

ISRAEL

A Brief Snapshot

When Frederick the Great asked his court chaplain for a proof of the Bible, the pastor replied in two words: “The Jews.”¹ Not from any disparagement of the Jewish people, but as an acknowledgment of their deeply instructive history of both blessing and judgment. To this day Israel, and Israel-related issues, dominate world news, though Jews make up *less than half of one percent* of total world population. How can this be?

Some 4000 years ago God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia into the child-sacrificing, idol-worshipping land of Canaan. He promised him that, though then childless, he and his wife Sarah would have many descendants, through whom they would possess the land. “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, *to give you this land* to inherit it.”² Expressly “this land”, ie, Canaan as it was then known, was *God’s gift* (“*I...give you*”) to Abraham and his designated descendants. Far from “stealing” it from others, he was actually granted it by GOD.

It was a promise by faith only, before Abraham had either sight or sod of any legal real estate. Until the later purchase of Sarah’s still-standing Hebron gravesite, Abraham and Sarah lived only in a tent throughout their many years in Canaan. Yet they “*believed in the LORD*, and He accounted it to [them] for righteousness.”³

Gilt-edged record

In due course Abraham’s descendants, through Isaac the child of promise, would greatly increase. Moving to Egypt under Joseph, the Jews multiplied, with the Biblical account providing a gilt-edged record of both their Sojourn, and their Exodus under Moses by miracles and wonders. As Georg Ebers, publisher of the famed *Ebers Medical Papyrus*, observed,

“The whole of Joseph’s history, even in its smallest details, must be regarded as in accord with the actual conditions in Egypt.”⁴

Even the great famine of Joseph’s time has been corroborated by extensive regional evidence of a major drought around 2,000BC, from ice cores on Mt. Kilimanjaro⁵ to dolomite dust sediments from the Gulf of Oman⁶, so that even “the Lake Victoria outflow [into the Nile] ceased for a short period.”⁷

It was Joseph’s father Jacob who first received the name “Israel”, meaning “Prince with God”,⁸ and showing its essential dignity. Yet today that same God-given name is widely hated and reviled, with respected Google co-founder Sergey Brin (himself a Jew), describing even the United Nations as “transparently anti-Semitic.”⁹ And that, despite Jacob’s descendants having won more Nobel prizes per head of population than any other people group on earth¹⁰, and Israel’s acknowledged world leadership on issues from water desalination to medical innovation. Let alone the renowned world-class treatment of Israel’s Hadassah Hospital for Jews, Egyptians and Arabs alike.

One of “least religious nations”

Yet for all its striking achievements, Israel remains essentially spiritually dead. As reported by *The Jerusalem Post*, a WIN/Gallup International poll revealed that “Israel is *one of the least religious nations in the world*”¹¹(emphasis added). This is an extraordinary finding for the “Holy Land,” as tourist brochures regularly call it. While some green shoots are appearing, with an increasing emphasis in Israeli schools on the Bible, and a popular national Bible Quiz which has seen, among others, four national champions from the family of first lady Sara Netanyahu, the situation in general hardly reflects well on Israel. Its Middle East neighbours, with their five-times-per-day-prayers, apparently put the land of the prophets to shame in terms of religious observance.

There are of course exceptions – both among Israeli and diaspora, or dispersed Jews. Among them the converted Jewish American nano-

scientist Dr James Tour (author of the chemistry textbook *Molecular Electronics*), whose YouTube presentation “Why putting Jesus first changes everything”¹² shows that faith in Christ can be perfectly consistent with being a modern Jew. Yet the spiritual description of the prophet Isaiah concerning his own nation still widely speaks today, that “there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.”¹³

THE “PROPHET LIKE [MOSES]”

In the midst of Mt Sinai’s fire and thunderings, at the giving of the Ten Commandments, the people of Israel were terrified by the voice of the LORD. They begged Moses for an intermediary to speak to them, lest they die from the raw power of God. The LORD commended them for their request, declaring

“What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear his words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.”¹⁴

Long recognised as one of the great Messianic prophecies of Scripture, this remarkable promise has a striking echo in Psalm 2, where the Lord’s “Anointed” (Hebrew *Meshiach*/ “Messiah”) is also called His “Son” the “King” (Ps. 2:2,6,7,12). But just who is this mighty “Prophet like [Moses]”?

