountable odds, a nation less than a week old was able to regroup and defend itself.

Not only did they defeat these invaders and drive these nations out of their land, but the Israeli army also isolated the Egyptian army and started a drive to Cairo, the capitol of Egypt.

It was at this time when the Soviet Union forced the United Nations to declare a cease-fire in order to end the conflict and protect these five attacking nations they supported.

Though costly, Israel gained back much of its ancient territory including Jerusalem.

Later, in another attempted invasion, Syria launched an attack by sending in 1000 planes into Israeli airspace.

None returned and Israel regained more of its ancient territories. Each time Israel had been attacked, she benefited territorially.

If history doesn't persuade us that God has a plan for Israel, the scriptures should. Hatred against the reborn Israel was prophesied long ago.

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In fact, Ezekiel 38 tells us that after Israel's gathering a powerful coalition of nations will assault Israel in the latter days.

Look at Ezekiel 38:3-6, *"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek (it is also translated Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech) and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you."*

Rosh is the region of Russia. It is unknown where Russia gained its name. One theory is that they were named after a river called 'Ros'; another says they were named after the Swedish name Ruotsi.

Some claim that when the hordes were attacking southward, they had no name so certain scholars stated that these must be the 'Rosh' spoken of in the Bible.

However, during the time of barbarian hordes, the land of Russia was called Muscovy.

Meshek and Tubal are easily identified by history. Meshek settled in western Russia. The name of the region became known as Moskva and later changed to the modern name, 'Moscow.'

Tubal settled in Siberia and the region was called Tobol. The modern-day name of Tobol is the city of Tobolsk.

Iraq and Iran are the modern inhabitants of Persia. Put is the same as Ethiopia and Libya. Gomer is the region surrounding Germany and Togarmah is modern day Turkey.

If you look at a map and locate these ancient settlements, you'll see that Israel is attacked from the north, south, east, and west. Israel will be at the center of the world, just as the Bible states.

Identifying the exact names is not essential to understanding this prophecy. The focus of this prophecy is that all the nations surrounding Israel will attack.

In the Bible God says to Israel's enemies, I will "*put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army.*" Now listen to verses 11-12.

Ezekiel 38:11-12, "You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land."

It may be that these nations are financially desperate. The Bible says that they're coming to plunder Israel because she had acquired wealth.

Now, some balk at the notion that this is an unfulfilled prophecy because they claim it's already been completed. However, when you read this passage, it's clear that it has never been fulfilled.

For one, Israel has returned from being scattered across the whole earth. When Ezekiel was written, during their first captivity they were in bondage but not scattered.

When Israel returned from bondage and re-established their nation, they weren't attacked on all sides.

Some claim Ezekiel's prophecy refers to the time that they were invaded by the Greeks or that it was when Rome occupied Israel.

However, Greece didn't attack from four directions. Rome didn't conquer Israel from four directions. Even more important, God didn't defend Israel during any of these invasions.

God clearly states the purpose for this invasion: *"I am against you."* The nations Ezekiel is talking about are drawn out so God can judge them at the height of their might and pride.

In this future invasion, God will defend Israel, destroy the kingdoms of the world, and then present Himself as their eternal King. This final conflict is for the purpose of judging the nations.

Zephaniah 3:8, "Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day I will stand up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them—all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger."

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At the beginning of the battle, Israel will be on the verge of annihilation, but, as they are being defeated and all seems hopeless, Jesus Himself will defend them and wipe out their enemies.

Zechariah 14:1-5, 12-13, "A day of the LORD is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south."

You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.”

Verses 12-13, “This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. On that day people will be stricken by the LORD with great panic. They will seize each other by the hand and attack one another.”

Now, compare Zechariah’s prophecy to Revelation 14.

Revelation 14:18-20, “Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.” (180 miles)

This is the final battle before the Millennial Kingdom but, before this battle is over, Israel finds God’s protection in the valley that He’ll open through the middle of the Mount of Olives.

Jesus descends and divides the Mount of Olives, at which time an angel gathers the nations into God’s winepress as a reaper drawing the harvest with a sickle.

God then sends an angel ‘*who had charge of the fire*’ to plague the nations by consuming them with the fire of God’s fury.

If we follow the sequence of events, we see that Israel's defeat will precede God's victory.

The invading armies will swarm down on Israel from every side. They'll plunder the Israelites and spoil their possession while the Jews watch helplessly.

Half of the survivors will be taken captive and half will be preserved by being given a way to flee.

The enemies of Israel will overrun Israel and succeed in taking the city of Jerusalem. When all hope appears to be lost, God will intervene.

The Mount of Olives will be divided by a great earthquake just in time to make a way of escape.

It's interesting to note that the largest fault line in Israel goes right through the Mount of Olives, east to west.

The people will flee to safety through this valley opened by that great earthquake.