Bible teacher and former Cambridge philosophy fellow Derek Prince identified 27 resemblances between Moses and Jesus in his influential article “The Prophet like Moses”.¹⁵ To name just ten (adapted):

1. Both were almost killed by a cruel king as an infant; 2. Both were called out of Egypt; 3. Both were initially rejected by their own people; 4. Both did mighty signs and wonders; 5. Both were outstanding teachers of immense authority; 6. Both established a covenant sealed by blood; 7. Both led their people through the waters; 8. Both literally shone on a mountain; 9. Both fed Israel

supernaturally; 10. Both were seen alive after their death¹⁶ – in Jesus’ case by numerous eyewitnesses¹⁷ and with “many infallible proofs”.¹⁸

No wonder the Apostle Peter, eyewitness and friend of the risen Jesus, directly applies Moses’ Prophet, *together with the Messianic witness of “all the prophets”*, to Jesus Christ!¹⁹

The elephant in the room

Here then is the problem. If God gave the Land of Canaan, including Judea and Samaria, to Israel – as the Bible clearly shows He did²⁰ – how come the Jewish people have been out of the land rather than in it for much of their history? Most notably, since the first century destruction and dispersion of Jerusalem in 70AD, reiterated within one lifetime in 135? How do we explain this apparent contradiction between God’s promise of the land, and the experience of the Jews? This is the elephant in the room of Jewish history, which utterly defies any explanation – save for one.

The LORD had forewarned that there would be a high cost for rejecting His great “Prophet” (“I will *require* it of him”). This is a very serious judgment. The Hebrew word for “require”, *dawrash*, denotes “pursue”, or, as the parallel passage renders it, “be utterly destroyed” (Acts 3:23). Moses distinctly warns of the possibility of Israel’s eviction from the Promised Land, as he states elsewhere:

“...lest the land *vomit you out* also when you defile it” (Lev. 18:28);

“...that the land...may not *vomit you out*” (Lev 20:22);

“...you shall be *plucked from off the land* which you go to possess. *Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples*, from one end of the earth to the other” (Deut. 28:63,64).

Likewise Joshua, Moses’ successor, who warned that if Israel “transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God...*you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you*” (Josh. 23:16).

Expressly Israel would **forfeit its tenure of the land** – certainly for a time – as wise Daniel similarly shows of the Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles:

“We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to...the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered them” (emphasis added).²¹

If Israel was “scattered” for these rebellions against the prophets, how much more for rejecting the Messiah Himself. This is our very “Prophet, Priest and King,” as His followers universally affirm, whose charge over His cross²², like the wise men at His birth²³, proclaimed Him the “KING OF THE JEWS.”

How do we know?

“But how do we know that Jesus was really the Messiah?”, our Jewish friend may reply. Let the evidence speak for itself.

Centuries before the incarnation, or coming into the flesh, of Jesus Christ, the **Old Testament Scriptures had already described His life**. The Messiah, they foretold, would be *born of a woman* (Gen. 3:15), in the *town of Bethlehem* (Mic.5:2), from a *virgin mother* (Is. 7:14), of the *seed of Abraham* (Gen. 22:18), the *tribe of Judah* (Gen 49:10), and the *house of David* (Is. 9:6,7). He would be called “*Son of Man*” (Dan. 7:13), be *filled with the Holy Spirit and power* (Is. 6:1), and institute a *New Covenant or Testament* (Jer. 31:31), by which those *bound will be freed* (Is. 49:8,9). He would be *betrayed for thirty pieces of silver* (Zech. 11:12), be *pierced in hands and feet* (Ps. 22:16), and have His *garments divided by lot before His eyes* (Ps. 22:18). Being “*cut off, but not for Himself*” (Dan. 9:26), He would substitutionally *bear the sins of others* (Is. 53:6,8), be *buried in a rich man’s grave* (Is. 53:9), and *rise from the dead on the third day* (Hos, 6:2, see also Is. 53:10-12), resulting in *His saving name and renown going throughout the world* (Ps. 2:8, Is. 42:1-10), and *justifying many* (Is. 53:11).

Here, before our eyes, is a New Testament portrait of Jesus Christ. Yet every part has been scripted – literally “scriptured” – centuries before in the **Old Testament**: sometimes expressly, sometimes, like buried gold, requiring seeking out. Yet in each instance, as their living Fulfilment declared, “the Scriptures...testify *of Me* (Jn. 5:39). Thus, as the saying of the wise goes, “the New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed.” No wonder **William Shakespeare** wrote of Christ, in his final will and testament from January 1616: “[H]oping and assuredly believing, *through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour*, to be made partaker of life everlasting” (emphasis added).²⁴

“Deliberate exclusion”

Such is the weight of this evidence that even the rabbis, according to Talmud professor Hananel Mack of Bar-Ilan University, practised the “deliberate exclusion”²⁵ of certain Old Testament Messianic passages from the appointed synagogue readings (the Haftarah, or liturgical cycle). Among them he notes the *Virgin birth* (Is. 7:14), the *Bethlehem birthplace* (Mic. 5:2), the “*out of Egypt*” (Hos. 11:1), the “*King...on a donkey*” (Zech. 9:9), the *suffering Servant* (Is. 52:13-53:12), and the “*Spirit of the Lord*” passage of Jesus’ Nazareth sermon (Is. 61:1), noting the particular “abhorrence (sic) felt toward this chapter to this day.”

That, “within one generation of Israel’s rejection of Jesus”, as Derek Prince observes, “the severest judgments of all their history came upon them,”²⁶ almost bangs the door down in terms of its historical causality. All the more when the overwhelming evidence for **Jesus’ resurrection** – described by *Guinness World Records* most successful lawyer, Sir Lionel Luckhoo, as “unequivocally” settled – is added!²⁷ Where but here, who but He, what but this can be the explanatory key for Israel’s two millennial scattering? As the prophet Jeremiah declares,

“And when the people ask, ‘Why has the Lord our God done all this to us?’ you will tell them, ‘As you have forsaken [Me]...in

your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own”²⁸.

Nailing - literally - the fact

This is said without a skerrick of antisemitism by the present writer. Almost alone his book, *Jesus Spoke Hebrew: Busting the ‘Aramaic’ Myth*,²⁹ has asserted for a quarter century that Jesus’ “mother tongue” was *authentic Galilean HEBREW*, with its distinctive northern accent analogous to Scots’ English today (cf. “your *accent* gives you away”, Matt. 26:73; NIV).

Yet the historical fact remains, as the former persecutor Paul declares, that “the Jews...killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets,”³⁰ as echoed by their Jerusalem chant of “Crucify Him, crucify Him,”³¹ and, “His blood be on us and our children”³² – even when the Roman governor Pontius Pilate was *wanting* to release Him!³³ Though it was all in God’s sovereign plan for the Lamb of God, foreshadowed by the annual Passover, to redeem us by His innocent blood, and though we all (most certainly I) were represented in His murder,³⁴ the historical record shows, as Peter declares, that Israel “killed the Prince of life,”^b whom they “murdered by hanging on a tree [ie, the cross].”³⁶ This emphatic eyewitness corroboration serves a double historical purpose. It confirms Israel’s culpability, and it refutes Islam’s counterfeit, which makes out that Jesus (“Isa”) never even died on the cross, but that Judas or someone else was switched in his place!