The invaders will pursue Israel into the valley not knowing that God has entered the battle and has prepared a plague that will destroy them all.

A vivid and horrible description of judgment will rain down on the enemies of Israel in the mountain valley. The valley that is deliverance to Israel is now the winepress of the enemies of God.

Revelation 9:16 even describes a 200-million-man army that will invade Israel from the east.

Think about that. Today China lies to the east and boasts of a 200-million-man army. What was an impossibility in the 1st century is a reality today.

Zechariah's description of the flesh dissolving off their bodies before they can fall to the ground sounds like a nuclear blast to me. However, God's not limited to man-made devices.

This could be nuclear warfare or a natural event such as the Great Siberian Explosion in Tunguska which occurred in 1908.

Before man discovered how to split the atom, an unexplained fireball streaked across the sky and exploded just before hitting the ground. It is estimated that the damage was equal to a 40 kiloton atom bomb.

This is 2,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in World War 2.

The radius destroyed by the blast was roughly half the size of Rhode Island. The trees in a 1300 square mile radius were scorched, stripped and knocked flat.

The description in Zechariah could be a nuclear blast, a meteorite, or the power of God unveiled without natural explanation.

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This is a photo of what Tunguska looks like today. There is still no vegetation at the center of the explosion.

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This is a 1908 photo of the scorched earth from this unprecedented explosion.

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Zechariah's prophecy about the Mount of Olives is also significant for another reason. Palm Sunday is coming a couple of weeks, so listen to what Luke has to say.

Luke 19:35-38, "They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Jesus came to Jerusalem, lowly and riding on the colt of a donkey at His first visitation. He descended from the Mount of Olives to present Himself as King, but Israel didn't recognize Him.

Again, we see that Jesus will descend from the Mount of Olives and present Himself in Jerusalem as King. This time there'll be no donkey and the veil of His glory will be removed.

At that first visitation, He established His kingdom in the hearts of His people. This next time He descends it'll be in power, and every knee will bow including His enemies.

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So, not only will their enemies be dissolved in that day, but so will the veil, that has blinded Israel since the crucifixion.

Romans 11:25-27, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved.

As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

Without repentance, the gift of God is never received. As long as Israel’s back is to God, they cannot see the grace He has for them.

After God has judged the sin of Israel, He has promised to remove the sins of the remnant.

Zephaniah 3:11-15, “On that day you, Jerusalem, will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from you your arrogant boasters. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble. The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the LORD. They will do no wrong; they will tell no lies. A deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid.” Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.”

There is only one way to remove sin and that’s through the blood of Jesus Christ. God doesn’t deal with the sin of Israel any differently than He deals with sin in the Gentile church.

The Bible tells us that the Cross of Jesus is the only provision for sin. Verse 12 says that they “*will trust in the name of the LORD.*” The LORD this verse refers to is Jesus.

Isaiah 45:21-25, “Declare what is to be, present it—let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.

“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone are deliverance and strength.’” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the LORD and will make their boast in him.”

God called Israel to come to Him for salvation and said, *“Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.”*

This same declaration is found in Philippians 2:10-11, *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Israel will see the scars and understand that Jesus received those wounds in the house of His friend. Israel will recognize that they were the friend who wounded Him.

They’ll turn to Him, confess Him as LORD and trust in His name. Just like the church, they’ll be made righteous because God has justified them by His blood, and they’re accounted as righteous by faith in Christ.

In Zephaniah 3, God said that He would purge out of Israel the unrighteous and the remnant will inherit the promise.

The unrighteous are those who rejected grace by rejecting Jesus and the righteous are, and always have been, those who put their trust in Him.

The only way Israel can be saved is through the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Israel will repent and confess Jesus as Lord.

This is made clear in Zechariah 12:9-11, *“On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”*

The *“the weeping of Hadad Rimmon”* refers to where Josiah was slain at which time all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him and appointed the day to be annually observed with lamentations.

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Conclusion

The Bible makes it clear that when Israel sees Jesus, who was pierced for their transgressions, they'll recognize Him for who He is and that they had rejected Him all those years.

The sorrow for their sins will be so overwhelming that it'll be as the morning of someone who lost their first-born son.

The moment they repent, they'll inherit the grace of God that's been equally poured out on them as it has on the church.

Once they're walking in the grace of God, they'll receive the plan God has set apart for them since the beginning.

This same prophecy is repeated in Revelation 1:7-8, *“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

The “*peoples,*” or some translations say “*tribes,*” of the earth are the tribes of Israel who have returned from throughout the earth.

The people of the earth are found in Revelation 6:15-16. They don't mourn over Jesus' scars, but are crying for the rocks to fall on them, so they don't have to see Him.

Throughout Revelation they're shaking their fist at God while refusing to repent.

Just like today and in the future, when people see Christ, they're either broken over sin or they try to flee from His presence.