Not for a moment does this make modern Jews responsible for the fateful decision of their forefathers. Yet so long as they share the same unbelief, hostility and obstinacy towards their Messiah – as seen from their disproportionate historical infatuation with Marxism, to the modern ultra-orthodox spitting towards the cross – they are undeniably complicit in Jesus’ crucifixion. As pastor Martin Niemoller, for seven years a prisoner in Hitler’s concentration camps for his defence of German Jews, observed, “What is the reason for their obvious punishment...for thousands of years?...[T]he Jews

brought the Christ of God to the cross.”³⁷ No amount of woke denial can alter this incontrovertible fact.

EZEKIEL’S VALLEY OF SCATTERED BONES

Israel’s forlorn spiritual condition, bereft of its true King, is graphically portrayed in Ezekiel’s Valley of Dry Bones vision.³⁸ The valley he saw was “full of bones...very many...very dry.” Yet through the prophetic word they first *come together*, and then *come alive* (Ezek. 37:1,2,7,10). The key, as God instructs the prophet, is that “**these bones are the whole house of Israel**” – now spiritually dead, yet in their appointed time promised to “live” (vv11,14).

This death has nothing to do with the *false* guilt piled on modern Israel, after the atrocities the Jewish people have suffered from the Holocaust to the October 7 massacre. British human rights barrister Natasha Hausdorff has called out “The great lie of the Gaza genocide”, contrasting the “pay for slay” policy, hostage taking, torture, civilian and hospital shields, and grossly exaggerated casualty claims of Israel’s enemies, with Israel’s humane policies of texting and leaflet drops to spare civilians, together with abundant (though frequently *stolen*) humanitarian aid.³⁹ All right-minded people lament the loss of innocent life in war, including Palestinian and Iranian, Lebanese and Israeli life. The difference, however, is that Israel **never**, as a matter of policy, targets civilians, whereas her enemies **notoriously do** – witness their *unbridled glee* at the multiple outrages against women and children on October 7, and their slaughter of thousands on the streets of Tehran in January 2026.

As Australian journalist Chris Kenny writes of one public broadcaster’s ideology-driven coverage, “this must be the most unsuccessful genocide in the history of humankind given the Palestinian population continues to grow faster than the broader Israeli population.”⁴⁰ No wonder Sergey Brin points out that

“throwing around the term genocide in relation to Gaza is deeply offensive to many Jewish people who have suffered actual genocides.”⁴¹

Has Israel been replaced?

Whatever the warped portrayal of the Left – and increasingly also of some on the Right – their falsehoods cannot be allowed to obscure the real issue, which is not political, but SPIRITUAL. Israel, like all of us without Christ, is *spiritually dead*, as the Bible declares of our fallen condition: “[Y]ou...were *dead in trespasses and sins*.”⁴² And again, “having their understanding darkened, being *alienated from the life of God*.”⁴³ The logic is irresistible. If the “Prince of life”⁴⁴ is rejected, what can be the consequence but death? Whoever “does not have the Son of God *does not have life*.”⁴⁵ Despite the claim of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem that “God has no son”, the very OPPOSITE is the central tenet of the risen Christ’s Gospel, in which “*the Son of God...loved me and gave Himself for me*.”⁴⁶

Does Israel’s spiritual death, as represented by its “very dry...**bones**”, mean that the Jews have been *replaced* by the Church? Equally earnest people hold strong yet opposing views on this important question. Could it be that BOTH have a case, and that the answer is more nuanced than the straight Yes/No of a one-track reply? Let us briefly note the evidence both ways.

On the one hand, yes: Israel *has been* replaced

In His famed Vineyard Parable of the Wicked Tenants,⁴⁷ Jesus explicitly states that Israel *would be rejected and replaced* for killing the Son:

“The kingdom of God will be *taken from you* and *given to a nation bearing the fruits* of it.” (Matt. 21:43).

Precisely this – the replacement of Israel by the (genuine) Church, God’s “holy nation”⁴⁸ – is what orthodox Christian theology, common

to East and West, has historically taught. Thus Irenaeus declared around 180AD, barely one lifetime after the apostle John's death, that

“the Jews have rejected the Son of God and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him. Therefore God has *justly rejected them* and has *given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation.*” (Emphasis added).⁴⁹

Likewise his contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, speaking of the Jews around 195: “[T]hey denied the Lord. So they *forfeited the place of the true Israel.*”⁵⁰ Thus Justin Martyr already wrote a generation earlier that “God blesses this people [ie, Christians], and *calls them Israel, and declares them to be His inheritance.*”⁵¹ Not just the Church Fathers, but also the Reformers essentially also maintained this, with both Luther and Calvin typically calling the Church the “true Israel.”⁵² (This is not to excuse Luther's later well-known antisemitism, just as *that* should not be allowed to distort his own wider contribution to theology and music).

Could anything be clearer than that the Church is now the “Israel of God”, as Paul calls the Galatian Christians?⁵³ Despite their imperfections,⁵⁴ his readers have believed and been baptized into Christ,⁵⁵ and are now sanctified by His cleansing blood⁵⁶ and Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ “He who has the Son,” says John, “has life.”⁵⁸ Thus the New Testament affirms: “[Y]ou have come to *Mount Zion* and to the city of the living God, the *heavenly Jerusalem*... to the general assembly and *church of the firstborn.*”⁵⁹ This recalls John Newton's beloved hymn about the Church, joyously sung by Christians around the world:

“Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God...”⁶⁰

Accordingly, the apostle declares that “he is a Jew who is one *inwardly*... of the *heart, in the Spirit.*”⁶¹ Whoever claims to believe the New Testament – which novelist Charles Dickens called “the best book that ever was or will be known in the world”⁶²– must also

acknowledge this Gospel fact. Especially since Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, *effectively said the same of his own people*:

“I have *no pleasure in you* [“Israel”, v1], says the LORD of hosts,...For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, *My name shall be great among the Gentiles.*”⁶³

Here, in the Church’s cumulative *billions of Gentile believers*, is the promise to Abraham fulfilled of descendants from “many nations”⁶⁴ and “as the stars of heaven.”⁶⁵ And **all through Ruth the Gentile**, who became David’s great-grandmother, and Christ’s very ancestor according to the flesh (Ruth 4:21-22; Matt. 1:5-6, 17). By contrast, Israel’s reigning spiritual death is evident from the Temple’s 70AD destruction – just seven years after its final completion under the procurator Albinus! – with its cessation of priesthood and sacrifice, down to the scattering and numerical impoverishment⁶⁶ of the Jewish people to this day.

Yet, on the other hand, Israel’s rejection is *only partial, not permanent.*

While it is true that the Holy Christian Church – the authentic “communion of saints,” as the Apostles’ Creed calls her – is now Christ’s spiritual Israel, this is not the end of the story. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob yet has a *glorious sequel* for His ancient covenant people. “I will bring them back,” He declares. “They shall be *as though I had not cast them aside.*”⁶⁷

“I say then”, says Paul, “has God cast away His people? *Certainly not!* For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. *God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.*”⁶⁸ Clearly Israel’s rejection is not terminal, but TEMPORAL (“has *not* cast away”, ie, ultimately). It is, as he later adds, a “blindness *in part* [that] has happened to Israel *until* the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.”⁶⁹ That is, it is **limited in both extent (“in part”) and time (“until”)**, reflecting Jesus’ own prophecy that “Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles *until* the

times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”⁷⁰ To both our Lord, and representatively His apostles, the rejection is finite and limited, implying a subsequent *restoration*.

The first stage is Israel’s RETURN to its ancient land, as clearly revealed by God to Ezekiel. “I will open your graves and...*bring you into the land of Israel...I will place you in your own land.*”⁷¹ Note who does it – *the LORD Himself* (“*I will open...I will bring you...I will place you*”). Though human choice and decisions are obviously involved in their implementation, behind them is God’s sovereignty at work, using them – as repeatedly seen in the Biblical interplay of divine and human – for his wider purpose.

Already we see the process of return, or *aliyah*/immigration, before our eyes. In 1882 “just 0.3 percent of the world’s Jewish population” lived in Palestine,⁷² according to Israeli scholar Raphael R. Bar On. Today that proportion has increased towards HALF of all Jews worldwide, as the newspaper *Haaretz* observes: “Currently Israeli Jews account for 46 percent of the world’s Jewish population” (as at May 2026).⁷³ This represents a proportionate increase of *well over a hundredfold*, now increasing at a rate approaching one percent annually. But there is a massive “sleeper” waiting in the wings – the 6-7½ million Jews (depending on definition) still calling America home, additional to several million more worldwide. In no time, of course, this could change, witness the rapid influx of a million plus Soviet Jews after the fall of communism. By whatever means, we can be sure that *it will happen*. As Jeremiah declares, “He who scattered Israel *will gather him.*”⁷⁴

The prophets are bursting with this! Witness Isaiah, “I will bring your descendants from the east... west... north... and south... *from the ends of the earth.*”⁷⁵ And Jeremiah, “I will *bring back from captivity* My people Israel and Judah”, says the LORD. “And *I will cause them to return to the land* that I gave to their fathers, and *they shall possess it.*”⁷⁶ Or again, “As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy..., so I will watch over them to *build and plant*, says the LORD.”⁷⁷ Likewise, Ezekiel,

“Surely I will take the children of Israel *from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land.*”⁷⁸

So too, Amos: “*I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste places and inhabit them;... I will plant them in their land.*”⁷⁹

OBJECTION. Some may object that these prophecies of return rather have to do with events closer to the prophets’ time. But the homecoming of some 50,000 Jews from the Babylonian Captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah⁸⁰, while thrilling to Israel, *was nowhere near the scale and universality of which these prophecies speak.* Besides, a familiar principle of Biblical prophecy is that of **successive or dual – even multiple – fulfilment.** This is where Scripture can have *both a nearer and a later, and even eschatological, fulfilment.* As, for instance, with the “out of Egypt” calling of both Israel and Christ, the Temple destruction by the Romans and the end-time “abomination of desolation”, or the Holy Spirit’s outpouring at Pentecost, and then in the end times (the “former and latter rain” of Scripture).⁸¹ It is often likened to viewing a mountain range from afar, where the mountains seem as one, yet upon closer approach are seen to be distinct and separate.

So Israel’s coming regathering is fixed and settled. Not because we pretend to some prophetic gift, but because the Bible clearly and repeatedly *says so*, just as “IT IS WRITTEN.”⁸²

Thus the more the media demonization, the radicalised mobs and the synagogue swastikas, the more the devil serves God’s purposes, as he did with Judas against Jesus,⁸³ in driving diaspora Jews back to the Promised Land. Today it is Paris⁸⁴ and London,⁸⁵ tomorrow New York⁸⁶ and Sydney⁸⁷. Now a trickle, soon a torrent, in what will become an unstoppable tide that saves the Jews, and swamps the naysayers.

The second stage is REVIVAL (“I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live”).⁸⁸ At present the “dry bones” are coming together, and

being covered with the “sinews, flesh and skin” of thriving nationhood!⁸⁹ Yet still, in spiritual terms, there is “*no breath* in them.”⁹⁰ But all that is due to change, as God explains through Ezekiel: “I will *put My Spirit in you*, and you shall *live*.”⁹¹

The Holy Spirit expressly speaks, through Zechariah, of a coming time when “the Spirit of grace and supplication” will be poured out upon Israel, and they will “look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son.”⁹² From the deep and protracted **repentance** which follows (“a great mourning in Jerusalem... and the land”, vv11, 12ff), this points to a national reconciling of Israel with her pierced Messiah. Not of every *individual* Jew, for that would be to turn salvation into an ethnic “right” – so clearly warned against by Christ and John the Baptist.⁹³ As later Harvard president Increase Mather wrote in his celebrated 1669 *Israel* treatise: “[T]heir rejection was not of every particular person...but of the body of the Nation; so shall their salvation be National.”⁹⁴ That is, on the same basis of **faith** (“*Look on Me*”)⁹⁵ as we Gentiles are also saved. As the great preacher Spurgeon famously wrote of his conversion, “I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word ‘Look!’... the cloud was gone.”⁹⁶

This joyous homecoming of Israel is approaching, not as a competitor to Christ’s Church, but as its *completion*, as Paul writes of Israel: “God is able to *graft them in again*,”⁹⁷ for in Christ “there is *neither Jew nor Greek*.”⁹⁸ Thus Tertullian, who gave us the word Trinity, declares with utter certainty that “there [will] be a resurrection of the body, *just as there is a restoration of the Jewish state*.”⁹⁹ (Emphasis added). It will not be to “judaize” the Church (the New Testament has already resolved that),¹⁰⁰ but to make us “*both one*”¹⁰¹ in the glorious liberty of Christ. “[T]here will be one flock and one shepherd,”¹⁰² as the Saviour promises.

BUT WHEN?

Devout Bible scholars differ as to when Israel's national conversion occurs. Some say it will be **at** Christ's triumphant Second Coming, others **before**, while still others say it is just **figurative**. Even among the early Christians there were differing views on Israel in relation to prophecy. Justin Martyr, beheaded for his faith, accepted a future *literal* restoration of the nation:

"I and many others are of this opinion... On the other hand,... many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise."¹⁰³

A personal view. In hopefully the same spirit as Justin's magnanimity, may the writer offer a personal opinion? Like most of the early, pre-Nicene Church Fathers (eg. Tertullian, Hippolytus etc), I believe that Israel's promised national conversion will take place **BEFORE** Christ's Second Coming. Here's why.

1. Jesus told the Jewish people, in His final public statement to Jerusalem, that "I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"¹⁰⁴ That is, Israel will *warmly greet* Christ's visible return as **friends** – very different from the ungodly who would rather the mountains fall on them than face His wrath!¹⁰⁵ This presupposes Israel's *spiritual turning* to Him **BEFORE** then.
2. In Ezekiel 39, the context of the latter-day outpouring of the Holy Spirit (vv21-29) is the huge, though overthrown, northern attack from "Gog, of the land of Magog." Whatever Gog's identification, the attack – written under the symbols of the time – is as relevant as Jesus' "render unto *Caesar*",¹⁰⁶ and Paul's government "bearing the *sword*."¹⁰⁷ It is absolutely pivotal to Israel's national salvation, and as Dr James Tour observes, "it has to occur...*prior to the Lord's return*."¹⁰⁸ Clearly it takes place in the **PRESENT AGE**, just like its parallels in Joel and Zechariah (see below), and is therefore not to be confused with the post-Millennial "Gog" of Rev. 20.8ff.

EZEKIEL 39	“Gog” etc from the “far north” (v1)	“seven months” burial (v12); “seven years” clean up (v9)	“I shall have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel” (v29)	“[T]hen they shall know that... I sent them into captivity among the nations but also brought them back to their land.” (v28)
JOEL 2	“the northern army” (v20)	“his stench will come up, and his foul odor will rise” (v20)	“I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (v28)	National repentance “with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning” (v12). “Valley of Jehoshaphat” judgment only <u>later</u> , in ch.3.
ZECHARIAH 12	“all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (v9)	Only later (ch. 14) comes “the day of the LORD ...[with] all the saints.”	“I will pour on... Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication” (v10)	Massive mourning over the Pierced One (“Me whom they pierced,” v10). Seven times the words “mourn” or “grieve”. ELEVEN times “by themselves/itself.” (10-14)

3. Paul says of Israel that “if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead,”¹⁰⁹ similarly placing Israel’s conversion ***before the resurrection***. Thus Bible scholar William Biederwolf, after exhaustive scrutiny of the Scriptures and Church Fathers, concluded that “It seems to us...that according to the Apocalypse [ie, Revelation], the conversion of the Jews *must precede* the coming of the Antichrist, and *consequently also precede the coming of Christ*.” (Emphasis added).¹¹⁰

A note on the rapture

This leaves no room for the secret “rapture” theory so popular among some sincere believers. This novel doctrine, entirely unknown to the early, pre-Nicene Church, actually only made its appearance from around the late 1820’s.¹¹¹

As Paul writes, “the day of Christ...will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed.”¹¹² That is, Jesus will not return until the great apostasy *and* the “man of sin” shall BOTH have been manifested. Consistent with this, John shows that the “first resurrection” **includes** those whom “the beast” (ie., Antichrist) has *already martyred* (Rev. 20:4-6), so he clearly operates *before then*. (Not, of course, that everyone will be martyred, for “we shall not all sleep,”¹¹³ and many will be “alive and remain”¹¹⁴ when the LORD returns, and the dead in Christ “rise first”¹¹⁵).

Thus our Lord Jesus declares that the “wheat” and “weeds” – representing the saved and the lost – “*both grow together until the harvest.*”¹¹⁶ Hence George Mueller, renowned for his orphanage and 50,000 diary-recorded answers to prayer, declared after his rejection of rapture doctrine: “Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus *will not come until the apostasy shall have taken place, and the man of sin...shall have been revealed.*”¹¹⁷

As for those allegedly “left behind” – supposedly for a “second chance” – they are actually **left out**, just as was the unprepared wedding guest in Jesus’ parable of the King’s Banquet.¹¹⁸ The ill-clad guest had accepted the royal invitation. Yet he neglected to prepare himself, as Matthew Henry comments, by “a frame of heart and a course of life agreeable to the gospel.”¹¹⁹ For his despising of a holy life, he was “cast into outer darkness.”¹²⁰

CHRIST'S WARNING AGAINST PRESUMPTION

As the Bible shows, ultimately “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”¹²¹ – every reader of these words, as surely as the writer (“we...all”). Hence the Lord’s instruction that we be *personally prepared* for His return, as set forth in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (*all* of whom had a right expectation of the Bridegroom’s coming, but only **some** of whom were prepared for it).¹²² Thus Paul uses even his teaching on Israel as a call for consecration, and a warning against presumption and neglect:

“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity: but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”¹²³

To even the high priest of Israel Jesus declared *under oath*, at His trial, that “hereafter *you will see the Son of Man* sitting at the right hand of the Power.”¹²⁴ Could Christ, by definition “the way, the *truth*, and the life”,¹²⁵ ever lie? Let alone “*under oath*”!¹²⁶ Rather, as godly Simeon declared of the infant Jesus in the Temple, “**This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel.**”¹²⁷ First Israel’s “fall”, then its “rising”. **The one has demonstrably been; the other will certainly come.**

As a former Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, declared following his conversion to Jesus Christ: “The synagogue was a promise, and Christianity is the fulfilment of that promise.”¹²⁸ That is why informed Christians are instinctively drawn to Israel – both from our shared heritage,¹²⁹ and from a recognition of Israel’s unique and Biblically based mandate of return and restoration. Thus U.S. President Harry S. Truman found it most natural, from his devout study of Scripture, to be the first world signatory in welcoming the modern State of Israel on 14th May 1948.¹³⁰ However much the nations today may “rage... against the LORD and His Anointed”,¹³¹ the true “King of the Jews”¹³² will forever have the last word.

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